

Council

Tuesday, 1 December 2020

7.30 pm

Present:

The Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr John Caller
The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Lyn Milner

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
Helen Ashenden
Ejaz Aslam
Gurjit Kaur Bains
John Burden
Harold Craske
Lee Croxton
Aaron Elliott
Leslie Hills
Jordan Meade
Shane Mochrie-Cox
Lenny Rolles
Brian Sangha
Narinderjit Singh Thandi
Steve Thompson
Denise Tiran
Jenny Wallace

Stuart Bobby	Chief Executive
Nick Brown	Director (Housing and Operations)
Kevin Burbidge	Director (Planning and Development)
Melanie Norris	Director (Communities)
Sarah Parfitt	Director (Corporate Services)
Simon Walsh	Service Manager (Communities)
Jan Guylar	Head of Legal Services
Carlie Simmonds	Committee Services Manager
Christopher Wakeford	Committee Services Officer (Scrutiny)

The Leader informed Members that a motion had now been passed by Parliament that Kent would be moving into tier 3 of coronavirus restrictions when the national lockdown ends on Wednesday 2 December 2020 – this being the very highest level of restrictions. The Leader provided Members with an update on the tier 3 restrictions and the support that will be provided by the Council.

The Council was informed that the latest figures showed that Gravesham's infection rate continued to rise. The Council was currently working with Public Health officials to open a test centre within Gravesham – the opening date was yet to be determined.

The Leader paid tribute to Council officers for continuing to support residents and businesses during the pandemic whilst maintaining front line services.

37. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2020 were signed by the Mayor.

38. Declaration of Interest

Councillor Jordan Meade made a voluntary announcement, which under advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer did not amount to an other significant interest, in agenda item 10 (Dog Fouling - Public Space Protection Order) as he was a Member of and purchased dog insurance through The Kennel Club who had been listed in the report as a consultee. As the declaration was a voluntary announcement, Councillor Meade would remain in the meeting during consideration of this item.

Cllr Lenny Rolles made a voluntary announcement, which under advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer did not amount to an other significant interest, in agenda item 9 (Amendments made to the Constitution to reflect formation of Rosherville Limited) as he was a Director of Rosherville Limited. As the report was for noting, it was agreed that Cllr Lenny Rolles would remain in the meeting during consideration of this item.

Cllr Lenny Rolles made a voluntary announcement, which under advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer did not amount to an other significant interest, in agenda item 10 (Dog Fouling - Public Space Protection Order) as he was a Member of The RSPCA who had been listed in the report as a consultee. As the declaration was a voluntary announcement, Councillor Rolles would remain in the meeting during consideration of this item.

39. To answer any questions received from members of the public of which notice has been given under Council Procedure Rule 13

No questions had been received.

40. Minutes of Committees

Motions that proceedings, reports and recommendations of Committees, except those reserved under Council Procedure 5.2(6) as referred to below be received and adopted and where applicable the Orders made by them be ratified and confirmed were duly proposed, seconded and resolved in each case.

Minutes of the Cabinet held on Monday, 5 October 2020

Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee held on Tuesday, 13 October 2020

Minutes of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 27 October 2020

Minutes of the Cabinet held on Monday, 9 November 2020

Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee held on Wednesday, 11 November 2020

Minutes of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 19 November 2020

Minutes of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday, 25 November 2020

41. Reserved Minutes

There were no reserved minutes.

42. Additional Resources - Phase 2 of the expansion of the workforce within DSO Building Management

The Council received a report advising of the Cabinet recommendation to expand the operational workforce within DSO Building Management and sought Council's approval to the expansion.

The Council was informed that the expansion of the workforce will reduce the reliance on external contractors within the DSO Building Management Team by increasing the in-house resource which can be done at a more competitive rate than current contractors to further assist with efficiency savings, improving the quality of work and timescales.

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 will be in the best possible position for trading to the public through Rosherville Limited.

Resolved that the proposals to further increase the in-house workforce within DSO Building Management as set out in Section 4 and Appendix 3 of the report be approved and the necessary amendments be made to the relevant Capital and Revenue Budgets as recommended by Cabinet on 9 November 2020.

43. Annual Climate Change Report

In response to the Climate Change motion passed on 25 June 2019, the Council was presented with the draft Climate Change Annual Report for consideration.

Resolved that:-

- the progress of the Council during 2020 in developing its activity to deliver the Climate Change motion be noted; and
- the Annual Report set out at appendix two be approved and delegated authority be given for any final amendments to be made by the Director (Corporate Services), in consultation with the Leader of the Executive.

44. Amendments made to the Constitution - to reflect formation of Rosherville Limited

The Council was presented with amendments to the Constitution to reflect the incorporation of the wholly-owned trading company, Rosherville Limited, and its subsidiaries.

Resolved that the amendments made to the Constitution by the Monitoring Officer be noted.

45. Dog Fouling - Public Space Protection Order

The Council was presented with a report which sought approval to replace the expired Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for dog fouling with a new PSPO for a further three years.

If the Council wished to continue to enforce against those that do not pick up after their dog then a new PSPO would need to be agreed as there were no alternative provisions in law to facilitate this.

Resolved that:-

- the making of the new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for dog fouling which will last for a period of three years be agreed and officers be instructed to proceed with the same; and
- the deletion of paragraph 1.13A.14 within Annex 1.13 of the Constitution relating to the delegation of making of PSPOs be approved, as set out in Section 4 of the report.

46. Alcohol Control - Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)

The Council was presented with a report which detailed the outcome of the public consultation in respect of the proposed replacement of the expired Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for an alcohol control zone for a further three years.

