

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 27 January 2022 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor J A Kite, MBE (Chairman)
Councillor C J Shippam (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor S H Brown
Councillor A R Lloyd
Councillor D J Mote
Councillor Mrs P A Thurlow
Councillor R J Wells

ALSO PRESENT: Sarah Martin, Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services
Peter Dosad, Director of Housing & Public Protection
Caroline Hicks, Director of Growth & Community
Alan Twyman, Democratic Services Manager

95. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman commented on the sad loss of former Cabinet member, Councillor Ann Allen MBE, which had left a vacancy on both the Council and the Cabinet which he said were 'big shoes to fill.' He welcomed Councillor D J Mote to the Cabinet as the new Portfolio Holder for Housing.

There were no apologies for absence.

96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

97. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2021

The Cabinet considered the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2021.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 9 December 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record.

98. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

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99. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE CABINET ADVISORY PANEL HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2021

The Chairman advised the Cabinet that no items had been drawn down for debate by members of the Cabinet Advisory Panel B and that consequently the meeting had been cancelled. It was therefore assumed that members of the Panel were happy with the recommendations contained in the reports.

100. REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEES

There were no references from other committees.

101. DEVELOPER FUNDED PARKING SCHEMES

The Director of Growth & Community introduced a report which described proposed parking schemes arising from new residential development in the town centre. Where new residential development replaced previous commercial uses, parking controls on adjacent streets might need to be updated to manage the different patterns of parking that might occur, including additional demands for parking by new residents. As part of the planning permissions granted for residential development east of Lowfield Street and on the former Abbott Murex site east of Lower Hythe Street the developers were required to fund the costs of the making and implementation of new Traffic Regulation Orders, including the consultation process, via s106 agreements, to be paid upon first occupation of the developments, which was now taking place.

The report examined the existing parking controls in the roads affected by the developments and the need for changes in order to mitigate the impact of the developments. It was noted that this exercise had been triggered by the progress of the developments and had been carried out separately from the ongoing Parking Study in the Town Centre, but could subsequently be reviewed as part of that Study. The Council would need to consult residents in the vicinity on the proposals detailed in the report, including a new cashless facility for short term parking in Lowfield Street. This would be done by way of site notices, advertisement in a local newspaper and a letter-drop to residents directly impacted by the scheme. If over 50% of respondents supported the proposals, these would be recommended for implementation but, if there was insufficient support, the Cabinet would be asked to consider the implementation of the proposals in terms of highway safety.

The Chairman sought, and received, clarification of the detailed changes to the on-street parking arrangements being proposed and the Cabinet received assurance that possible parking displacement had been examined and that the proposals were subject to consultation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposed parking restrictions set out in:

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- (i) paragraphs 4.5 and 4.8 and Appendix A relating to Lowfield Street; and
- (ii) paragraphs 4.15-4.16 and Appendix B relating to Lower Hythe Street

of the report, be consulted on and implemented, if the proposals are supported following consultation; and

- 2. That the use of a cashless facility for short term vehicle parking, for up to 6 spaces in Lowfield Street, as detailed in paragraph 4.8 of the report, be approved.

102. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF 2022/23

The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services presented a report which proposed granting discretionary rate relief to National Non-Domestic Ratepayers who had made applications in respect of 2022/23, or who would have made an application by 18 February 2022, which were properties eligible for relief and met the Council's criteria for granting Discretionary Rate Relief.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the maximum level of discretionary rate relief for 2022/23, for the organisations listed in exempt Appendix A to the report, be determined in accordance with the detailed recommendations set out in that exempt Appendix;
- 2. That the types of property eligible for discretionary rate relief, as specified in Appendix B to the report, be noted; and
- 3. That the recommended criteria for granting discretionary rate relief, as set out in Appendix C, be noted.

103. STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING - LAND NORTH OF ST MARYS ROAD, STONE

The Cabinet considered a report which sought approval for a new road name for a residential development on the land north of St Marys Road, accessed via Crossways Boulevard. The proposed name, Liberty, was derived from the name of a World War II cargo ship built by the Americans but based on a British concept and was in keeping with the nautical theme of all the roads on the Crossways Estate. The proposed name had been submitted for consultation to Council Members, the Emergency Services, Royal Mail and the developer and complied with the Council's policy on Street Naming. A suitable suffix would be chosen once the final road name was approved.

