

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2020 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. McArthur, Dyball, Maskell and Thornton

Cllrs. Grint, Osborne-Jackson and Pender were also present.

110. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of Cabinet held on 9 July, 21 July and 6 August 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

111. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

Cllr Dyball declared that for Agenda Item 8 (Minute 117 below) - Bartholomew Way Park, Swanley, she had a declared non pecuniary interest as the Chairman of Swanley Town Council and would not speak or vote on that item.

112. Questions from Members

Councillor Pender asked whether the Council had any intention of implementing so-called 'Covid Marshals' in the District. The Chairman indicated that there were no such plans.

113. Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee, CIL Spending Board or Cabinet Advisory Committees

There were none.

114. Treasury Management Annual report 2019/20

The Portfolio Holder Finance & Investment presented the report which sought approval of the Treasury Management Annual report 2019/20. The report outlined the strategy adopted during the year, showed the position of the investment and debt portfolios at the beginning and the end of the year and gave details of how the investment fund had performed in comparison with previous years and against various benchmarks.

The Portfolio Holder advised that Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report and recommended it for approval.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That Treasury Management Annual Report for 2019/20, be approved.

115. Financial Results 2020/21 - to the end of July 2020

The Portfolio Holder Finance & Investment presented the report on the Council's 2020/21 financial results to the end of July 2020, which showed the year-end position was currently forecast to be an unfavourable variance of £3.3m which was largely due to COVID-19; and represented 21.2% of the Council's net service expenditure budget totalling £15,581,000. This position did not include any recovery of lost income as part of the Government's income compensation scheme.

The Portfolio Holder advised that Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had noted the same report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

116. Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2021/22 and beyond

The Portfolio Holder Finance & Investment presented the report which was the first report of the Council's budget setting process for 2021/22 onwards. It set out the financial pressures the Council was likely to face in the coming years and suggested an appropriate strategy, utilising the 10-year budget framework which had proved successful to date and put the Council in a much stronger financial position than most other Councils. The Portfolio Holder advised that Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer Finance & Trading set out that the intention was to shorten the budget process this year so that the Council's budget was set in November 2020 instead of February 2021, which would enable any changes to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2021 and the period of uncertainty for staff minimised.

The annual budget gap included in the report was £826,000 which was largely due to Covid-19. Growth and savings proposals were to be presented to the Advisory Committees and Cabinet, and their recommendations would be considered as part of the process to remove the gap.

The report was intended to start the debate and the assumptions would be updated if more accurate information became available. The main message was that the intention remained that the Council was aiming to continue to be

financially self-sufficient and have a balanced 10-year budget but the process would be more challenging this year due to the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- a) the ten-year financial planning approach and principles set out in this report, be endorsed;
- b) Advisory Committees be requested to review the Service Dashboards and advise Cabinet of possible growth and savings options; and
- c) officers be requested to continue to review the assumptions in this report and consider options to address the budget gap, that is largely related to Covid-19, and report back to Cabinet on 15 October 2020.

117. Bartholomew Way Park, Swanley

The Portfolio Holder Finance & Investment presented the report which sought Members' views on a proposal from Swanley Town Council to transfer the Bartholomew Way Park to Swanley Town Council at nil cost with the view to Swanley Town Council developing the site for a new Swanley Health Hub. The Portfolio Holder advised that Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the proposal by Swanley Town Council to transfer Bartholomew Way Park from Sevenoaks District Council to Swanley Town Council, be rejected.

(Having advised of her declared non-pecuniary interest, Cllr Dyball took no part in the debate or voting therein.)

118. Burlington Mews Update

The Portfolio Holder Finance & Investment presented the report which provided an update on the development of the houses in Burlington Mews. The Portfolio Holder advised that Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

The Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer Finance & Trading advised that due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the housing market, the Council had taken the opportunity to revise its approach to selling the houses to protect its

Cabinet - 17 September 2020

investment in the properties. In contrast to the sales market, the lettings market had strengthened partly due to lockdown encouraging more home buyers to test living outside city centres in larger properties. The original intention had been to put all the houses up for sale, however the new approach was to proceed with a mix of sales and lettings to increase the options available as the situation evolves. The more flexible approach of letting some of the houses meant the houses could be sold if/when house prices increased. With the Chairman's permission he requested that an additional recommendation be agreed delegating authority to the Strategic Head of Property & Commercial to allow the Council's remaining properties at Burlington Mews, Sevenoaks to be leased to Quercus 7 Limited for the purpose of renting out until the disposal of the freehold property.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Chairman moved the recommendation within the report along with the additional recommendation and it was

Resolved: That

- a) the revised approach for the disposal of the houses in Burlington Mews contained in the report, be supported; and
- b) until the disposal of the freehold of each property, the Strategic Head of Property & Commercial be delegated authority to allow the Council's remaining properties at Burlington Mews, Sevenoaks to be leased to Quercus 7 Limited for the purpose of renting out.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 21 September 2020. The decisions contained in Minutes 114, 115, 116 and 118 take effect immediately. The decision contained in Minute 117 takes effect on 29 September 2020.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.42 PM

CHAIRMAN