
CABINET

MINUTES of the Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting held in Maidstone Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1TF on Thursday, 5 November 2015 from 2.00 - 2.35 pm.

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

OFFICERS PRESENT: Katherine Bescoby, Kathryn Carr, James Freeman, Donna Price, Mark Radford, Paul Taylor and Nick Vickers.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Sue Gent and Mike Henderson.

313 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

PART B MINUTES FOR INFORMATION

314 **PLANNING SUPPORT SHARED SERVICE REVIEW AND UPDATE**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Planning Services and the Cabinet Member for Planning. The report gave an update on the discussions and respective positions of the partner local authorities following an 'in principle' decision by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to disaggregate from the Mid Kent Planning Support (MKPS) shared service, and to consider what approach the Council might wish to take with regard to its future role within the shared service.

The report set out the background; a review of performance of MKPS since its inception and the impacts on Swale's Development Management performance against the corporate performance indicators; a summary of the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) review of Swale's current performance and operational issues in respect of the Development Management service and its relationship with MKPS and the new IT systems; a financial review; alternative options and proposals.

The Mid Kent Services Director explained that the Business Case had been prepared by the Project Board, and thanked all for their input in particular MKPS. He outlined the proposal to reconstitute a planning support service at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, and a shared service between Swale and Maidstone Borough Councils which would be located at Maidstone Borough Council. He introduced the report and advised that whilst the proposal was to implement the services in July, it would not go live until everything was complete and had been signed off by Tunbridge Wells, Swale and Maidstone Borough Councils.

In response to questions from a Member, the Head of Planning Services advised that an improvement plan was attached to the agenda for Swale, which focused on improving IT systems to maximise efficiencies, and training for MKPS staff and

Development Managers at Swale Borough Council. With regard to targets, he advised that the targets had been agreed between Maidstone and Swale at this stage, and those targets were challenging; however, once the service had been embedded they would look at reviewing those targets.

In response to further questions, the Chairman thanked the Member for his support on the direction of travel, and reiterated that the timescale was not more important than getting the service right. With regard to when the full PAS report would be made available, the Chairman advised that the Member had been in direct contact with officers about this matter.

Resolved:

(1) That the Business Case prepared and presented by the Mid Kent Services Director, subject to any amendments following necessary consultation with affected staff, be agreed.

(2) That the disaggregation of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council from the Mid Kent Planning Support Service be agreed.

(3) That Swale Borough Council's partnership in the Mid Kent Planning Support Service with Maidstone Borough Council be agreed, subject to moving to a 'volume based' contribution mechanism; and undertaking a joint review of the service with Maidstone Borough Council by June 2017.

(4) That the continuation of the shared Land Charges Service between Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils be noted.

(5) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Planning, to finalise the detail of any collaboration agreement(s) that are required as a result of the decisions taken by the Cabinet.

Chairman

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