

## Cabinet

Monday, 04 January 2022

7.30 pm

### Present:

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

Councillors: Shane Mochrie-Cox  
Lenny Rolles  
Lauren Sullivan  
Narinderjit Singh Thandi  
Jenny Wallace

Please note: Cllrs Jordan Meade, Les Hoskins and Dakota Dibben were in attendance.

Stuart Bobby Chief Executive  
Nick Brown Director (Environment) & Deputy Chief Executive  
Melanie Norris Director (Communities)  
Sarah Parfitt Director (Corporate Services)  
Daniel Killian Director (Housing)  
Lisa Nyon Assistant Director (Corporate Services)  
Elizabeth Thornton Service Manager (Property & Regulatory Services)  
Andy Rayfield Communications Manager (Virtually)  
Ben Clarke Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

### 57. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

### 58. To sign the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on Monday, 08 November 2021 were signed by the Chair.

### 59. To declare any interest members may have in the items contained on this agenda. When declaring an interest a member must state what their interest is.

Cllr Rolles declared a non-prejudicial personal interest in item 11 and item 14 as his sister worked for Thames Clippers however she was not a shareholder and Cllr Rolles had been advised by Legal that he was able to stay for the duration of the discussion on both items.

### 60. Delegated Decisions - Cabinet Members

There were no further decisions for Cabinet to be updated on.

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

The Cabinet were provided with a report detailing the outcome of the annual review that had taken place in respect of the Payroll Shared Service with Medway Council.

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) advised that from Gravesham's perspective the shared service was working well in that both officers and Members were being paid accurately and on time.

Page 18 of the report gave an overview of the shared service arrangement and page 20 updated Members on the progress made against recommendations identified in the previous year review together with Recommendations to enhance the shared service for the coming year.

The Chair stated that the shared service had performed well so far and the areas for improvements outlined in the report would be taken into consideration for the coming year.

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) advised that quarterly meetings had been diarised with Medway officers to discuss issues when they arose, to review the service level agreement and to monitor the KPI's to ensure they were progressing accordingly.

Cllr Mochrie-Cox was pleased to see a recommendation for improving the SS4U service included in the report; it was recognised that Covid had delayed that recommendation and Cllr Mochrie-Cox was keen to see it delivered before next year's review.

**Resolved** that Cabinet noted the report.

## **62. Revised Safeguarding Policy**

The Cabinet were presented with an updated version of the Council's Safeguarding Policy.

The Director (Communities) directed Member's attention to pages 21-22 of the report which outlined the changes that were proposed to the Safeguarding Policy; Members points that had been made previously had been taken into consideration and included within the policy. Members were advised that KCC were the lead authority on safeguarding, but Gravesham Borough Council held certain delegated responsibilities for safeguarding as well. Many Council staff and external partners such as the bailiff service visited homes during the course of their work and all had received some degree of safeguarding training as it was essential that staff could spot signs of abuse or neglect, follow internal procedures and report it to the correct officer.

The Chair outlined the importance of the policy and its ability to prevent unnecessary deaths and injuries in the Borough.

**Resolved** that Cabinet agreed the revised Safeguarding Policy.

## **63. The Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Scheme Phase 2 Funding Grant**

The Cabinet were informed of notification received confirming the award of grant funding for the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Scheme Phase 2. In line with the requirements of the funding, the project had a delivery deadline of March 2022 which was deemed achievable.

The Director (Housing) explained that a previous project looking at a ground source heat pump and solar panels for sheltered housing schemes had to be scrapped due to the

available funding, the price per property cap and increased material costs. Instead, 100 suitable homes were identified which could be improved substantially by completing various energy efficiency measures and all the properties identified met the requirements to be eligible for LAD2 Funding. The project would be part funded by the Council (33%) and external funding (67%).

The Chair agreed it was a worthwhile scheme that would provide support to residents in need when energy prices were increasing, and it fully utilised all of the money given to the Council by the Government.

Cllr Wallace voiced her support for the scheme and noted the difficulty of successfully meeting the March 2022 deadline to spend the grant money.

In response to the Chairs question, the Director (Housing) confirmed that the Leader of the opposition had been consulted prior to the Cabinet meeting and he approved of the decision.

**Resolved** that Cabinet:

- Noted the grant award notification
- Ratified the decision to accept the award taken by the Director (Housing), in consultation with the S.151 Officer
- Approved the addition of the project to the current year capital programme, recognising that 67% of the cost of the project was to be met from external funding and 33% funded by the Council

#### **64. Insurance Tender**

The Cabinet were presented with the current position of the process for securing the future provision of insurance services for the Council.

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) advised that the report set out the options for procuring insurance services for the Council; the Council existing contract with Zurich Municipal was due to expire on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

Gravesham Borough Council after considering the options had opted to procure insurance services under a Framework Agreement and for Broker services to be awarded direct to Aon Risk Solutions. Aon were appointed under both the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) and Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) Frameworks. The benefits of utilizing the framework were laid out in full at 3 of the report.

**Resolved** that Cabinet noted the report.

#### **65. COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund**

The Cabinet were informed of the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund and their approval was sought to delegate authority for the design and implementation of the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund Scheme to the Director (Corporate Services), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Performance & Administration.

