

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Darent Room - Sessions House on Monday, 15 July 2019.

PRESENT: Mr P B Carter, CBE, Mrs C Bell, Miss S J Carey, Mr M C Dance, Mr R W Gough, Mrs S V Hohler (Substitute for Mr P M Hill, OBE), Mr E E C Hotson, Mr P J Oakford, Miss C Rankin and Mr M Whiting

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R L H Long, TD

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Beer (Corporate Director of People and Communications), Mr D Cockburn (Corporate Director Strategic & Corporate Services), Mrs B Cooper (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mr M Dunkley CBE (Corporate Director for Children Young People and Education), Mr S Grimshaw (Strategic Programme Manager), Mrs C Head (Head of Finance Operations), Mr A Scott-Clark (Director of Public Health), Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance - Planning, Policy & Strategy - and Acting Section 151 Officer), Mr D Smith (Director of Economic Development), Ms P Southern (Corporate Director, Adult Social Care and Health) and Mr B Watts (General Counsel)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

105. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item)

1. Apologies had been received from Mr Hill, Mrs Hohler was substituting.

106. Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 June 2019

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2019 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

107. Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring - May 2019-20

(Item 4)

1. Mr Oakford (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Traded Services) introduced this report. This was a two month report which showed a forecast revenue pressure of £0.661m. There was a £1.8m pressure on Adult Learning Disability, the forecast for Children, Young People and Education showed a pressure of £2.8m (£500k being Asylum and £1.8m Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)). The report was to be taken in conjunction with the High Needs Budget pressures.

2. Mr Oakford highlighted the Business Rate Compensation Grant which would provide an additional £3.2m (unaudited) and Cabinet was asked to agree, consistent with last year, that any additional money should be transferred into the local taxation

equalisation reserve to smooth future fluctuations in the business rates baseline and collection fund.

3. Referring to the capital monitoring position there was a reported variance of - £40.7m this was summarised in section 6 of the report.

4. The Leader commented on the importance of monitoring the High Needs Funding and SEN funding in a quarterly report to Cabinet. This was a national issue that needed addressing following the change in regulations in 2014.

5. Cath Head commented that the figures contained within the first monitoring report were considerably lower than in previous years and there were a number of assumptions made within the report, it was expected that the pressure would increase before it reduced but officers would continue to report to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

i) **Note** the forecast revenue budget monitoring position for 2019-20 and capital budget monitoring position for 2019-20 to 2021-22, and that the forecast pressure on the revenue budget needs to be eliminated as we progress through the year.

ii) **Agree** that any additional Business Rate receipts received over and above the 2018-19 budgeted amount, are transferred to the local taxation equalisation reserve to smooth future fluctuations in the business rates baseline and collection fund.

ii) **Agree** the revenue budget realignment set out in Appendix 3.

iii) **Agree** the capital budget realignment set out in section 6.4.

108. KCC Bus Feedback Portal - Summary of Feedback received January to May 2019

(Item 5)

1. The Leader explained that the Bus Feedback Portal was introduced in January 2019 as a response to feedback received during last year's Big Conversation on rural transport. The portal was designed to enable bus users to tell KCC about their experiences of using bus services and allowed KCC to capture data and identify trends.

2. Mr Whiting explained that the figures shown in the report showed an initial spike in interest following the launch in January, Mr Whiting had quarterly meetings with bus operators and he was able to pass on to them feedback gathered through the portal. A letter from KCC would be sent to Head Teachers prompting them to remind their pupils and parents about the portal and that it was a good way to ensure their issues were recorded. The Leader suggested that this letter also be sent to the District, Borough, Town and Parish Councils.

3. A Member commented on the feedback relating to particular routes being delayed due to congestion in towns in Kent and the further growth in housing compounding this issue.

4. The Leader asked for a report back on the KCC Bus Feedback Portal in November 2019.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the contents of the report and request that a report be brought to Cabinet in November 2019.

109. No Use Empty update and continuation of the initiative
(Item 6)

1. Mr Dance (Cabinet Member, Economic Development) introduced this item. This was a good news story but there were still 5000 long term empty properties across Kent, the income that could be generated from those properties in business rates and council tax was considerable, there were only two outstanding debts across the scheme.

2. Steve Grimshaw (Strategic Programme Manager) gave a presentation to Cabinet Members - available [online here](#).

3. Kent's initial investment into the No Use Empty (NUE) scheme was £5m. To date NUE had awarded £27m in short term secured loans and had levered in £29m from the public/private sectors, giving a total investment of £56m across Kent. It was considered that KCC had a strong partner relationship with the 12 District Councils in Kent and was also hoping to work with Medway Council.

4. The Leader congratulated Mr Grimshaw and his team on the success of the NUE scheme. He commented on the outstanding quality of the property conversions and asked how it was possible to ensure that recipients of the loans provided accommodation that was built to a good or excellent standard. Mr Grimshaw explained that there was a legal document ensuring that if money was provided the recipient had to bring the property up to the Government's decent homes standard. KCC and district colleagues monitored the projects and reinforced that a high standard was required. In response to a further question Mr Grimshaw confirmed that the majority of empty properties remained in East Kent, the district council directed properties which could be considered under the scheme, KCC would undertake site visits, meet the owners of the properties and make a plan to find the best solution to bring the property back into use and reduce the number of empty properties in each district.

5. A Member asked if there would be further opportunities to work with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) now there was demonstrable success with the initial NUE money? Mr Grimshaw explained that his team was always looking for opportunities to draw money back into Kent.

6. A Member asked whether the number of houses brought back into use under the NUE scheme benefitted the local authorities against their housing targets as set by Government within their local plan? Mr Grimshaw understood that currently any empty properties brought back into use were not counted against the local plan. David Smith explained that a number of attempts had been made to change national policy both to count conversions that NUE had produced within the local plan and by showcasing what Kent had done, there was no similar scheme anywhere else in the Country. Officers would like to align central government funding and rules, currently no central government money was available for the scheme, apart from KCC's bid to the Growing Places Fund. The NUE team relied on KCC's Capital Programme which was repaid every three years, and then made further bids.

RESOLVED that Cabinet thank officers for the update and note the report.