
CABINET

MINUTES of the Cabinet Meeting held remotely via Skype on Wednesday 8 July from 7.00pm - 8.20pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock (Vice-Chairman), Monique Bonney, Angela Harrison, Ben J Martin, Richard Palmer, Roger Truelove (Chairman) and Tim Valentine.

DEPUTY CABINET MEMBERS: Councillors Derek Carnell, Alastair Gould, Hannah Perkin, Julian Saunders, Sarah Stephen, Eddie Thomas and Ghlin Whelan.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Anne Adams, Tracey Beattie, Martyn Cassell, David Clifford, Philippa Davies, Deborah Hardy, Robin Harris, Charlotte Hudson, Jay Jenkins, Jo Millard, Lyn Newton, Julie Oates, Debbie Townrow, Claudette Valmond and Nick Vickers and Emma Wiggins.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Cameron Beart, Lloyd Bowen, Simon Clark, Steve Davey, Simon Fowle, Tim Gibson, Nicholas Hampshire, Ken Ingleton, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes, Denise Knights, Lee McCall, Ken Rowles, David Simmons, Paul Stephen, Mike Whiting, Tony Winckless and Corrie Woodford.

723 INTRODUCTION

The Leader explained that the Cabinet meeting would be conducted in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No. 392.

In welcoming all Members and members of the public, the Leader explained which Swale Borough Council officers were in attendance.

724 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3 June 2020 (Minute Nos. 679 – 690) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

725 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

726 SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL AND ITS APPROACH TO RECOVERY

The Leader introduced the report which set out the Council's draft recovery plan, and its approach to the economic recovery from the effects of Covid-19. He explained that whilst there was a reduction in the number of cases of Covid-19, there was a daily increase of unemployment figures. He said that much would

depend on the national recovery plan and that local government had a key role to play.

The Leader said that the Council had to be focussed and realistic of staff and funding resources. Any planned recovery would have to be flexible and evolutionary, and he highlighted the short, medium and longer term recovery phases as at paragraph 2.1 on page 5 of the report. He said that the recovery plan was built on the Council's Corporate Plan and reminded Members that, if the draft Recovery Plan was agreed, there would be an all-Member forum to discuss it on 22 July 2020 that would move towards an adoptable plan sometime in the Autumn 2020. The Leader said the structure of the plan built on Cabinet priorities but were relevant to the changing situation. He went through the priorities at paragraph 3.1 on pages 6 and 7 of the report and drew attention to Appendix 1 on pages 9 to 12.

In the discussion that followed Councillor Nicholas Hampshire commended officers for the work already carried out, and said that some measures to assist the local economy could be implemented quickly before the adoption of the plan. He suggested the following:

- 30 mins of free parking in all SBC car parks to kick start the recovery of the high streets;
- Tables and chairs outside hospitality businesses in marked areas of closed roads; and
- to build on the success of the volunteer scheme, introduce volunteer 'High Street Angels' to assist with social distancing in high streets.

The Cabinet Member for Planning said that much of the work going forward had already been planned before the pandemic. He suggested that Members could email their ideas to Cabinet Members and he praised Kent Police for their measured approach when dealing with issues that had arisen.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being said that the Council had already been working well with partners and volunteers before lock-down and their assistance during the pandemic should be captured to assist in other areas in the future. She praised the community and voluntary sector and said that many organisations lacked funding. An officer was currently putting together a document to be available on the website of outside body grants available.

The Cabinet Member for Housing thanked officers for their efforts as the situation evolved and reminded Members that health and wellbeing of the public was still paramount.

Councillor Mike Whiting praised the work of officers and raised the following points:

- How would the Council fund the Affordable Housing priority as outlined on page 6 of the report?;
- questioned whether the refurbishment of Swale House was premature whilst considering what a post Covid-19 service provider the Council would be in the future?; and

- was there a priority order of actions for staff to focus on from pages 13 to 16 of the report?.

In response, the Leader referred to the North Kent Housing and Commercial Growth Business Rates Fund in the Financial Outturn report later in the agenda. He reminded Members that the Council would be using Business Rates reserves and borrow the funds necessary to meet the cost of affordable housing, but that a large amount of necessary social housing would be provided via the planning system. The Leader said that the Council needed to provide low-cost affordable housing. He said consideration had already been given to how Swale House would be utilised post Covid-19 when considering the refurbishment. Referring to the final bullet point, the Leader said that the actions from pages 13 to 16 would be phased and that he was conscious of staff resource.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing stressed that good quality affordable housing was required, not just maximum numbers, and he reminded Members of the need for housing to assist the mental health sector.