The Director (Corporate Services) explained that on 25 March, the Government announced plans to provide an additional business rates support package, worth £1.5 billion, to support

businesses in England affected by COVID-19 but not eligible for existing support linked to business rates. A total of £1,762,857 had been allocated to Gravesham Borough Council for the CARF Scheme, which was required to be applied to the business rates account of eligible businesses during the 2021/22 billing period (01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022).

The Director (Corporate Services) advised that 3.2 of the report listed the expectations from the Government in how the funding was expected to be used to grant reliefs to eligible businesses.

The Chair was happy that further funds had been received which would be utilised to support local businesses but raised concern that the spending had to be rushed due to Government deadlines. The Chair hoped that other local Councils were able to spend the money they received and make positive use of it before the end of the 2021/22 period.

In response to a Members question, the Director (Corporate Services) advised that if the money received from Government was not spent in its entirety by the 31 March 2022 deadline, then there would be a reconciliation process.

The Director (Corporate Services) further explained that another scheme was announced on 21<sup>st</sup> December by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The announcement set out the intention to provide a further £1 billion in support for businesses most impacted by Omicron across the UK. Under the support scheme, businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors in England would be eligible for one-off grants of up to £6,000 per premises, plus there would be further discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant funding made available for local authorities to support other businesses primarily in the supply chain to those sectors. The Director (Corporate Services) concluded that there was still some work to be done before the 31 March 2022 deadline and her team would work to ensure that money was spent.

Cllr Thandi praised the Councils ability to support those who needed it the most and spend the money given by Government for various projects effectively. Last year, the Government gave the Council money to go towards Discretionary Housing Benefits and the Council were one of the only authorities to spend all the money given by the deadline which meant that extra grant money was awarded to the Council this year.

Cabinet thanked officers for all of their hard work over the last year and in particular noted the positive feedback received from the public about the refuse teams that had volunteered to collect the rubbish in the Borough on the New Year's Day bank holiday.

**Resolved** that Cabinet:

- Delegated authority to the Director (Corporate Services), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Performance & Administration, to develop a COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund Scheme and associated policy, and to make the necessary arrangements to assess eligibility and determine award of funding to eligible businesses
- Delegated authority to the Director (Corporate Services) to make any further technical amendments to the scheme where further government advice was issued and ensure that the Portfolio Holder for Performance & Administration was kept informed of any such amendments required

## 66. Town Pier and Pontoon Part A Report

The Cabinet's authorisation was sought to agree to the sale of the Town Pier and Pontoon, West Street, Gravesend in order to facilitate rapid river transport solutions for the Town.

The Chair praised the comprehensive report and clear recommendations laid out in the report; the Chair noted that the conditions in the agreement would preserve some of the rights to buy back the town pier and pontoon should something go wrong with the new operators.

In response to Members questions, the Service Manager (Property & Regulatory Services) explained that:

- The public would still be able to access the pier; Legal has been instructed to include public access rights in the documentation and Thames Clippers were aware of the public access rights as well
- Thames Clippers was not owned by Uber; the companies name was Collins River Enterprises Ltd but their trading name was Thames Clippers

The Cabinet Members praised the report and outlined key benefits of the sale:

- Safeguards were being sought so that public access to the end of the Pier would be allowed to continue
- GBC had included safeguards within the transfer to allow the Gravesend / Tilbury Ferry Service to continue on a sustainable footing. KCC had been made aware of the safeguards being included in respect of the Gravesend / Tilbury Ferry Service and have raised no concerns to date.
- The sale of the pier and Pontoon would allow for Thames Clippers to operate a functional alternative mode of transport to London and enhance the offers for visitors to the Town
- Improved connectivity with Gravesham to the river and surrounding areas
- The sale should increase commercial use of the pier and increase footfall to the Town Centre
- Retention of the pontoon would require a significant financial outlay over its lifespan in addition to the cost of maintaining the Town Pier. Instead, the Council were receiving good value for money from the sale which would be redistributed to improve services in other areas all to the benefit of residents in the Borough
- The sale meant that the historic asset and its heritage would be preserved in the Town. Thames Clippers would be responsible for maintaining the asset with the Council having an option to buy back the pier and pontoon if something went wrong
- The sale made better use of the river to residents than previously and went towards achieving one of the recommendations made by the Maritime Scrutiny Review Sub Group

**Resolved** that Cabinet:

- Agreed that the Town Pier and Pontoon were declared surplus to requirements and approved their sale for the reasons set out in the report, noting the specific requirements outlined within the Heads of Terms for any sale to protect public access rights and secure long term management of the Town Pier / Pontoon

- Delegated authority to the Director (Communities), in consultation with the Leader of the Executive, Director (Corporate Services as s151 Officer) and Monitoring Officer to negotiate the final terms of the sale and enter into the necessary associated legal agreements on behalf of the Council

#### **67. Exclusion**

The Chair moved that pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded from any items included in Part B of the agenda because it was likely in view of the nature of business to be transacted that if members of the public were present during those items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

#### **68. Town Pier and Pontoon Part B Report**

The Cabinet considered and discussed the Part B information pertaining to the Town Pier and Pontoon report.

#### **Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 20:12pm.