

## **Cabinet**

**Tuesday, 7 September 2021**

**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

Stuart Bobby       Chief Executive  
Sarah Parfitt       Director (Corporate Services)  
Simon Hookway     Assistant Director (Communities)  
Wendy Lane         Assistant Director (Planning)  
Lisa Nyon           Assistant Director (Corporate Services)  
Chris Wakeford     Committee Services Manager (Minutes)

### **21. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from the Melanie Norris, Director (Communities), Daniel Killian, Director (Housing) and Nick Brown, Director (Environment).

### **22. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on Monday, 28 June 2021 were signed by the Chair.

### **23. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Lenny Rolles declared a non- prejudicial interest for agenda item 14. Drawdown request from Rosherville Property Development Limited as he is the Chair of the Rosherville Limited Board.

Cllr Lenny Rolles and Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox declared a non-prejudicial interest in 11. Maritime Strategy Scrutiny Review as they are both trustees on the Regatta Committee.

### **24. Delegated Decisions - Cabinet Members**

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

## 25. Minutes of meeting of Gravesham Joint Transportation Board

The Leader of the Executive expressed his disappointment at the lack of attendance of KCC officers at the Gravesham Joint Transportation Board meeting on 25 May 2021.

The Cabinet instructed the Chief Executive to write to his counter-part at Kent County Council and formally state the Cabinet's displeasure at the lack of attendance of KCC officers at the meeting of the Gravesham Joint Transportation Board held on 25 May 2021.

## 26. General Fund Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22 - Quarter One

The Cabinet were presented with:

- A report on actual performance against the approved Revenue and Capital budgets for 2021/22, including projected variances agreed or identified through budgetary control activity in the 20/21 provisional General Fund Outturn Report, including movements in the General Fund working balances and earmarked reserves
- An update on other key areas of financial performance that may have an impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), or Financial Statements

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) highlighted the following:

- As this is a quarter one report there are minimal variances to report at this stage.
- The level of Working Balances at year-end is projected to be £11.65m, which constituted of minimum working balances of £2.0m, the General Fund reserve of £3.25m and usable Working Balances of £6.40m.
- Medium Term Financial Plan (Appendix 2 to the report), shows that budgeted expenditure continues to exceed income. A budget gap starts to emerge during 2026-2027 and the Council is looking at ways to address this.
- This report will be presented to the Finance & Audit Committee on 21 September 2021

The Director (Corporate Services) highlighted the latest announcements from central government, as detailed below:

- The Prime Minister has announced that the Spending Review will take place on 27 October, alongside the Autumn Budget. This will be a 3 year review and might indicate that a multi-year settlement for local government could follow.
- There are several workstreams expected in the Spending Review including;
  - Ensuring strong innovative public services
  - Levelling up agenda
  - Transition to net zero
  - Advancing Global Britain and seizing opportunities of the EU Exit
- The indication is that government departments will be expected to identify 5% savings or efficiencies
- There is recognition of the ongoing effects of the pandemic but also reference made that additional spending will only be considered in exceptional circumstances

- The Council is awaiting the outcome of the New Homes Bonus Consultation
- The announced proposal for a 1.25% increase in National Insurance Contributions will have an impact on the General Fund that has been estimated at £100,000 per annum

The Leader of the Executive commented that all ideas would be welcomed to tackle budget gaps.

The Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

## **27. HRA Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22 - Quarter One**

The Cabinet were presented with:

- A report on actual performance against the approved Revenue and Capital budgets for 2021/22, including known variances agreed or identified through budgetary control activity
- An update on 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 Assistant Director (Corporate Services) highlighted the following areas:

- At the end of Quarter One, income and expenditure for the year remains balanced, albeit there remains an anticipated contribution from reserves to fund projected revenue expenditure for the year.
- At this stage of the year there are limited variances to report.
- The three main variances this quarter are:
  - Supervision and Management - favourable variance of £135,000
  - Capital Finance – adverse variance of £102,000
  - Non Dwelling Income – favourable variance of £32,000
- Housing Capital Programme is underway with £7.5m spent in Quarter One.
- The report will be presented to the Finance & Audit Committee on 21 September 2021

The Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

## **28. LGA Peer challenge Follow-up report an action plan**

The Cabinet were provided with a copy of Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge follow-up report following their onsite visit and an updated Council action plan for approval.