Resolved:

(1) That the draft Recovery Plan set out in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to future amendments as the recovery phases evolved, be agreed.

727 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT - FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT 2019/20

The Leader introduced the report which set out the revenue and capital projected outturn position for 2019/20, drawing attention to the revenue underspend of £64,188 which was higher than the expected projection in March 2020. He praised the efforts of Housing Services in achieving a reduction in the overspend expected from March to June 2020 in homelessness, as highlighted at paragraph 3.2 on page 20 of the report. The Leader drew attention to the reduction in car park revenue and planning fee income on page 21.

The Leader highlighted the variances at Table 2 on page 22 of the report, paying particular attention to housing which had cost more than the anticipated budget set in 2019. The Leader stressed the importance of the revenue received from the Princes Street Retail Park. He noted the rollovers of £357k which were agreed by the previous administration or were statutory rollovers.

The Leader referred to the costs incurred in defending two public appeals as detailed in paragraph 3.3 on page 20 and said that the costs were not as a result of an executive decision but made by Planning Committee in its democratic process. He added that the reduction in income by Section 106 Agreements was not an executive decision.

In referring to Table 11 on pages 48 to 49 of the report, the Leader reported the success of the Special Projects Fund and the benefits to the local community.

The Leader advised that there was a reduction in the Kent Pool Economic Development Business Rates Reserve of £739k and £776k increase in the

business rate, not £758k and £757k as in the report at paragraph 3.10 on page 24. He advised that there was £800k available for corporate priorities and improvements to the town centres were a priority.

In reporting healthy reserves at Table 10 on pages 43 – 47, the Leader said the future would be challenging. He drew Members' attention that The Swallows Leisure Centre roof would need replacing, as at paragraph 3.26 on page 27 of the report. The Leader spoke positively about the projects on Table 12 on pages 50 to 54 and said they were initiated by the previous and current new administration.

Finally, the Leader thanked the staff in Financial Services, particularly the Financial Services Manager and said that the Council's financial position was more sound than many other Councils.

In response to a question from Councillor Lloyd Bowen, the Leader explained that the Council had reserves of over £23million and the estimated £4.1million referred to in press releases as a result of the financial effect of Covid-19 was from the Revenue Budget. He said Government income would provide some of the deficit and the balance would be funded from the General Fund. The Chief Financial Officer advised that there was more detail in this report than previously, the report was transparent and he explained how the funding gap would be filled. Councillor Bowen said that he hoped Scrutiny Committee would consider the report in the near future.

In response to a question from Councillor Steve Davey, the Leader advised that the cost of replacing The Swallows roof was far in excess that the insurance would cover.

Councillor Cameron Beart clarified that the two High Court appeals for Barton Hill Drive, Minster were executive decisions.

Resolved:

- (1) That the revenue underspend of £64,188 be noted.**
- (2) That the revenue service rollovers of £190,630 and the setting up of new reserves as set out in in Appendix I Table 9 be noted.**
- (3) That the uninsured losses regarding the roof replacement at the Swallows Leisure Centre will be met from borrowing in 2020/21 be noted.**
- (4) To delegate to the Chief Financial Officer the allocation of uncommitted underspends to reserve funds.**
- (5) That the capital underspend of £4,937,473 and expenditure of £19,097,577 as detailed in paragraph 3.19 and Appendix I Table 12 be noted.**
- (6) That the approval of the capital rollovers of £5,263,936 as detailed in Appendix I Table 13 be noted.**

728 QUEENBOROUGH & RUSHENDEN REGENERATION HIF CONTRACT AWARD

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property introduced the report and gave a background to the Queenborough and Rushenden improvement site. She referred to the original grant of £3.5million allocated from the Homes England Grant Determination Agreement which was further increased to £5.1million in 2019. The

Cabinet Member for Economy and Property explained that Campbell Reith were appointed as the Project Managers for the scheme and due to the timescales associated with the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) a successful contractor was required to be appointed as soon as the procurement process had been completed.

Members were supportive of the scheme, the work of officers and of Campbell Reith.

Councillor Cameron Beart referred to the lack of support from the administration to a previous HIF bid on a different site earlier in 2020.

Resolved:

(1) That delegated authority be given for the appointment of the contractor to deliver the land raising and remediation contract currently being procured, to the Head of Housing, Economy and Community Services and Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Property and the Cabinet Member for Finance.

(2) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Legal Services to approve and execute the Contract documentation for the appointment of the selected contractor.

