

## Cabinet

Monday, 9 November 2020

7.30 pm

### Present:

Cllr John Burden (Chair)  
Cllr Lee Croxton (Vice-Chair)

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

Stuart Bobby	Chief Executive
Nick Brown	Director (Housing & Operations)
Kevin Burbidge	Director (Planning & Development)
Melanie Norris	Director (Communities)
Daniel Killian	Assistant Director (Housing)
Jan Guylar	Head of Legal Services (Medway Council)
Andy Rayfield	Communications Manager
Nicole Arthur	Service Delivery Manager
Andrew Barnett	Principal Accountant (General Fund)
Alexandra Jarvis	Principal Accountant (Housing & Exchequer)
Carlie Simmonds	Committee Services Manager
James Bridges	Digital Developer (Technical Support)

### 37. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2020 were signed by the Chair.

### 38. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

### 39. Delegated Decisions - Cabinet Members

The Leader advised that he had taken a delegated decision in respect of the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme which had previously been circulated and published on the Council's website.

### 40. Annual Review of the Payroll Shared Service

The Cabinet was provided with a copy of the annual review that had been conducted in respect of the Payroll Shared Service with Medway Council in accordance with the Council's Working in Partnership Framework.

The Director (Communities) advised that the shared service had a third successful year and drew Member's attention to appendix two of the report which detailed the objectives and key areas of focus that had been met.

Members expressed concern regarding the SelfServe4You system not being user-friendly.

The Director (Communities) advised that the system had recently been upgraded to improve user experience and this would continue to be a commitment moving forward.

The Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

#### **41. Corporate Performance Update: Quarter Two 2020-21**

The Cabinet received an update against the Performance Management Framework for Quarter Two 2020-21 (July to September 2020).

Appendix Two provided a summary of corporate performance in the last reporting quarter, with the following key statistical headlines:-

- 64% of reported indicators improved or maintained their level of performance; and
- 36% of reported indicators had fallen in their level of performance.

Specifically in consideration of the adopted corporate objectives, the following headlines were presented for the last reporting quarter:-

- People: 67% of reported indicators improved or maintained their level of performance;
- Place: 70% of reported indicators improved or maintained their level of performance; and
- Progress: 40% of reported indicators improved or maintained their level of performance.

Information on performance over the period was presented in tabular and graphical form for all indicators. Where any data was not presented, this related either to those indicators reported on an annual basis or, alternatively, where data had not yet been submitted in time for the presentation of the report. Any outturns where data had been unable to be reported will be presented within the next available reporting cycle to Cabinet and the relevant Cabinet Committees.

The Chief Executive advised that, following Cabinet's review, all Cabinet Committees will be presented with individual performance reports tailored to the respective portfolio responsibilities. Alongside statistical content, these will provide more detailed contextual or qualitative updates outlining what activity the Council had delivered and what action will be taken to successfully realise the Corporate Plan's corporate objectives and policy commitments.

The Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

#### **42. Communications Strategy**

The Cabinet was advised that communications and engagement was at the heart of all that the Council does and that it was vital that the Council engages with residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders effectively to communicate key messages and how it will deliver against the objectives set in the Corporate Plan. The Council did not currently have a Communications Strategy. The Communications Manager committed to drafting a Strategy on his appointment in August 2019. This was also a key commitment within the LGA Peer Challenge Action Plan and Annual Governance Statement 2019-20.

The Communications Manager presented Members with a draft Communications Strategy together with the following appendices:-

- Draft Social Media Policy; and
- Draft Crisis Communications Policy.

The Cabinet welcomed the Communications Strategy and its appendices and commended the format/language used within the document.

The Cabinet also acknowledged that an Engagement Strategy was currently being drafted which would sit alongside this document.

**Resolved** that the Communications Strategy and its appendices be adopted.

#### **43. Annual Review of the Legal Shared Service**

The Cabinet was provided with a copy of the annual review that had been conducted in respect of the Legal Shared Service with Medway Council in accordance with the Council's Working in Partnership Framework.

The Director (Communities) advised that the shared service had a third successful year and drew Member's attention to appendix two of the report which detailed the objectives and key areas of focus that had been met.

The Cabinet welcomed the additional resilience offered by the shared service.

The Cabinet also acknowledged the feedback detailed within section 5 of appendix 2 and asked what measures have or can be put in place to assist the issues raised.

The Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

#### **44. Additional Resources - Phase 2 of the expansion of the workforce within DSO Building Management**

Further to minute 129 (08.10.2018), the Cabinet was informed that Phase 1 of the expansion began in November 2018 and saw a well-publicised recruitment campaign. There was a really good response with over 200 people applying for the vacant positions. However, whilst a high calibre of applicants was received it was essential that people were recruited with the exact skill set that were needed in order to generate the savings and efficiencies that had been identified. The very specific requirements meant that recruitment took longer than first

anticipated and the newly-created roles in Phase 1 were not fully occupied until September 2019.