The Peer Challenge team reviewed progress against the actions resulting from the original review in October 2019, and recognised that good progress had been made on the majority of these, despite the council needing to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The team also recommended a number of follow-up actions as detailed below:

- Must add the Local Plan, five-year land supply and Housing Delivery Test to the corporate risk register.
- Urgently proceed with a Gateway Review of the Local Plan and with the development of the new Local Plan.
- All members need to be briefed and understand the risks on the Local Plan, five-year land supply and Housing Delivery Test.
- Create a Strategic Planning Forum.
- Must roll out Office 365 and improve the phone system as soon as possible, communicating this to staff.
- IT services and infrastructure must be added to the corporate risk register.
- A new agile working policy is being developed, this needs to be done quickly and staff engaged in the process.

In addressing the findings from the review, the detailed action plan has been reviewed and updated and was attached at appendix three for Member review and approval.

Subject to Cabinet approval, the LGA Peer Challenge Report and action plan will be published on the council's website to ensure it is publicly available (which is deemed best practice by the LGA), with a report brought back to Cabinet in March 2022 to provide an update to Members on progress against the revised action plan.

**Resolved** that Cabinet:

- Noted the content of the LGA Peer Challenge follow-up report at Appendix Two
- Approved the action plan, as detailed in Appendix Three, for implementation.
- Approved the process for publishing the report, reporting back and providing updates to the Cabinet as set out in section three of the report.

## **29. Corporate Performance Report: Q1 2021-22**

The Cabinet were presented with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as introduced within the council's Corporate Plan, for Quarter One 2021-22 (April to June 2021)

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 has delivered, and what is to be taken, to successfully realise the Corporate Plan's corporate objectives and policy commitments.

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

- 51.2% of reported indicators improved or maintained their level of performance;
- 48.8% of reported indicators have 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: 52.2% of reported indicators improved or maintained their level of performance;
- Place: 50% of reported indicators improved or maintained their level of performance;
- Progress: 50% of reported indicators improved or maintained their level of performance.

Cabinet Members highlighted the following areas:

- There is a commitment from the Kent Police Crime Commissioner to review the way Anti-Social Behaviour data is recorded and presented. This should enhance data quality going forward.
- PI 13 - Total number of environmental enforcement actions taken: 100
- Actions taken by the council are having a positive impact on the reduction of carbon emissions
- The Council is committed to taking on Kickstart placements for young people and is encouraging local businesses to do likewise.

The Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

### **30. Maritime Strategy Scrutiny Review**

Maritime Strategy report, as approved by Members of the Overview Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet considered the report at Appendix Two, taking into account the seventeen recommendations made by the Overview Scrutiny Committee, as detailed below:

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

- 1. The lead Cabinet member should consider dedicating the Community & Leisure Committee agenda to the 'river' once per year and invite representatives along from various groups to update members on activity throughout the year and how such groups could work better together in events or bid funding.**

The purpose of the Group would be to encourage a joined up approach to the recreational and tourism aspects of the Thames - providing The Executive with a reliable group of stakeholders from which the Council may develop a better understanding of the needs of the river community

**2. The Leader of the Executive consider adding the oversight of matters relating to the river, under the portfolio of a single Cabinet Member**

This will demonstrate the Council's desire to have a key-point of entry for members of the public, organisations and businesses whom wish to engage on maritime matters.

**3. The Council should improve its engagement with Young People in matters relating to the river.**

The Council should work with the Port of London Authority and RNLI, acting as a facilitator to better communicate messages around River Safety to schools and local organisations.

The Executive Member for Young People should ask the Youth Council to appoint a "youth representative for the River" who will act as a stakeholder for the Cabinet to engage and consult with on matters concerning the recreational use of the Thames.

Councillors and Youth Councillors be provided with a tour (when conditions allow) of Northfleet Harbour and the Northfleet River frontage so that they can be better aware of the issues and opportunities.

The Executive engages and consults with the Youth Council on the Lower Thames Crossing giving young people a chance to feed into the mitigation process.

**4. The Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure ensures that greater consideration is given to recreational/sport activities on the Thames and that these opportunities are communicated to young people across the Borough as part of the annual sports programme and listed on the Visit Gravesend website.**

**5. The Council consider passing a motion (in the name of the Leader and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition) which communicates the unanimous desire of Members to protect and enhance the river.**

Whilst this could not be attached as an annex to the Council's Planning Policies it could be referenced as evidence to help inform planning decisions in the future.

**6. The Council start to consider the real and immediate threat posed by global warming and the projected rise in water levels.**

The Executive should make sure that the Environment Agency is reporting back to the Council on this subject and that Planning Policy is considerate of

the fact that greater flood defences will be needed in the near future. Disabled access should also be considered in relation to this matter.

**7. The Leader of the Executive appoint a representative from the Council to attend public meetings of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Maritime and Ports, and the APPG on the River Thames**

This will ensure that Gravesham has a voice amongst parliamentarians at these meetings.