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RESOLVED:

That the single new road name for the residential development on the land north of St Marys Road, accessed via Crossways Boulevard, be approved as Liberty.

104. ACTION TAKEN UNDER STANDING ORDER 38: THE OMICRON HOSPITALITY AND LEISURE GRANTS, THE ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT AND THE COVID-19 ADDITIONAL RESTRICTION GRANTS POLICY

The Cabinet considered a report which detailed the delegated action taken under Standing Order 38(2)(a) by the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Chairman, relating to the immediate implementation of new Covid-19 relief and grants schemes arising from national restrictions put in place to combat the spread of the Omicron variant.

The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services explained that the Government had announced additional grant support for businesses severely impacted by Covid and the rise of the Omicron variant on 21 December 2021. Funding would be payable through the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grants Scheme to hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses which had struggled due to the rise in the Omicron variant. Support would also be available to businesses not covered by this grant scheme, but nevertheless severely impacted by the Covid restrictions and the Omicron variant, through the Additional Restrictions Grant Scheme. Additional funding had also been made available to the Council through the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund to assist those ratepayers who have been, and continue to be, affected by the pandemic but who were ineligible for existing support linked to business rates.

The eligibility criteria for the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grants Scheme was set by the Government and grants were determined according to rateable value up to a maximum grant of £6,000. Dartford had received a funding allocation of £834,030 but this was only available for the 2021/22 financial year. The Council had already received an allocation of £2,252,120 under the Additional Restrictions Grants Scheme but was allocated a further £1,000,285 by the Government on 5 January 2021, and subsequently received a further top-up allocation of £891,622, of which £677,000 remained unallocated, and a further allocation of £202,644 had been received as part of the additional support announced by the Government on 21 December 2021. It was proposed to allocate these funds to support hospitality and leisure businesses, the personal care sector and travel businesses (which might not qualify for the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grants), Dartford's event, cultural and entertainment business and local market traders. The Council had also received an allocation of £3,009,089 for Covid-19 Additional Relief Funding to assist those ratepayers who had been, and continued to be, affected by the pandemic but who were ineligible for existing support linked to business rates. The Council had produced policies for each of these Funds and was assessing applications with a view to dispersing funding as quickly as possible and to meet the Government's deadlines for spending the money.

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Further work was required to finalise the details of the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund but the Council had until 30 September to apply this relief.

The Cabinet welcomed the additional funding and the generous support that this had provided and was particularly glad to be able to extend support to local event and cultural companies and market traders. It was confirmed that the Council had promoted the funds and had contacted a number of these organisations to make them aware of the further grants and the deadline for applications. The Cabinet stressed that recipients should have a track record of local delivery and noted that the purpose of the funding was not only to provide support but also to encourage public confidence, increase footfall and a return to normality. The Cabinet also stressed the need to allocate funding as soon as possible and to ensure that all funding was committed by the Government's deadline. It was also agreed that any amendments to the Policy for the Additional Restrictions Grants Scheme should be delegated to the Director of Growth & Community, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Portfolio holder for Finance.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet notes the action taken by the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Chairman, under Standing Order 38(2)(a), to implement new Covid-19 relief and grants schemes arising from national restrictions put in place to combat the spread of the Omicron variant.

105. POTENTIAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION

The Cabinet considered a report which sought approval to acquire an investment property within the Borough. The report detailed the rationale which supported the acquisition of the property outright as a property asset, including how this helped to deliver the Council's economic development objectives and provided other benefits to the community, and the steps to be taken to determine the optimum level of investment by the Council to reach an offer level that could be formally proposed for agreement with the vendor. The history of the site, current management arrangements and legal background were discussed along with future options.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations and delegations contained in the exempt report be agreed and that the recommended delegations of authority to the Director of Growth & Community should be exercised in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance.

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**106. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF 2022/23 -
EXEMPT APPENDIX A - DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF APPLICATIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS
(EXEMPT CATEGORY SO 46 (1) (B) ANNEX 1 PARAGRAPH 3)**

That, following discussion of the main report (minute 102 above), the contents of Exempt Appendix A be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.48 pm

Councillor J A Kite, MBE
CHAIRMAN

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