

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 3 April 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor J A Kite, MBE (Chairman)
Councillor A R Martin (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor P F Coleman
Councillor A R Lloyd
Councillor C J Shippam

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mrs A D Allen (Lead Member)
Councillor B E Read (Lead Member)
Councillor M J Street

139. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

140. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J A Kite, MBE declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 9, Princes Park – Mini Pitches, as he is a Director of Dartford Football Club.

141. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 MARCH 2014

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6 March 2014 be confirmed.

142. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman reported that the following urgent report had been authorised and that it would be considered as the next item on the agenda:

4a – Dartford Borough Council Led Bid to DECC Green Deal Communities Local Authority Fund - Update

143. DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL LED BID TO DECC GREEN DEAL COMMUNITIES LOCAL AUTHORITY FUND - UPDATE

In accordance with Standing Order 48(4)(b) the Chairman had agreed that this report be considered by Cabinet as urgent business, in order to update Members on the outcome of a bid for external funding and to seek Cabinet endorsement of the Managing Director's decision that Dartford act as the Accountable Body, and agreement to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with DECC.

This report updated Cabinet on a successful bid made to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) by the Council (supported by E3

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consultants) for £4,026,855 in funding towards delivering Green Deal initiatives.

The Head of Housing explained the background behind the Green Deal award programme and said that Government had thought that Local Authorities were best placed to deliver the scheme. He said that the bid that had been made had included areas of Sevenoaks and drew Members' attention to the residential focus areas and the non-residential elements, and also the planned outputs from the scheme. He described the types of work that would be covered and said that they ranged from small home related improvements to larger civic/commercial building improvements. He then noted that they would be working with an experienced consultant to deliver the scheme and said that promotion exercises were to be carried out to ensure community engagement. He also noted that a shop and show homes would be set up in order to promote the scheme.

The Head of Housing then confirmed that the majority of the funding received would be used in the private sector but noted that much of the Council's own housing stock was already benefiting from previous exercises that had been carried out to introduce energy saving measures. He then noted that although the Council had originally bid for £3 million, they had been awarded £4.2 million, and said that they were liaising with DECC to confirm that they would not be asked to raise the targets that had already been defined due to the increased level of funding being provided. He also explained that the report asked Cabinet to endorse the decision for Dartford Borough Council to act as the Accountable Body for the funding and highlighted the amount of work that this would involve. He said that the monitoring and auditing of all associated spending would have to be carried out to ensure that the Council is able to provide DECC with a spending breakdown if required.

Members welcomed the fact that more funding had been awarded than had originally been requested but, having noted that specific focus areas had been identified by Sevenoaks District Council, asked for reassurance that the parished areas of Dartford would also benefit from the scheme. The Head of Housing said that the area defined for Dartford had been deliberately unspecific so that no areas of the Borough were excluded and that DECC were keen for the benefits of the scheme to be deployed as widely as possible. It was also noted that the additional funding would enable the original focus of the scheme to be expanded.

The Head of Housing also confirmed that the scheme would be run by a not-for-profit consultancy under the banner of Dartford Borough Council and said that the Council would be involved in the running of the proposed town centre shop.

The Managing Director said that it would be important to promote the benefits that were being delivered by the scheme and added that, if the scheme proved to be successful, he hoped that DECC would make more funding available to enable it to be expanded further.

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RESOLVED:

1. That the successful bid be welcomed.
2. That the Managing Director's decision that Dartford Borough Council act as Accountable Body for the grant funding be endorsed, and the Managing Director be authorised to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

144. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE CABINET ADVISORY PANEL HELD ON 31 MARCH 2014

The Cabinet received the minutes of the Cabinet Advisory Panel held on 31 March 2014 and took note of the Panel's views throughout the meeting.

145. REFERENCE FROM JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD: FASTRACK

This report advised Cabinet of the current position relating to future development proposals for Fastrack, and sought clarification from Kent County Council (KCC) on the arrangements for the replacement of the Fastrack Vehicle Fleet.

The Vice-Chairman, who is also the Chairman of the Joint Transportation Board (JTB), reported that concern had been expressed because the Fastrack fleet of buses, which when originally introduced had been 'state of the art', were now showing their age. He said that the new Arriva buses now being introduced on other routes were being built to a higher specification when compared to the Fastrack bus fleet. He also noted that the two Fastrack routes were being run under different contract agreements and hoped that the issues that were being raised would be addressed in order to ensure the continued success of the service.