If the Council wished to continue to enforce restrictions on the consumption of alcohol control then the Council would need to replace the PSPO with a new order as there were no alternative provisions in law to facilitate this.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted and the draft Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) be endorsed.

47. To consider questions from Members of the Council of which notice has been given under Council Procedure Rule 14.

Question One

The following question had been submitted by Cllr Jordan Meade, Leader of the Opposition and a response was given by Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council.

Question:

Today marks nearly a year since this Council unanimously committed to signing the Social Mobility Pledge and entwining the theme of social mobility throughout everything that we do. Due to the pandemic, unemployment is now at a three-year high and redundancies are all too commonplace, especially amongst young people.

Could the Leader of the Executive therefore provide us with an update on the progress that this authority has made in encouraging social mobility, with particular reference to apprenticeships, work placements and the Kickstart Scheme.

Response:

Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council, highlighted the following points in his response:-

- Apprentices - The Council currently employed 19 apprentices across a range of services and currently had 2 vacant posts, which will be recruited to. The Council had huge success with apprenticeships over the years and many had gone on to achieve permanent employment with the Council, many achieving management positions.

The Council had a long history of trade apprenticeships and some of its best employers to date started life as an apprentice at Brookvale.

The Council was currently reviewing apprenticeships within the Borough to ensure that it prioritised placements for young people living within the Borough and to ensure distribution across the organisation.

- Work Experience – The Council was currently reviewing the scheme and will be advertising work experience placements for student residents in Gravesham at the beginning of each year so that they can be planned more effectively. These could comprise of project focused placements, designed to give students a specific outcome as well as making a positive contribution to the work of the Council. Placements at the present time may need to be carried out remotely given current Covid-19 restrictions.

The Council's Youth Democracy Scheme also made a positive contribution to students in the preparations of CV's and UCAS applications. 9 young people took part in 2019/20 with the outcome of the scheme being reported to the Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee earlier this month.

- Kickstart Scheme - Of particular concern was the number of young people (18-24 years old) claiming benefits. 965 young people in the Borough were currently unemployed. A rate of 12.7% which was higher than Kent (9.9% and UK 9.2%) averages.

This was against a backdrop whereby the numbers of unemployed may continue to increase. The Government had extended the Job Retention Scheme until March 2021, deferring redundancies for the time being and there will be further cohorts of young people leaving school, college and university next year.

Some sectors had been particularly hard hit by the pandemic, notably within the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors where young people had traditionally found it easier to access work.

Competition for jobs was fierce. Vacancies had declined by 34% nationally, with decline across all industrial sectors, except for utilities and construction. Again, the largest decline had been seen in retail, hospitality and leisure sectors (-50%) and the number of vacancies per 100 jobs nationally had declined from 2.6 to 1.7 over the year.

As part of the Governments 'Plans for Jobs' announced in July, it established the Kickstart Scheme - a £2 billion fund to create high quality 6-month work placement for young people (16-24 years old).

Council officers had been tasked with identifying where there would be capacity to provide work placements within their service areas and to date in excess of 30 positions had been identified, with the potential to create a variety of opportunities.

The Council had also expressed an interest in acting as a gateway to partner with other local businesses. Economic Development had sought expressions of interest from local employers and had identified an additional 30 plus placements. This was likely to expand as the scheme will be promoted further to businesses.

- The Council will offer in 2021/22:-
 - 21 apprenticeship positions within the Council;
 - 48 work experience placements within the Council;
 - 30 plus Kickstart Placements within the Council;
 - 30 plus Kickstart Placements outside of the Council, with the Council acting as a gateway; and
 - additional career graded positions were currently being explored.
- The Council will be working in partnership with local job centres, North Kent College, local businesses, DWP, Council contractors, Kent Employment Taskforce, The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) as a 4th pilot area for a Digital Development Team.

Question Two

The following question had been submitted by Cllr Steve Thompson and a response was given by Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council.

Question:

It is welcome news that Highways England have withdrawn their application for the Lower Thames Crossing. This Council has worked hard to get the scheme cancelled, or at least significantly changed to remove the damage to the environment but has this view been supported by the other Councils in Kent and who originally promoted this location?

Response:

Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council, highlighted the following points in his response:-

- the application for development consent had now been withdrawn by Highways England due to early feedback that had been received from the Planning Inspectorate. Some of the specific points raised by the Planning Inspectorate reflected those concerns raised by the Council;
- disappointment was expressed that Option C (East of Gravesend) continued to be supported by the Government (excluding Adam Holloway, MP for Gravesham), Kent County Council (KCC), Medway Council and Dartford Borough Council. It was highlighted that KCC had originally indicated its support for Option C in documents which were released in 2010/2011 and were proposed, at that time, by the Leader of

KCC, Mr Paul Carter and seconded, at that time, by the Transport Cabinet Member for KCC and County Cllr for Gravesham Rural, Mr Bryan Sweetland (Mr Sweetland subsequently resigned from his Cabinet post in 2016 due to his opposition of the Lower Thames Crossing); and

- the view of Adam Holloway, MP for Gravesham, be supported in that consideration should be given to a tunnel running between the M25 in Kent and M25 in Essex - this proposal would alleviate some of the concerns raised such as the environmental impact, destruction of greenbelt, congestion etc.

48. To receive the Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor paid tribute to and thanked the community for following Government Guidelines and asked that they continue to do so over the Christmas period.

The Mayor expressed his condolences to those families who would be experiencing their first Christmas without a loved one.

The Mayor advised that the Christmas Lights had now been switched on and invited the community to shopping locally to support local traders, businesses etc.

The Mayor wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The Council also commemorated World AIDS Day 2020.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.49 pm