729 VISITOR ECONOMY FRAMEWORK ACTION PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property introduced the report which set out the Visitor Economy Action Plan and intention to consult before being considered by Cabinet later in 2020. She commended the work on the Plan carried out by officers over the past year and said that action points had been reviewed as a result of Covid-19.

Councillor Cameron Beart acknowledged the work carried out by Honorary Alderman Mike Henderson. He welcomed the public consultation but said that Ward Members should have been consulted first.

Councillor Mike Whiting spoke about the collaboration with partners as part of the Isle of Sheppey Academy, and asked whether Chalkwell Buses, who were not listed with the other bus companies in the document, had been part of the discussions? In response, the Cabinet Member for Economy and Property advised that they would work with all partners.

The Cabinet Member for Housing said that Visitor Economy was a key role going forward and SBC should encourage hospitality in the region.

Members praised the report and Action Plan.

Resolved:

(1) That the Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan and proposed consultation ahead of Cabinet endorsement in early Autumn 2020 be noted.

730 AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS (AQMA)

The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the report which sought to update Members on the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in Swale. He referred to the maps on page 101 of the report which showed the data from nitrogen dioxide tubes at Keycol Hill and Key Street on page 102, which concluded that an AQMA should be declared at Keycol Hill. He advised that Key Street would continue to be monitored.

Referring to the map of St. Pauls, Sittingbourne on page 104 of the report, the Cabinet Member for Environment explained that this was the only area where there was an exceedance of particulates fairly regularly but at irregular times of the day, and he said further investigations to establish the cause was on-going.

Councillor David Simmons referred to paragraph 2.1 on page 95 of the report and asked what progress had been made in considering the entire A2 a low-emission zone? In response, the Cabinet Member for Environment advised that consultants had been engaged to conduct a feasibility study into a clean air zone on the A2.

In response to a question from the Cabinet Member for Economy and Property on whether the particulates at St. Paul's were industrial or caused by traffic, the Cabinet Member for Environment explained that monitoring had continued through lockdown and there had still been spikes of particulates but a reduction in nitrogen dioxide. Councillor Tony Winckless suggested the nearby Waste Disposal/Recycling Plant might have an impact.

Resolved:

(1) That a new Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) at Keycol Hill for nitrogen dioxide be declared.

(2) That the AQMA for particulates at the existing AQMA at St. Paul's Street, Sittingbourne be declared.

(3) That the declaration of the AQMAs using Defra's Fast Track procedure, proceed.

731 BARTON'S POINT BRIDGE CONTRACT AWARD

The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the report which sought to inform Cabinet of the recently undertaken tender process for the Barton's Point Coastal Park permanent footbridge replacement and to recommend action to award the contract. He advised that the temporary pontoon installed in March 2020 cost £364 per week to hire.

The Cabinet Member for Environment explained that a tender had been undertaken to provide a footbridge of Timber (Option A) or Timber and Steel combination (Option B). He explained that a Timber bridge had a life span of approximately 25 years, whilst a Timber and Steel combination provided 50 – 100 years, if maintained appropriately. The Cabinet Member for Environment drew attention to the tender price quotations for Options A and B on pages 107 and 108 of the report and said that in all cases, Option B was lower-priced than Option A. He explained that the photographs provided were examples, not specific SBC designs.

Referring to the consultation carried out with Ward Members and Parish Councils, all responses received had preferred Option B. The response from Minster Parish Council had not yet been received.

On being put the vote, all Cabinet Members preferred Option B.

Resolved:

(1) That Option B is the preferred option.

(2) That delegated authority be given to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure to agree the preferred option, taking account of the consultation with Ward Members and local parishes once complete, and to award the contract to the company with the most economically advantageous tender for the selected option.

732 CONTRACT FOR POST COLLECTION AND DELIVERY SERVICE

The Leader introduced the report which sought Members' approval to enter into a 5-year contract with Whistl Ltd for the collection and delivery of post from Swale House, commencing on 1 August 2020.

The Head of Property Services said that there was a limited market for postal services and Whistl Ltd, as their existing provider were reliable and cost-effective.

Resolved:

(1) That a new 5-year contract with Whistl Ltd for the collection and delivery of post from Swale House commencing on 1 August 2020, be agreed.

733 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXTRAORDINARY LOCAL PLAN PANEL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11 JUNE 2020

Cabinet considered the recommendations from the Extraordinary Local Plan Panel held on 11 June 2020.

Resolved:

(1) That the recommendations in Minute Nos. 693 and 694 be agreed.

Chairman

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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