

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2024 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Thornton (Chairman)

Cllrs. Dyball, Maskell and McArthur

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Perry Cole and Reay

Cllrs. Baker, Bulford, Harrison, Leaman, Lindop, Manston, Purves, Streatfeild, White and Williams were also present.

Cllr. Robinson was also present via a virtual media platform which is not recognised as attendance under the LGA 1972.

86. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of Cabinet held on 8 February 2024, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

87. Declarations of interest

Cllr Dyball declared for reasons of transparency that she was Vice Chairman of Every Step Counts, which had made an application to the Community Grants Scheme. She further declared that she was the Council's appointee to Citizens Advice North & West Kent.

88. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

Members asked questions regarding the annual review of parking. In response the Portfolio Holder advised that in Westerham weight had been given to the responses and consideration given to when Darenth Car Park in Westerham was changed to charging and this did not have an impact on the number of users. In regards to questions on Sevenoaks Town and supporting the local economy, Members were advised that the comments had been noted which were made within the consultation. Footfall was up by 22% pre pandemic figures and so it was not considered that that charging in all car parks would cause a significant impact. Blighs Car park already had Sunday charges, and by introducing Sunday charges in all car parks, it would mean that charges did not go up Monday to Saturday.

In response to questions regarding waste collection and recycling Members were advised that the report that was due to be considered at the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee, but it was deferred for further information from central government and from the review. Therefore, until all the information had come through it was not reasonable to consider the report with only half the information.

Cabinet - 14 March 2024

The Chief Officer Finance and Trading advised the Technically, Environmentally and Economically Practicable (TEEP) Assessment would be addressed.

In regards to questions on InShape, and the environmental impact, the Portfolio Holder for Improvement & Innovation advised that it was a balancing act in getting information out to residents, and solely digital communication was a way off yet. The InShape went out in the postal rounds and was printed on Carbon Neutral paper to lower the Council's Carbon Footprint.

A question regarding the climate change strategy would be taken under the relevant agenda item.

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

There were none.

90. Changes to Committee Appointments

Members considered the report which set out Membership changes to the Finance & Investment, Housing & Health and Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committees.

Resolved: That

- a) Cllr. Lindop be removed from the Finance & Investment, and Housing & Health Advisory Committees and Cllr. Manston be appointed to the Committees; and
- b) Cllr. Barker be removed from the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee and Cllr. Manston be appointed to the Committee.

91. Consultation Results - Annual Review of Parking Fees & charges 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener presented the report which set out the consultation results from the annual review of parking fees and charges. The preferred option was to have a zero percent increase on all parking fees and charges, but an end to free parking and an expansion of operation hours/days across the district. The consultation ran from 4 December to 5 January 2024 and 62 responses were received. Of these, 58 were in the negative, four neutral or positive. The full consultation results were set out in the appendix. The option supported the Council's net zero ambitions by ending free parking expanding the operating times for on and off street parking, and actively discouraging town centre driving.

Members discussed the report, noting that options had been considered and preserving the pricing on the Monday to Saturday was positive. Concerns were raised regarding the businesses, and it was important in the future to make sure they were not suffering. It was encouraging to note that a review would take place following its implementation. Local worker parking permits had all been allocated

presently and they were mostly located around Sevenoaks Station. All options were being kept under review.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the public sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That a zero percent increase on all parking fees and charges, but an end to free parking and an expansion of operation hours/days across the district from 1 April 2024, be agreed.

92. Food Safety Plan 2023 - 24

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report, which set out the Council's Food Safety Service Plan, in line with the Food Standards Agency requirements. The plan targeted resources towards frontline services and high risk food activities. Its objective was to ensure public confidence that food was prepared and sold in safe and hygienic conditions. All high risk establishments had received inspections within their deadline, and all non-compliant establishments had received revisits to check compliance. The Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee had considered the same report, and recommended its adoption.

Members showed their appreciation to the Food and Safety Team Leader who was retiring at the end of April, and thanked her for her service.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the public sector equality duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that the contents of the SDC Food Safety Plan 2023/24, be adopted.

93. Communications Strategy 2024-25

The Leader & Portfolio Holder for Improvement & Innovation presented the report which set out the Communications Strategy 2024-27. It provided clear guidance to meet the strategies and priorities and there were six key priorities within the strategy. The strategy was considered by the Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee who had suggested additions and amendments to the Strategy.

The Communications and Consultation Manager further explained the six key priorities and it was primarily delivered by the Communications Team, but everyone in the Council and Members worked to the strategy. Periodically resident surveys were undertaken and InShape was a very important to residents as that was how they found out most the information regarding the Council. 85% of residents had responded that they read InShape and resident satisfaction with the Council which was at 82%.

Members considered the strategy and suggestions by the Advisory Committee and considered the criteria around some of the wording. There were occasions where the Council could not be fully open due to confidentiality requirements. It was suggested it would be more appropriate to include an additional bullet point, “be informative, uphold the principles of openness, honesty and transparency where there is no requirement for confidentiality.” in the section titled ‘Delivering our strategy,’

Public Sector Equality Duty.

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the public sector equality duty.

Resolved: That subject to the section titled ‘Delivering our strategy,’ include an additional bullet point “be informative, uphold the principles of openness, honesty and transparency where there is no requirement for confidentiality.” And that the phrase “unlike other council’s” be removed from appendix 1 of the strategy, the Communications Strategy 2024 - 27, be approved.

94. Climate Change Strategy 2024

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener introduced the report, which set out the Council’s proposed Climate Change Strategy, which would provide a framework for actions relating to reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change to provide a better environment for future generations. The strategy represented a change of emphasis to prioritise the Council’s leadership role, as the majority of emissions within the district could be influenced but not controlled by the council and priority was given to our leadership role. The Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee had thoroughly debated the report and she highlighted to Members that page 89 of the report set out the details of the Council’s progress so far.

The Principal Infrastructure Delivery Officer outlined the report. The council’s aspiration to reach Net Zero by 2030 was no longer realistic, due to a number of factors and restraints, including cost and a lack of infrastructure. Work would continue to reduce council emissions where practicable. The council was responsible for less than 0.5% of the district’s emissions, and was limited in its ability to influence the two main sources of emissions of transport (60%) and domestic use of gas and electricity (26%) across the district. The strategy thus prioritised community leadership and engagement, and sought to work with residents, businesses, partners, visitors, and community groups to raise climate awareness and combat climate change. The officer outlined the six climate change priorities within the strategy. A new action plan would be developed for the strategy, which would identify projects across the council to deliver the strategy’s aims.

In response to a question raised earlier regarding not having a target date for NetZero the Officer advised that Government had set a national target for 2050,

and this was also included within Kent's strategy for the District to be NetZero by 2050.

Members considered the report and comments raised, when looking at the progress made so far, it was something that the Council should be proud of.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the Climate Change Strategy be approved, subject to final design and any associated amendments, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

95. Community Grants 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for People & Places presented the report, which outlined the Community Grant Scheme and set out the proposed schedule of grants for 2024 - 25. The total funding for grants and charities was £97,388 and this was through Service Level Agreements with the Citizen Advice, and the Sevenoaks District Arts and Sports Councils. The remaining funding was through the grant scheme. The funding available for the scheme was £28,848 and 40 applications had been received, requesting £151,162 in total, which was significantly more than the 30 to 32 applications usually received.

All applicants had been contacted to explore alternate funding opportunities. The applications were assessed on a number of strict criteria included their eligibility, the scheme's priorities, value for money, need, any other council funding due to be received and sustainability. The People & Places Advisory Committee had considered the same report and were in support of the recommendation to Cabinet.

Members considered the report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the public sector equality duty.

Resolved: That the grants, as set out in Appendix C of the report, subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 14 of the report, be approved.

96. PSPO Consultation Results: London Road, Halstead, Orpington By Pass Badgers Mount and the M25 Spur Road

The Portfolio Holder for People & Places presented the report which set out the results of the consultation regarding the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) relating to London Road, Halstead, following car meets in the area and causing anti-social behaviour. The People & Places Advisory Committee had considered the same report and recommended its implementation.

In relation to motor vehicles the Council would be the first to implement the PSPO. The team and the Police were working to prevent the issue from being displaced elsewhere. Bromley Council currently had a PSPO in relation to Section 59 and vehicle nuisance causing Anti-Social Behaviour. It was hoped they would soon put in an additional PSPO regarding car meets. The PSPO would be implemented in May 2024.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the implementation of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and its measures at London Road, Halstead, Orpington By Pass Badgers Mount and the M25 Spur Road, for a period of up to 3 years, be approved.

97. Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership 2024-25 Strategy & Action Plan

The Portfolio Holder for People & Places presented the report which set out the Community Safety Partnership Strategy & Action Plan for 2024-25, and outlined the priorities within the Strategy, highlighting that a new priority relating to business crime, such as abuse to shops and stuff had been introduced. A strategic assessment had been undertaken in December 2023, in partnership with the voluntary sector, housing associations, the police, council officers and other partners. Actions for each of the priorities were reviewed every three months, with funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner, to spend across the priorities. People & Places Advisory Committee had considered the same report and recommended its adoption.

Members considered the report, and the Health and Communities Manager advised that Sevenoaks had a low risk for Serious Violence, but it was a county wide priority. The District was in the top 3 safest areas in Kent with low crime statistics.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That it be recommend to Council that the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership Strategy and Action Plan 2024 - 25, be approved.

98. Leisure Operator Options Report

Resolved: that under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting when considering the Report and Appendices A and B of Agenda Item 9 above, on the grounds that likely disclosure of exempt information is involved as defined by Schedule 12A,

Cabinet - 14 March 2024

paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information.)

The Portfolio Holder for People & Places presented the report, which set out the Council's future options regarding the management of its leisure centres in Sevenoaks and Edenbridge, and Lullingstone Park Golf Course. The current interim leisure operator contract for these facilities was due to end in May 2025. Four options were presented to the Advisory Committee and the Committee recommended Option 2 to Cabinet.

The procurement process would ensure the Council received best value for money in the contract, as it would be competitively tested in the market. Operating risk could be transferred to an external leisure operator, who have the expertise and resource to be more commercially focused. A contract service specification would be developed to ensure the facilities were managed against industry best practice.

A five-year (plus two) contract had been selected as it would encourage greater competition and response from the market, not be overly financially burdensome to operators and would allow for feasibility plans to regenerate the leisure centres to come forward.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the public sector equality duty.

Resolved: That

- i) Option 2, to proceed with the procurement of a leisure operator contract for Edenbridge and Sevenoaks Leisure Centres and Lullingstone Park Golf Course for 5 years (with an option to extend for a further two years, subject to satisfactory performance) in accordance with the strategy set out in the report, be agreed.
- ii) Authority be delegated to the Chief Officer, People and Places and Chief Officer, Finance and Trading and Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for People and Places and Cabinet Member for Finance and Investments, to conduct the procurement and evaluation exercise.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 18 March 2024. The decisions contained in Minute 90 and 93 take effect immediately. The decisions contained in Minute 91, 94, 95, 96 and 98 take effect on 26 March 2024. The decisions contained in Minutes 92 and 97 are references to Council.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.16 PM

CHAIRMAN