The Managing Director reported that Kent County Council were currently reviewing the Fastrack contracts for routes A and B and had asked ProLogis to extend the current route A contract by a year so that the two separate contracts may be renewed together in the future. He said that he felt that this would be necessary to ensure that the service remained sustainable. He also anticipated that renewal of the bus fleet would be considered as part of the final settlement.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Kent County Council report on Fastrack, which was considered by the Joint Transportation Board, be noted
2. That the Leader of the Council writes to Kent County Council:
 - a) Noting that the current Fastrack fleets, especially on Route B, are nearing the end of their useful lives.

- b) Urging KCC to explore as many options as possible to facilitate the early replacement of the vehicles, and advise details of a replacement programme as soon as possible.

146. LOCALLY SET FEES CONSULTATION

The Licensing Act 2003 regulates the sale of alcohol, the provision of late night refreshment and regulated entertainment in England and Wales, and is administered by local authorities, acting in their capacity as licensing authorities.

Licensing fees are intended to recover the costs that licensing authorities incur when carrying out licensing functions. The current Licensing fees were set in 2005 and apply nationally. They have not been adjusted since (other than for the introduction of new fees for new processes). The Home Office is now consulting on proposals to move from centrally-set to locally-set fees under the Licensing Act 2003. This report proposed a response to that consultation.

The Strategic Director drew Members' attention to the tabled addendum which addressed an issue that had been raised when the proposed response had been considered by the Licencing Committee on 25 March 2014. The Licensing Committee had requested that more detail be included in the response to Question 22, which had asked for evidence to be provided relating to the proposed cap of £100 on the fee for Temporary Event Notices.

RESOLVED:

That the response to the Locally Set Fee Consultation, as set out in Appendix B to the report and amended by the tabled addendum, be endorsed.

147. CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT FURTHER ALTERATIONS TO THE LONDON PLAN

The Mayor of London is carrying out a consultation on the draft further alterations to the London Plan prior to its submission to the Secretary of State. This report identified the issues impacting upon the Borough of Dartford and proposed a response to the consultation.

The Chairman noted the press interest that had been generated by this report and welcomed the proposed consultation response.

The Head of Regeneration advised that the proposed alterations were primarily related to population growth, which was much greater than had been anticipated in the 2011 London Plan. She said that population growth projections were suggesting that between 49,000 and 62,000 homes had to be built per annum in order to meet the needs of London's residents, and that the London Plan proposed the delivery of 42,000 which would not meet the identified need. She said that the consultation response emphasised the fact that the annual under provision of homes could put more housing pressure on

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places outside London, especially in the south east, and said that the Greater London Authority (GLA) was being encouraged to liaise with local authorities and deliver all of the required 49,000 per year demand for homes within London's boundaries.

Members recognised the impact that the London Plan might have on the predicted housing requirements for Dartford and referred to the allocations policies that had been put in place to ensure that local people were given priority when allocating social housing in Dartford.

The Head of Regeneration confirmed that any increased demand on Dartford would primarily come from those buying homes on the open market, who found themselves unable to afford London prices. However, there was a risk that London Boroughs would seek to secure accommodation in the Borough to house those on their waiting list. She also confirmed that the impact of the London housing shortfall would be distributed throughout all areas that surround the London boundary and was not expected to affect Dartford disproportionately. She also noted that the response asked the GLA to consider the impact that their plans might have on the infrastructure requirements and schools in neighbouring Boroughs.

Members welcomed the fact that the Council was liaising with the GLA directly and thought that the identified housing provision shortfall would be raised as an issue when the London Plan is submitted for formal examination and sign off.

Members noted the need to ensure there is a good mix of people in a community and felt that the response should be strengthened to emphasise the fear that the London Plan may result in a specific group of people being displaced from London into the surrounding areas, which could adversely affect the balance of people living in a particular neighbourhood. They also said that the London Plan's ability to deliver the required number of homes should not be dependent on developments proposed for other areas (e.g. the development of an airport in the Thames Estuary).