The Cabinet was informed that Phase 2 would create further opportunities to reduce the reliance on term contractors within the DSO Building Management Team by expanding the in-house workforce at a more competitive rate than current contractors to further assist with efficiency savings, improving the quality of work and timescales in which work would be completed.

In addition to this, the proposals outlined within the report would also enable a more commercial approach to be adopted within the repairs teams to ensure the service is in the best possible position for trading to the public through Rosherville Limited.

The Assistant Director (Housing) advised that the total financial commitment of recruiting the additional craft workers would be approximately £590,990. The recruitment of the additional craft workers would be accommodated within existing budgets and will allow the service to continue to drive through efficiencies and savings by bringing more work back in-house. The changes as proposed within the report were likely to generate a saving of £672,500 within Capital HRA budgets and £256,480 within HRA Revenue budgets whilst also increasing the quality of work and capacity to deliver more for the tenants.

The Cabinet congratulated the Assistant Director (Housing) and DSO Building Management Team for making the expansion a success.

**Resolved** that the Cabinet recognise that an in-house workforce is more competitive than using contractors to carry out certain elements of work and recommends to Full Council the proposals to expand the in-house workforce further as set out in Section 4 and Appendix 3 of the report and to make the necessary amendments to the relevant Capital and Revenue Budgets.

#### **45. De-merger of the Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership**

The Cabinet was informed that following the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, both Dartford and Gravesham established Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) now known as Community Safety Partnerships, in order to meet their statutory obligations. The separate Partnerships were then merged in December 2006 following a Home Office-led review. The merger of Partnerships, particularly in two-tier Authorities, was seen at that time as a positive means of pooling resources and reducing the level of demand made on those agencies needing to participate in Partnership meetings.

During the lifetime of the CSP since the merger, the joint arrangements had generally worked well and strong relationships had been formed across the agencies represented. However, many things had changed during the course of the last 14 years that led Gravesham to conclude that now was the right time to re-establish its own separate and independent statutory CSP.

All statutory partner representatives were contacted and briefed on the proposed de-merger in late August/early September. A majority of the responses received were in support for the de-merger, with some having been very positive about the proposal. Dartford Borough Council made clear that they would have preferred the Partnership to remain a joint one but agreed to respect Gravesham's wish to have an independent CSP and therefore, conceded to a de-merger.

A delegated decision was therefore taken on 15 October 2020 by the Lead Member, Councillor Shane Mochrie-Cox countersigned by the Leader of the Council, Cllr John Burden for the withdrawal of Gravesham from the joint CSP in order that a dedicated District-level Partnership can be established.

The Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

#### **46. General Fund Budget Monitoring Report 2020/21 - Quarter Two**

The Cabinet received the second budget monitoring report for 2020/21 showing the position up to 30 September 2020. The Cabinet noted the information provided on:-

- actual performance against the approved Revenue and Capital budgets for 2020/21, including projected variances agreed or identified through budgetary control activity; and
- other key areas of financial performance that may impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Medium Term Financial Plan or Financial Statements.

Following the new national restrictions which came into effect on 5 November 2020, the Chief Executive provided Members with an update on the support which will be provided by the Council to vulnerable groups and businesses together with the financial consequences of COVID-19 and the support packages which have been provided, to date, by Central Government. The most recent being the:-

- Local Restrictions Support Grant (£1.38 million) – this grant will be available to those businesses that were open as usual and then required to close due to the new restrictions; and
- Additional Restrictions Grant (£2.1million) – this grant will be available for those businesses that are not covered by other grant schemes or where additional funding will be needed.

The Cabinet was informed that, due to the Council's efforts over the last five years, it had a strong level of reserves which would be sufficient to avoid serious financial difficulty in the short term however the Council was now forecasting a shortfall from 2026/2027 onwards.

The Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

#### **47. Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring Report - Quarter Two 2020/21**

The Cabinet received the second budget monitoring report for 2020/21 showing the position up to 30 September 2020. The Cabinet noted the information provided on:-

- actual performance against the approved Revenue and Capital budgets for 2020/21, including known variances agreed or identified through budgetary control activity; and
- other key areas of financial performance that may impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Medium Term Financial Plan, HRA Business Plan or Financial Statements.

The Leader stated that the Council will continue to deliver new homes within the Borough.

The Cabinet acknowledged the work being undertaken by the Income Team on debt recovery whilst providing support to customers to minimise and prevent the accumulation of debt.

The Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

**48. Minutes of the meeting of the Gravesham Joint Transportation Board held on Wednesday, 9 September 2020**

The Cabinet considered the minutes of the Gravesham Joint Transportation Board held on Wednesday 9 September 2020.

**49. Minutes of the meeting of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 8 October 2020**

The Cabinet considered the minutes of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 8 October 2020.

**Close of Meeting**

The meeting ended at 9.09 pm