

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 10 July 2024

PRESENT: Mr D L Brazier (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr T Bond, Mr N J D Chard, Ms M Dawkins, Mr A J Hook, Rich Lehmann, Mr J P McInroy, Mr H Rayner, Mr P Stepto, Mrs R Binks (Substitute), Ms J Meade (Substitute) and Mr G Cooke

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P J Oakford and Mr D Jeffrey

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), Mrs A Beer (Chief Executive), Mrs R Spore (Director of Infrastructure), Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Mr J Betts (Acting Corporate Director Finance), Miss K Reynolds (Governance Advisor), Mr H D'Alton (Investment and Disposal Surveyor), Ms C Starte (Head of Marketing and Resident Experience), Ms A Wynde (Engagement & Consultations Lead) and Ms C Vincent (Investment & Disposals Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

210. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies for absence had been received from Dr Sullivan, Mr McInroy, Mrs Hudson and Mr Cooper. Ms Meade and Mrs Binks were present as substitutes for Dr Sullivan and Mr McInroy respectively.

211. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

212. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2024

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2024 were a correct record and that a paper copy be signed by the Chairman.

213. Budget Update

(Item 5)

1. Mr Peter Oakford and Mr Dave Shipton introduced the report which set out the proposed process and timetable for updating the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presented to full Council on 19th February 2024 including consultation, scrutiny and final approval by full Council in February 2025. It

was emphasised that the Council's planned spending growth exceeded the expected increase in funding through Council Tax and the Government settlement.

2. It was said that the response rate to the ongoing Budget Consultation was less than that of the previous year, despite a comprehensive communications campaign. Further work was being undertaken to promote the consultation at the halfway point. Members of the public were urged to respond to the consultation.
3. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
 - a) The first quarterly budget report for 2024/25 would be considered by Cabinet in September 2024. It was said that early indications suggested that there were still areas of budget pressures, despite the planned spending growth. However, it was always difficult to estimate the impact accurately in the early months of the financial year. There were weekly meetings involving relevant Corporate Directors and Cabinet Members to review the Council's spending.
 - b) The expected inflation were based on the November 2023 Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts for 2024-25 to 2026-27. The March 2024 OBR report had lower forecasts into 2025/26 than the November report. However, the most recent Bank of England forecasts were higher than OBR forecasts despite rate of increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) reducing close to the 2% target in recent months.
4. RESOLVED to note and comment on the proposed process and timetable to update the MTFP.

214. 24/00063 - Disposal of Boughton Mount, Boughton Monchelsea, Maidstone, ME17 4NA

(Item 6)

1. Ms Rebecca Spore introduced the report which detailed the proposed disposal of Boughton Mount, Boughton Lane, Boughton Monchelsea, ME17 4NA. It was confirmed that a full review had been conducted and that the site was surplus to KCC's requirements. It was proposed that the property would be marketed on an all enquiries basis.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
 - a) Historic restrictive covenants had complicated the disposal of the property. Further to a Key Decision taken in June 2017 to undertake an appropriation procedure in relation to the restrictive covenant, and subsequent to an abortive disposal in 2019/20, the site was considered to be ready for remarketing.
 - b) Mr Oakford confirmed that, given the Council's challenging financial position, he was not in a position to ringfence the capital receipt from the sale of the property for children's or education services.
3. RESOLVED to consider and endorse the proposed decision to agree to:

- a) the disposal of the property, Boughton Mount, Boughton Lane, Boughton Monchelsea, ME17 4NA; and
- b) delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

215. Decisions taken outside of Committee cycle: 24-00050 - Rosemary Centre Disposal

(Item 7)

1. Mr Peter Oakford introduced the report which outlined the reasons why Key Decision 24/00050 was taken outside of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee cycle, and why it could not reasonably be deferred to the next programmed Committee.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
 - a) There were specific processes in place to dispose of properties that were listed as assets of community value. It was confirmed that the Council was required to demonstrate Best Value and, therefore, some assets that were listed as assets of community value were put to auction to achieve the highest capital receipt. The process ensured that there was a 6 month period prior to the disposal to give community groups time to develop proposals and secure funding in order to participate in any process. However, the Former Rosemary Centre, 189 High Road, Wilmington DA2 7DP was not an asset of community value when it was entered into auction; the nomination was made after it had been published in the auction catalogue.
 - b) A full list of KCC's property assets was available on the KCC website: [Contact us about property or land we own - Kent County Council](#). The Council's property asset disposal list was not published as this was seen to increase the risk of criminal activity on the sites.
3. RESOLVED to note that Decision No. 24/000550, Disposal of the Former Rosemary Centre, 189 High Road, Wilmington DA2 7DP, was taken in accordance with sections 12.32 and 12.35 of the Council's constitution.

216. Contract Management Review Group update

(Item 8)

1. Ms Clare Maynard introduced the report which detailed on the work of the Contract Management Review Group (CMRG) following the re-launch of the Group under new Terms of Reference in September 2023. The paper summarised the key outcomes and common themes emerging from the contract reviews that have been undertaken since the re-launch of the CMRG and assesses the impact that the Group had in that time period. Since the publication of the report, the CMRG had also met on the 9th of July 2024 to discuss the property construction framework.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:

- a) The Terms of Reference for the CMRG would be reshared with the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee for reference.
- b) Ms Maynard would consider the recommendation that union representatives be invited to attend the CMRG meetings to provide information on specific contracts.

3. RESOLVED to consider and note the report.

217. Kent County Council's Approach to Public Consultation

(Item 9)

1. Mr Dylan Jeffery introduced the report which summarised the current approach and process to public consultation at KCC. The distinction between statutory and non-statutory consultation was emphasised and Members were told that where KCC had a duty to consult it adopted fair and effective consultation methods. It was emphasised that KCC follows the Gunning Principles - the requirements for a legally robust consultation process. The Let's Talk Kent platform was an example of how the Council utilised technology to engage with a greater number of residents. Members were assured that the Council always offered different methods of engagement to avoid digital exclusion.
2. In response to questions and comments it was said that:
 - a) A number of the 36,000 registered users on the Let's Talk Kent platform were organisations, and therefore represented multiple residents within a single registration.
 - b) Responses to consultations were taken into account by decision-makers, but consultations were not a form of vote. It was confirmed that consultation promoted was targeted to those who were most affected by the proposed decision to encourage them to respond. The Consultation Team worked with services in the community to better understand how to improve the consultation process.
 - c) The Consultation Team would take into account the suggestion to provide feedback on the results of consultations on the same channels on which they were initially advertised.
 - d) The Consultation Team would take into account the suggestions made for improvement to the Let's Talk Kent Platform.

3. RESOLVED to note KCC's approach to public consultations.

218. Work Programme

(Item 10)

RESOLVED to consider and note the planned work programme for 2024/25.