The Chairman then made reference to the recently announced intention to develop a garden city at Ebbsfleet and the fact that an Urban Development Corporation (UDC) would be established to deliver the project. He said that the Council was having meetings with senior Government ministers to ensure that Dartford's views on how the development should be managed were being heard. He said that they were stressing the importance of local community involvement and said that the views of those living in the surrounding neighbourhoods should be included in order to ensure that a quality integrated living environment is delivered. He said that the development would transform the landscape and that the Government would be pushing for it to be a success in order that the approach used could be promoted as a way of delivering similar schemes in other areas of the country. He noted the responsibility that Members had to those living in their wards and said that they would be looking to focus on ensuring that the scheme delivered would enhance the local area. He also noted the perceived risks associated with the

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granting of decision making powers to an unelected body, but reassured Members that he had received assurances that the local authority would be closely involved with the UDC. He said that, in order to secure local community support for the scheme, good communication was essential.

Members endorsed the Chairman's comments and noted that previously planned developments were already underway in the area. They also noted that there had been an increased number of visitors to the area who were showing an interest in the work that was being carried out. They emphasised the need to include all interested parties as the proposals are developed in order that the best overall plan for the area may be developed. The Chairman hoped that the developments that were already underway would be progressed at pace, and that the developer would also deliver the associated infrastructure, in order that a community may be established.

The Chairman emphasised how important it was to ensure that the right people were chosen when forming the UDC and said that it should not be overly large, but must include local representation. He also hoped that the UDC would not attempt to address areas that were already well served and noted that the Bluewater shopping centre and Ebbsfleet Station were realities. He hoped that despite the scale of the developments they would be based on a village character and a close community ethos. He also hoped that the motivation that had been initiated by the announcement would continue and that the plans and strategies that had already been prepared for the area would be progressed. He asked that his appreciation for the officer work that had already been carried out in relation to planned development in the area be taken back to those who had been involved in the process.

RESOLVED:

1. That the representation on the consultation document, as set out in Appendix A to the report, and subject to its strengthening in the area identified in the above minute, be submitted as the Council's formal response to the draft further alterations to the London Plan.
2. That authority be granted for an Officer to continue to attend the South East England Councils (SEEC) and Greater London Authority (GLA) liaison meetings, with a view to representing Dartford Borough Council's views and those of other Kent authorities.

148. PRINCES PARK - MINI PITCHES

Having declared a prejudicial interest Councillor J A Kite, MBE left the room and took no part in the debate or decision related to this item. Councillor A R Martin assumed the chair for this item.

This report sought approval to a revised service level agreement with Dartford Football Club for the operation of the mini football pitches at Princes Park.

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The Managing Director explained that the proposed changes to the agreement were being made because, as usage of the mini pitches had increased, Dartford Football Club had been required to carry out more administrative and maintenance work. He also noted that the new terms would provide the operator with an incentive to actively promote use of the mini pitches.

Members welcomed the proposed new arrangement, and the intention to share the surplus income received, but questioned the plan to increase the annual fee payable to Dartford Football Club by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) each year. They felt that the automatic inclusion of CPI increases in Council contracts and agreements should be discouraged, and that contractors and operators should be asked to absorb any increased costs resulting from inflation.

The Managing Director confirmed that, to date, it had been usual to include CPI increments in Council contracts and noted that the exclusion of CPI increments from longer running contracts could cause difficulties.

RESOLVED:

That the main terms and conditions for a service level agreement between the Council and Dartford Football Club for the operation of the mini pitches at Princes Park, as outlined in the report, be approved.

149. ANNUAL REVIEW AND RENEWAL OF SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

This report presented an annual review of the performance of Dartford Citizens Advice Bureau and Groundwork South Trust (formerly known as Groundwork Kent and Medway) against the requirements specified in their respective Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for 2013/14. Both are organisations that receive Council funding. The report also asked that the current SLAs for Dartford Citizens Advice Bureau and Groundwork South Trust be continued.

Members noted the reference to agreed Performance Indicators and thought that it would have been useful if those that had been agreed for the forthcoming year had been included in the report. They also noted Dartford Citizens Advice Bureau's request to remove an element of the existing SLA and suggested that, if parts of an SLA are removed, leading to a reduction in the number of services being provided, then the level of associated funding should also be reviewed. Members also noted that the reviews attached as Appendices to the report had been written by the organisations concerned and felt that an officer's view of the service levels being delivered would have been helpful.

Members then discussed the figures that had been supplied by Dartford Citizens Advice Bureau for 2011/12 and 2012/13 and highlighted the fact that in 2012/13 there had been a significant drop in demand but that despite this Dartford Citizens Advice Bureau had been unable to provide one part of the

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service required under the SLA. Members also noted that they always had the option of considering whether to provide an in-house advice service.