**8. Members of the Executive and Members of the Planning Committee be taken on a tour of the borough's river boundary (by boat) subject to the costs being covered from external sources.**

This will provide a greater appreciation and understanding of the borough's uniqueness from the river can be developed and help to inform future decision making. This should be done in collaboration with the Estuary Envoy, following her offer to facilitate such a trip.

**TO BE CONSIDERED FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS OR FUTURE BID APPLICATIONS TO APPROPRIATE FUNDING SOURCES**

**9. Plans be developed for the complete regeneration of the Promenade.**

The Executive should consider a feasibility study on improving and regenerating river fronted recreation areas such as St. Andrews Garden and The Riverside area. This would then ensure that plans and scheme would be in place for when appropriate external funding becomes available.

This work should also include a commitment to making sure that all aspects of this space are DDA compliant.

For some bids this may be appropriate to join up its other users on the site such as the Gravesend Sailing Club, The Gravesend Rowing Club and LV21

**10. The Council commences work, where possible, to promote and improve the access to the Saxon Shore Way.**

Planning policy should reflect a desire for developers to contribute towards the upkeep and ongoing maintenance of this path.

The Executive may want to consider using the Community Payback scheme or the new Kickstart initiative to start clearing the pathway.

The Executive should explore the possibility of registering and administering the Promenade, Gordon Gardens and the Saxon Shore Way as a "Country Park" (Like Riverside Country Park in Gillingham).

**11. When applying for grants it would be productive to conduct a public consultation on how the river can play a much more important part in the life of the borough and the type of events or facilities that local**

**people would wish to see if the council were successful in the bid funding.**

WORK ALREADY HAPPENING OR BEING DEVELOPED

- 12. The Executive should continue and strengthen the work with the Port of London Authority to promote and grow the Thames Visitor website, ensuring that it corresponds and complements the existing Visit Gravesend Website.**
- 13. The Executive considers all possible options to improve access to the Thames for passengers, including working to secure a commuter ferry service from Gravesend to London.**
- 14. The Council should enhance their work with the EDC and the Northfleet Harbour Restoration Trust to preserve Rosherville assets and support the interim use of Northfleet Harbour for biodiversity and community use.**

The Council currently have good partnership working with the EDC and we are aware that EDC have already funded some work for the Northfleet Harbour Restoration Trust. If this trust is to be successful in its aspirations the work needs a project plan, with key stages, so that successful bids can be submitted for the various stages or when such funding becomes available. The Executive should consider if they could assist the Northfleet Harbour Restoration Trust with some expert guidance, so that they are in a better position to submit bids for funding.

- 15. The Executive begin to work with the Thames Estuary Growth Board (Thames Estuary Envoy) and local education providers to understand how opportunities such as the London Resort will require the upskilling/retraining of the local workforce.**

Under the Council's commitment to Social Mobility an assessment should be carried out on the future skills gaps that we may have in the near future

- 16. The Council continues to build and take a much more active part in participating in partnership-programmes such as the Estuary Festival, using such events as a catalyst to promote tourism locally and in the wider area.**

The Council is very involved with this years Estuary Festival and has led on some art installations and also obtained funding from Arts Council for a Fringe Festival, we hope that this relationship will grow as the Festival becomes bigger.

- 17. The Council consider sponsoring and/or facilitating a Maritime Festival weekend, to promote economic development, in which people from all backgrounds could have taster sessions in rowing, mud larking, sailing etc.**

A small festival has already started which celebrates the river and is currently being organised for this year at St. Andrews Gardens. The organisers have been spoken to and are considering how they might better involve others from the river community into the event and make residents and visitors aware of the many clubs that exist within the borough that make use of the river.

The Cabinet thanked the Overview Scrutiny Committee and agreed to note the report and review the recommendations in order to find opportunities where the Cabinet can confirm their support and achieve some of the aspirations. The Leader of the Executive explained that, with regard to Recommendation 14, the Council does not stand in the way of the ambitions of the Northfeet Harbour Restoration Trust and is happy to support the Chairman of the trust to unlock government funding. The Cabinet will report back to the Overview Scrutiny Committee in due course.

### **31. Exclusion**

**Resolved** pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded during the following item of business because it was likely in view of the nature of business to be transacted that, if members of the public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

### **32. Drawdown request from Rosherville Property Development Limited**

The Cabinet considered a report that set out a request for working capital that has been made by Rosherville Property Development Limited.

The Cabinet were requested to consider the request and approve the release of funding as set out in Appendix Two and paragraph 2.2 of the report.

**Resolved** That the funding request from Rosherville Property Development Limited be approved and the Director (Corporate Services) be authorised to arrange release of the requested funding to the company.

**Note:** Following questions from Cabinet Members; Cllr Lenny Rolles left the room for this item.

### **Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm