

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### **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, 26 July 2023

PRESENT: Mr R J Thomas (Chair), Mr N Baker, Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mr T Cannon, Mr N J D Chard, Mr M Dendor, Mr J P McInroy, Mr H Rayner, Mr P Stepto, Dr L Sullivan, Mr M Whiting, Mrs R Binks (Substitute), Mr A Brady (Substitute), Mr I S Chittenden (Substitute) and Mr D Jeffrey (Substitute)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R Gough, Mr P Oakford, Mrs S Prendergast

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), Mrs A Beer (Deputy Chief Executive), Mrs R Spore (Director of Infrastructure), Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Ms L Gannon (Director of Technology), Miss K Reynolds (Democratic Services Officer), Ms Z Cooke (Corporate Director of Finance), Ms C Grosskopf (Policy Manager), Mr J Sanderson (Head of Property Operations), Mr M Thomas-Sam (Strategic Business Adviser, Social Care), Ms C Maynard (Interim Head of Commissioning), and Ms K Frearson (Head of Property Strategy)

### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

#### **149. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item 2)*

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Hook, Mr Bond, Mr Cooper, Ms Dawkins, and Mr Lehmann. Mr Chittenden, Mr Jeffrey, Mrs Binks and Mr Brady were present as substitutes.

#### **150. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda**

*(Item 3)*

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **151. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2023**

*(Item 4)*

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2023 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chair. There were no matters arising.

#### **152. Election of Vice-Chair**

*(Item 5)*

1. Mr Baker proposed, and Mr Rayner seconded that Mr Dendor be elected Vice-Chair of the Cabinet Committee.

2. It was agreed unanimously that Mr Dendor be elected Vice-Chair of the Cabinet Committee.

RESOLVED that Mr Dendor be elected Vice-Chair of the Cabinet Committee.

### **153. Property Accommodation Strategy - Strategic Headquarters**

*(Item 6)*

*It was moved that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item. The item was deferred to Part 2 of the meeting and considered in private. A summary of the minutes has been provided where access to these minutes remains restricted.*

1. Mr Oakford and Mrs Spore introduced the report and updated the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee following the decision 21-00064 on 13 August 2021 which confirmed a preferred option for the development of the KCC Property Accommodation Strategy for its Strategic Headquarters. It was said that a review of the options was necessary as previous, more comprehensive options were no longer achievable given the financial constraints that KCC was operating within. Members were reminded that a significant constraint with the SHQ estate is the restrictive covenants in the favour of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The officers were working closely with the MoJ to establish viable options for SHQ.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision to:

- a) Agree to discontinue with the Preferred Option as set out decision 21-00064;
- b) Note and agree the current business case and Value for Money assessment recommendations and that a further market test of Sessions House will be progressed to enable the next steps and approach to be agreed;
- c) Allocate £3.4m from the 2023-33 approved capital budget to enable the essential and urgent backlog maintenance works at Invicta House to be completed; and
- d) Agree to delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, Corporate Director, Finance and General Counsel to authorise the execution of necessary contractual and land agreements required to implement the above.

### **154. Regular Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update**

*(Item 7)*

1. Mrs Zena Cooke and Mr Dave Shipton introduced the report which provided an update on the development of 2024-25 budget and 2024-27 medium term financial plan. It was said that since the launch of the budget consultation on 13th July, approximately 400 responses had been received. This was consistent with previous years.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
  - a) The Outcomes Based approach replaced the previous incremental demographic demand growth and service improvements based approach.

Each budget proposal would be accompanied with a detailed risk assessment to allow Members to make an informed judgement of the proposal.

- b) The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services said that the budget may not fully align with Framing Kent's Future, the top-level council strategy for 2022 to 2026, due to the Council's financial position.
- c) The funding assumptions for 2024/25 take into account the government's published spending plans, specifically a higher settlement in the form of additional social care grants. There would be an opportunity to consider the 2025/26 funding assumptions at a future meeting.

RESOLVED to note the report.

### **155. Update on the Afghan Resettlement and United Kingdom Resettlement Schemes**

*(Item 8)*

1. Mr Michael Thomas-Sam and Ms Christine Grosskopf introduced the report which provided an overview of the following refugee resettlement schemes being managed by Kent County Council (in partnership with the district housing authorities) and an update on the work being undertaken to inform the future support service arrangements. Members were reminded that the scheme was self-funded using ring-fenced funding received from Government.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
  - a) There were 52 Afghan families settled across Kent under Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) at the time of the meeting. It was expected that this would increase to about 95 families by the end of August, following the closure of the Afghan bridging hotels. The team were working closely with all the district housing authorities across Kent to find suitable homes.
  - b) Eligible individuals granted settled status under the ARAP or ACRS were able to enter into rental agreements and claim benefits and other public funds. In these cases, the tenancy arrangements were primarily between the individual family and the private sector landlord. In contrast, asylum seekers were accommodated by the Home Office in dispersed housing arrangements.
  - c) Mr Roger Gough highlighted that the Government's programme to increase the use of dispersed accommodation for adult asylum seekers in the South East presented a challenge for the Council as there were currently significant numbers in hotels and other contingency accommodation, such as Napier Barracks.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and note that a paper on future service options would be presented to this Cabinet Committee before the end of the year.

### **156. Homes for Ukraine Programme Update**

*(Item 9)*

1. Mr Gough introduced the report which provided an update on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme since the implementation of decision 22/00037.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
  - a) Rebecca Spore would provide clarification on the number of Ukrainian refugees leaving Ukraine to neighbouring countries to flee the conflict.
  - b) Mr Shipton confirmed that the additional 'Thank You' payments agreed by KCC were funded using the Homes for Ukraine Scheme government grant. It was said that the while the underspend for 2022/23 had been rolled into 2023/24, it had not yet been confirmed if this would be permissible for the next financial year.
  - c) There was additional funding to councils to provide education services, including early-years learning, for children from families arriving from Ukraine under this scheme. KCC worked closely with key partners to communicate with families in the scheme to understand the specific education needs and to put appropriate measures in place.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the update report.

### **157. 23/00063 - Enterprise Business Capabilities Modernisation**

*(Item 10)*

*It was moved that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item. The item was deferred to Part 2 of the meeting and considered in private. A summary of the minutes has been provided where access to these minutes remains restricted.*

1. Ms Lisa Gannon and Mr Oakford introduced the report which updated the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee with the details of the Full Business Case (FBC). It was recommended that KCC move to a new Enterprise Business Capabilities (EBC) platform, Oracle Cloud Fusion Software. This would be achieved through a multi-year implementation programme.

RESOLVED to consider and endorse the proposed decision to:

- a) award a contract of 8 years for the provision of a cloud-based finance, HR, procurement and payroll service;
- b) award a contract for a System Implementor Partner, to support the Enterprise Business Capabilities Programme in implementing and Integrating the Cloud solution; and
- c) delegate authority to the Director of Technology in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, for the necessary contractual negotiations and authority to enter into any legal agreements to implement the above.

### **158. Commissioning of Legal Services**

*(Item 11)*

*It was moved that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item. The item was deferred to Part 2 of the meeting and considered in private. A summary of the minutes has been provided where access to these minutes remains restricted.*

1. Mr Ben Watts introduced the report which provided an update in relation to the arrangements for the commissioning of legal services within the Council.

RESOLVED to note the Legal Commissioning Update.

### **159. Annual Information Governance Update**

*(Item 12)*

1. Mr Ben Watts introduced the report which set out some of the activities and actions that had been undertaken in relation to the Council's repeated failure to meet the statutory and performance targets relating to responses provided to FOI queries and Subject Access Requests. A planned Member briefing would facilitate a deep dive into some of the complex issues. Members were told the Information Governance team were looking at how to use technology to support further efficiencies. It was also highlighted that the performance of the relevant directorates in responding to FOI queries and Subject Access Requests would be included for consideration at the appropriate Cabinet Committee meeting.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
  - a) The processes in place for responding to these requests were being reviewed, including the step involving Cabinet Member sign-off of all responses. The use of technology and automation was intended to increase transparency.
  - b) Further information regarding the correlation between the subjects of unanswered complaints and FOI queries could be provided at the briefing.
  - c) Members were encouraged to email the Clerk with their requests for clarification or further information ahead of the briefing.

RESOLVED to:

- a) Note the update on the proposed changes to the Freedom of Information Request Process; and
- b) Note the activity undertaken within Governance, Law and Democracy to transform Information Governance processes and improve compliance with KCC policies.
- c) Note plans to organise a Member Briefing ahead of the next meeting of the Committee to provide further details of the FOI process, requests and improvements planned.

### **160. Decision taken between Cabinet Committee Meetings - 23/00067**

*(Item 13)*

1. Mr James Sanderson and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services introduced the report which outlined why Decision No. 23/00067, Reinforced Autoclave Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in Schools, was taken in accordance with sections 12.32 and 12.35 of the Council's constitution. It was said that since the key decision was taken, another school had RAAC identified. The school was likely to re-open by the end of August 2023.

2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:

- a) A future paper would be brought to the Committee following the conclusion of the commissioned RAAC survey of all the corporate landlord sites.
- b) There were ongoing conversations with the DfE regarding the classification of capital and revenue costs and reimbursement of costs associated with the works relating to this Decision.

RESOLVED to note that Decision No. 23/00067, Reinforced Autoclave Aerated Concrete in Schools, was taken in accordance with sections 12.32 and 12.35 of the Council's constitution.

### **161. Work Programme**

*(Item 14)*

RESOLVED to consider and note the planned work programme for 2023 subject to the addition of a regular update item on the Enterprise Business Capabilities (EBC) Modernisation implementation.