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## **CABINET**

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 2 December 2015 from 7.00 - 7.37 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Bowles (Chairman), Mike Cosgrove, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Gerry Lewin (Vice-Chairman), Ken Pugh, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright.

Councillor Sue Gent was in attendance as Lead Member for Environmental and Rural affairs in Councillor David Simmons' absence.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Kathryn Carr, Amber Christou, Estelle Culligan, Philippa Davies, Abdool Kara, Alice Oxley, Mark Radford, Nick Vickers, Ginny Wilkinson and Phil Wilson.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Mick Galvin, Mike Henderson and Alan Horton.

**APOLOGY:** Councillor David Simmons.

### **359 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 November 2015 (Minute Nos. 307 – 312) and the Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting held on 5 November 2015 (Minute Nos. 313 – 314) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **360 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

### **PART A MINUTES FOR CONFIRMATION BY COUNCIL**

### **361 SITTINGBOURNE TOWN CENTRE - FOOTPATH CREATION ORDER**

#### **Cabinet Member for Regeneration**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Economy and Community and the above Cabinet Member which set out information to support the creation of a new public footpath linking St Michael's Road with the High Street between numbers 48 and 50, High Street, Sittingbourne.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration introduced the report. He welcomed the connectivity that the proposal would provide between the High Street and St Michael's Road, especially in respect of the regeneration proposals.

**Recommended:**

**(1) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Legal to make and confirm a Footpath Creation Order for a new public footpath linking St Michael's Road with the High Street between numbers 48 and 50, High Street, Sittingbourne.**

**(2) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration to take all necessary actions to construct a new public footpath in accordance with the Footpath Creation Order linking St Michael's Road with the High Street between numbers 48 and 50 High Street, Sittingbourne.**

**362 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND 2016/17 BUDGET****Cabinet Member for Finance**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Finance and the above Cabinet Member which set out the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and proposals for the 2016/17 Budget.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and explained that it had been written to give time for the Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the Budget proposals. This meant that it had been published before the Comprehensive Spending Review announcements; there were likely to be changes to the budget, once the local settlement was known.

The Cabinet Member reported that savings of £517,000 had been made following good procurement and efficiency reviews; that additional revenue streams had been sought resulting in less reliance on Government grants; and the Council had as a result avoided proposals for a reduction of frontline services.

A Member referred to paragraph 2.15 on page 14 of the report, and the top-slicing to fund the Regeneration Fund; he asked for a definition of what was meant by regeneration-funded projects, and what was, and what was not included within the Fund? The Member considered the Council had been pressed into approving borrowing for funding the new multi-storey car park, and he questioned where the money would come from for this? He also questioned the £46,000 spending at point 6, on page 21 of the report, and considered the increased planning fee income was as he had previously expected it would be.

In response, the Leader explained that a conservative estimate had been given to the planning fee income to enable there to be a safety margin; and a variety of regeneration projects were considered for funding.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and the Head of Finance explained that the £46,000 arose as a result of the terms of the contract between the Council and the leisure provider.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration explained that regeneration was not solely confined to Sittingbourne, and the Regeneration Fund was one of various funds that were available, and this provided an additional approach and more options.

The Chief Executive outlined other funding streams for regeneration projects in the Borough and stated that regeneration needed to be looked at as a general concept. He further explained that Members had not agreed to borrowing funds for the multi-storey car park, but had agreed the option of proceeding in that way if that was the best way forward at the time that the decision needed to be made. He stated that the planning income needed to be considered year-on-year, i.e. this proposal was for the 2016/17 budget, not the 2015/16 budget which the Councillor had previously referred to.

***Recommended:***

- (1) That the budget proposals be noted.***
- (2) That the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted.***

**363 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES**

**Cabinet Member for Finance**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Finance and the above Cabinet Member which set out the proposals for the level of fees and charges to be levied for the next financial year 2016/17 for submission to Council. The charges would take place from 1 April 2016.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and explained there was a need to 'balance the books'. Tables in the report indicated charges where an increase was not recommended; charges where an increase was recommended; a proposed new charge or a change in a charge was recommended; and also where a decrease was being recommended.

The Head of Finance advised that there would be changes on page 37 of the report to reflect the charge of £25 per hour, plus photocopying charges, in relation to provision of historical information relating to street naming and numbering.

***Recommended:***

- (1) That the proposed fees and charges for 2016/17 as set out in the report for submission to Council be approved.***

**PART B MINUTES FOR INFORMATION**

**364 NEW ROAD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE - CLAIM FOR DILAPIDATIONS**

**Cabinet Member for Finance**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Property Services and the above Cabinet Member which sought delegated authority to allocate a budget from the Council's reserves to fund the claim for dilapidations at New Road Industrial Estate.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and advised that a consultant had been appointed to ensure that the cost of the work was justified.

In response to a question, a Member was advised that a figure for the cost of the work had not been included in the report, as this would prejudice any negotiations. The final figure would be reported when the negotiations had concluded.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That a budget is allocated from the Council's reserves to cover the settlement of the claim.**

**(2) That the Head of Property Services, in conjunction with the Head of Finance and the Cabinet Member for Finance, be delegated to agree the final amount required.**

**365 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT: APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2015**

**Cabinet Member for Finance**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Finance and the above Cabinet Member which showed the revenue and capital projected outturn for 2015/16 as at the end of September 2015.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and explained that the total forecast revenue underspend was £785,915; and the capital expenditure was £643,998. He explained that the biggest savings continued to be from the waste contract and he congratulated the Cabinet Member for Environmental and Rural Affairs and the Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact on the procurement savings.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the projected revenue underspend on services of £785,915 be noted.**

**(2) That the capital expenditure of £643,998 to end of September 2015 be noted.**

**366 MINUTES OF THE SWALE RURAL FORUM HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2015**

The Chairman advised that there were no recommendations for Cabinet to consider.

**367 URGENT ITEM - REDUCTION OF THE BENEFITS FUNCTIONS AT FAVERSHAM OFFICE**

**Cabinet Member for Finance**

The Leader explained that this had been accepted as an urgent item as AmicusHorizon were reducing their opening times at the Stone Street office from 3 January 2016. The report requested a reduction of Swale Borough Council's Housing Benefit operating days at Faversham, in the context of the on-going channel swift work programme, so that it also came into effect from 3 January 2016.

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and drew Members' attention to the table in paragraph 2.6 of the report which indicated the significant reduction in footfall at the Faversham Office. He outlined the proposals which included frontline housing benefit support in Faversham one day a week; a

telephone interview facility; drop-off document service; and online service provision at Faversham Library which he considered together would ensure the continuation of excellent service.

In response to a question, the Revenues and Benefits Manager – Operational and People advised that the Benefits Section was being re-structured, and staff would move from Faversham to the Sittingbourne Office and this would enable a more efficient way of working.

A Member requested that the Cabinet Member for Finance wrote to Kent County Council requesting more computers at Faversham Library. The Cabinet Member undertook to do this.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the Housing Benefits facility currently located at AmicusHorizon premises in Stone Street, Faversham be reduced.**

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel