

Cabinet

Monday, 3 June 2019

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr John Burden (Chair)

Councillors: Shane Mochrie-Cox
Lenny Rolles
Brian Sangha
Narinder Singh Thandi
Jenny Wallace

Note: Councillors Derek Ashenden, Ejaz Aslam, Conrad Broadley, Leslie Hills, Jordan Meade, Steve Thompson, Denise Tiran were also in attendance.

David Hughes	Chief Executive
Stuart Bobby	Director (Corporate Services)
Nick Brown	Director (Environment & Operations)
Kevin Burbidge	Director (Housing & Regeneration)
Sarah Parfitt	Assistant Director (Corporate Services)
Carlie Simmonds	Committee Services Manager

The Cabinet welcomed the Extinction Rebellion Gravesham Group which was in attendance seeking the support of Councillors for the following:-

“We demand that a climate emergency is declared now and that Councillors act as though the truth is real by committing to net 0% emissions by 2025.”

The Leader informed the Group that the above was unable to be discussed as it was not listed on the agenda however the Labour Group would be submitting a motion to the next Full Council meeting on Tuesday 25 June 2019 in support of the above. The Leader invited the Group to the Full Council meeting in order to listen to the debate.

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Lee Croxton.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2019 were signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox declared an ‘other interest’ in item 8 (Minutes of the meeting of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 2 April 2019) in that he works for Kent County Council.

4. Delegated Decisions - Cabinet Members

No decisions other than those already circulated had been made.

5. Provisional Outturn Report 2018/19

Members were presented with the following:-

- the 2018/19 provisional General Fund Revenue Outturn and movements in the General Fund working balances and earmarked reserves;
- the 2018/19 provisional General Fund Capital Outturn;
- the 2018/19 provisional Housing Revenue Account Revenue Outturn and movements in the Housing Revenue Account working balances and earmarked reserves; and
- the 2018/19 provisional Housing Revenue Account Capital Outturn.

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) highlighted the key areas of financial performance as detailed in the report including those areas that may have an impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Medium Term Financial Plan, HRA Business Plan or Financial Statements.

The Leader drew Members' attention to the success of the Kent & Medway Business Rates Retention Scheme and advised that Kent & Medway had been unsuccessful in retaining pilot status for 2019/20 and would be reverting back to the original Kent Pool arrangement.

The Director (Corporate Services) advised that, to date, Kent & Medway had not received feedback from Central Government outlining the reasons for the 2019/20 bid being unsuccessful.

The Cabinet expressed concern with the lack of clarity from Central Government regarding the future of local government funding particularly as there was less than nine months until the Council had to set its budget for the 2020/21 financial year.

The Leader advised that the reserve for the Lower Thames Crossing would remain in the budget and will provide for any costs incurred by the Council in relation to assessing/seeking mitigation of any potential environmental or other impacts on the borough and its residents.

With regard to the Housing Revenue Account, the Cabinet thanked officers for the work that had been undertaken to improve the Repairs and Maintenance service which continued to deliver efficiencies and savings whilst providing an equitable service that meets the Council's objectives and the tenants' expectations.

The fact that the budget was being well managed was acknowledged and appreciated by the Cabinet. The Leader stated that the Council will need to continue to maintain robust budgetary control actions to ensure good financial governance and to respond to the pressures on the Council's finances particularly as the Council will continue to face more challenges and uncertainty moving into 2019/20 onwards.

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) advised that the report will be presented to the Finance and Audit Committee on 23 July 2019.

6. Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy

The Cabinet was presented with the Council's draft homelessness and rough sleeping prevention strategy which had been circulated widely for consultation with stakeholders.

The Council's current homelessness strategy had expired and the production of a new strategy was delayed to allow for the Homeless Reduction Act to receive Royal Assent during 2017 and for subsequent guidance to be issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government in the form of a revised Code of Guidance which would contain key information around Government expectations for Homelessness Strategies and their production. The revised Code of Guidance was issued in November 2017 and the Government consulted on this early in 2018.

Therefore, a new strategy had now been produced setting out the Council's approach for tackling homelessness in the district and how, over the lifetime of the strategy, the Council will achieve this working with key partners. Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping continues to be a priority for the Council and the Council will remain committed to preventing homelessness, helping people find housing that meets their needs and providing the support needed to prevent them from going back into homelessness.

In response to the consultation exercise, the Cabinet was informed that two comments had been received from the YMCA Thames Gateway and a Kent-based Housing Association and were detailed at paragraph 1.4 and 1.5 of the report.

Members were informed that those areas highlighted in yellow in the strategy and associated appendices would be updated prior to publication.

The Director (Housing and Regeneration) sought the Cabinet's approval for:-

1. the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy to be adopted and published;
2. the Action Plan to be endorsed and implemented; and
3. the evidence base to be published alongside the Strategy.

The Leader stated that the foreword would be from Councillor Jenny Wallace as the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

With regard to the action plan, it was suggested that the information and advice that will be placed on the website, be supplemented by plain English guides.

The Cabinet thanked officers for the support that had been provided to assist with the setting up of the new facility at Longferry, Gravesend. The facility will be managed by Gravesham Sanctuary offering help to the homeless.

Resolved that:-

1. the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy be adopted and published;
2. the Action Plan be endorsed and implemented; and
3. the evidence base be published alongside the Strategy.

7. Minutes of the meeting of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 2 April 2019

With reference to minute 58 (MHCLG Supporting Families Against Youth Crime) of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 2 April 2019, the Cabinet requested that clarification be sought regarding the decision to reduce the scale of the bid and the amount requested from £2.1m to £1.3m.

Members also acknowledged that the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee had, on numerous occasions, invited the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner to its scheduled meetings and that, to date, he had been unable to attend to date. It was requested that contact be made with the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner to request his availability so that a meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee can be convened on a date that is convenient for him.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.32 pm