The Chairman then referred to when Groundwork South Trust had been known as Groundwork Kent and Medway and noted the beneficial environmental projects that had previously been delivered. They also noted that the organisation had recently decided to review its structure and reform as Groundwork South Trust. Members hoped that the newly formed organisation would deliver some useful projects for Dartford and asked that officers monitor how the grant funding was being spent.

At the end of the debate, having noted the need to agree the recommendations in order that the funding for 2014/15 may be made available to the organisations concerned, it was proposed that the recommendations be confirmed subject to a satisfactory review being carried out by the Deputy Leader in consultation with the Managing Director, and that if any concerns are identified during the review they be referred back to Cabinet for further consideration.

RESOLVED:

1. That the performance of Dartford Citizens Advice Bureau and Groundwork South Trust, against the requirements of their respective Service Level Agreements, as detailed in Appendices A and B to the report, be noted.
2. That grant funding for 2014/15, up to the amounts shown below for the following organisations be confirmed subject to a satisfactory review being carried out by the Deputy Leader in consultation with the Managing Director, and Service Level Agreements being completed with each organisation:
 - Dartford Citizens Advice Bureau – up to £99,750
 - Groundwork South Trust - up to £19,000

150. NEW COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING

This report provided an update on the progress being made towards the Council's new build housing project and requested approval to submit planning applications as necessary and undertake competitive tendering exercises for the development of the sites, subject to the satisfactory completion of ongoing technical and topographical surveys of the three sites.

The Chairman welcomed this project and noted that the programme would be the first to deliver new affordable social housing for many years. He referred to the debate that had taken place at the General Assembly of the Council's budget meeting relating to the timing of the overall programme and said that professional advice had been sought before deciding how best to proceed with the build programme and that proposals were in place to deliver the planned build as soon as possible.

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The Head of Housing described how this project related to a previous Cabinet decision relating to the 1-4-1 scheme, which allowed for a proportion of Right to Buy receipts to be retained and, together with Council funding, used to build affordable housing. He then drew Members attention to the spend deadlines defined in the report and said that that they gave an indication of how the spending would initially be distributed and an estimate of the number of properties that would be delivered. He then referred to the three proposed sites and said that a number of approaches were currently being considered. He said that once the associated designs and budget arrangements for the various options had been established they would be presented to the Strategic Director and Managing Director for their consideration. The proposals for each site would then have to be submitted for planning approval, and the budget allocated, to enable each site to be developed.

Members discussed the timescales for delivery in more detail and the Head of Housing said that until a preferred development route and detailed designs for each site become available exact delivery dates could not be guaranteed. Members then referred to a recent meeting of the Resident Involvement Joint Liaison Group where it had been noted that the only concerns raised so far had come from those living opposite the Coleridge Road site.

Members discussed the high profile Temple Hill Square site and the Strategic Director said that this development could provide an opportunity to improve how the area is currently perceived by delivering a high quality development. She also noted how the design of the other proposed sites could be linked in with the developments planned for the former GlaxoSmithKline site. She also suggested that the smallest site at Shaftsbury Lane could be developed in a traditional way in order to deliver the first homes from this project quickly, and that more time could then be taken to market the other two sites as design and build projects.

In response to a question the Head of Housing confirmed that designs for the sites under consideration would be completed by the autumn. Members welcomed this as it would allow them to reassure residents and show them what was planned for the area. The Head of Housing also confirmed that the size distribution would be based on known needs and that they would aim to deliver quality housing within the strictly defined budget. In relation to this the Head of Housing also confirmed that the requirements for those who currently wished to downsize were being met.

Members hoped that the project would be progressed quickly and also noted the strong words of support that were being expressed by other Council Members. It was suggested that those local Members voicing support be invited to act as ambassadors for the scheme.

RESOLVED:

1. That, subject to ongoing technical studies confirming that the development of the sites identified in Appendix A to the report is feasible, authority be delegated to the Managing Director, in

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consultation with the Portfolio Member for Housing, to seek planning permissions and other consents as necessary and undertake competitive tendering exercises with a view to the award of contracts for the development of each site.

2. That further reports be presented to Cabinet seeking approval to award contracts to the successful tenderers for each site, subject to finance being available for each contract.

The meeting closed at 8.33 pm

Councillor J A Kite, MBE
CHAIRMAN