

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2021 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. McArthur, Dyball, Maskell and Thornton

Cllrs. Penny Cole and Perry Cole were also present.

49. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 11 November 2021, be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

50. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

51. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

There were none.

52. Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee, CIL Spending Board or Cabinet Advisory Committees (if any)

There were none.

53. Budget Update 2022/23

The Finance & Investment Portfolio Holder presented the report which set out the progress made in preparing the 2022/23 budget and updated Members on key financial information. The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading set out the background to the report.

The Head of Finance set out that recommendation (a) of the report asked Cabinet to consider and respond to comments and recommendation of the Advisory Committees regarding growth and savings / additional income proposals (SCIAs) listed in Appendix D and detailed in Appendix E. He explained the SCIAs and invited questions and comments from Members.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

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- a) SCIA 1 - 7 (22/23) detailed in Appendix E be included in the budget;
- b) a SCIA be presented to Cabinet in January on the following savings suggestion put forward by the Advisory Committees listed in Appendix F:
 - i) Review the potential of setting up of a social letting agency;

and that there be no further action on the following savings suggestions put forward by the Advisory Committees listed in Appendix F:
 - ii) Charging for tourism events;
 - iii) Charging for sporting events.
- c) Officers be requested to identify further saving options to be included in the Budget Update report to Cabinet on 13 January 2022.

54. Street Naming and Numbering Policy

The Portfolio Holder for Improvement & Innovation presented the report which set out the revised Street Naming and Numbering Policy. He advised that Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

The Head of Information and Customer Solutions advised that the current policy was limited in scope and was not robust enough to support officers in some of the more complex decisions that were required, and so the revised policy aimed to provide a more robust and user-friendly document that guided applicants and officers, which supported the Street Naming and Numbering function. It also detailed the decision making process, routes for appeal and issues of responsibility.

It was highlighted to Members that some typographical and consistency errors had been noted by the Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee and had been addressed.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the revised Street Naming and Numbering Policy be adopted.

55. Community Lottery

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The Portfolio Holder for People & Places presented the report which outlined proposals to introduce a Community Lottery. A society lottery of the type proposed in the report had been successfully implemented by many other local authorities. The Community Lottery would focus on delivering proceeds locally, maximising benefits to the community, minimising the costs so the scheme was largely self-financing, delivering winners locally.

The Community & Projects & Funding Officer advised that a partnership with an existing deliverer of lotteries in the market place known as an External Lottery Manager was included in the proposal. Their responsibilities included managing the prize fund and associated insurance, providing marketing materials and conducting the draw. The Council would not handle any transactions other than receiving its share of the income on a monthly basis.

The Portfolio Holder advised that People & Places Advisory Committee had also considered the report and resolved in support. She indicated the engagement with the District's Voluntary Sector Forum would help ensure the project's success. She set out that charities and the Voluntary Sector Forum were in favour of the project.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People & Places answered questions from Cabinet on this item about apportionment of funds and set out that Sevenoaks District based charities, clubs, associations and societies are all groups that would be eligible to register as a local good cause with the Community Lottery provided they meet the terms and conditions.

Cabinet discussed the item and expressed concerns about the adoption of the proposal. Members expressed a wish to consider grant levels and to offer assistance to the charitable sector in setting up their own individual small society lotteries as an alternative.

Cabinet agreed that charities were under financial pressure and that it would be valuable to look at a grant funding scheme offering assistance to charities as part of a SCIA through the budget process, with a view to directing such support directly at those organisations most in need.

The Chief Executive set out that Officers would be glad to investigate a SCIA for the growth item proposed by the Cabinet. He reminded Members that the original proposal for a Community Lottery was a Member proposal and did not originate with Officers.

The Chairman indicated that he considered that it would be more empowering to enable worthy charities to run their own individual small society lotteries. He stated that he considered that there was an absolute immediate need for funding following 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 Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment and the Portfolio Holder for People & Places work with the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading and Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People & Places on a SCIA to set up a grant fund, time limited for Covid-19 recovery, with eligibility criteria along the same lines as set out in the report;
- b) the Council investigate means to advise charities of the means to set up their own individual small society Lotteries.

56. A Local First Homes Policy for Sevenoaks District

The Portfolio Holder presented the report which proposed a local First Homes Policy for the District. The national First Homes policy would be implemented for s106 sites on 28 December 2021. First Homes would be sold at a prescribed discount to first time buyers and held as affordable housing in perpetuity.

The Housing Strategy Manager advised Members that Based on the recommendations from the Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs (TRLHN), it was proposed that the Sevenoaks First Homes policy should contain a 50% discount on open market value, a capped maximum discounted sale price of £250,000 at initial sale and a set annual household income of £56,250. She answered questions on the report.

The Portfolio Holder advised that Housing & Health Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members gave consideration to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- a) the Local First Homes policy for Sevenoaks District, the contents as set out in the report, or as further defined, be approved and adopted for implementation on 28 December 2021; and
- b) any supplementary First Home policies, including re-sales and use of First Homes Commuted sums, be drawn up by Officers, with delegated authority given to the Chief Officer - People & Places and the Chief Officer - Planning & Regulatory Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Housing & Health and Development & Conservation, to approve these policies.

57. Approval to Seek Additional Designation of Parishes/Areas under Section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Health Advisory Committee presented the report which proposed an application be submitted to the Secretary of State for Department of Levelling up, Housing & Communities to seek additional areas within the District to be designated 'rural' under section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985. The Portfolio Holder advised that the Housing & Health Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

The Housing Strategy Manager advised that from 2014 affordable housing contributions could be sought for planning application sites with a net residential addition of ten or more homes. Local authorities were able to set a lower threshold to rural areas described under section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985. S157 designation had applied to over 60% of the District as they were located within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). A lower site threshold of six to nine homes was agreed by Cabinet to be applied to these designated areas, but could not applied to rural areas located outside of the AONBs.

Local authorities may apply to have additional areas designated rural under S157(1). Parishes would be required to have a population density of less than two persons per hectare and for any settlements within them have a population of fewer than 3,000 inhabitants, with some flexibility to the first criterion.

Rural designation under S157(1) would allow the Council to put restrictive covenants in place so the home could only be sold on to someone who had been living or working in the parish for three years. It would also enable the Council to apply the lower site threshold to all new market housing sites within the parish to maximise the opportunity for S106 commuted sum payments towards the delivery of new affordable housing.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members gave consideration to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That an application to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, seeking additional areas/parishes in the District (as detailed in Appendix A) to be designated under section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985, be submitted.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 10 December 2021. The decisions contained in Minute 53, 54 and 55 take effect immediately. The decisions contained in Minutes 56 and 57 take effect on 20 December 2021.

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THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.03 PM

CHAIRMAN