

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 8 December 2022 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor J A Kite, MBE (Chairman)
Councillor C J Shippam (Vice-Chairman)
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
Alan Twyman, Democratic Services Manager

68. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brown and from the Director of Growth & Community.

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

70. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 27 OCTOBER 2022

The Cabinet considered the minutes of its meeting held on 27 October 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 27 October 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record.

71. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

72. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE CABINET ADVISORY PANEL HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2022

The Cabinet received the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet Advisory Panel A which took place on 5 December 2022 and had regard to the Panel's views throughout the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Advisory Panel held on 5 December 2022 be noted.

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73. REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEES

There were no references from other committees.

74. TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023-2026

The Director of Housing & Public Protection introduced a report which presented a new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy for 2023-26 in response to the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill 2022-23 which aimed to deliver on the proposals contained in the November 2020 Social Housing White Paper to have “more people living in decent, well looked-after homes enjoying the quality of life they deserve”. The White Paper emphasised the need to engage more fully with residents and the Council had fully embraced this requirement.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy had been informed by the responses to the Resident Engagement Survey, and produced in consultation with tenants and leaseholders. The Strategy replaced the Resident Involvement Agreement, in order to address all of the elements of the Council’s commitments and regulatory requirements in one document.

The Strategy outlined how the Council planned to fulfil its obligations, alongside detailing residents’ priorities which had been identified in the recent Residents’ Satisfaction Survey. It was intended that the Strategy will be a ‘living’ document which will be reviewed annually to assess progress and priorities.

The Chairman noted that the Cabinet Advisory Panel had questioned the arrangements for identifying ‘community champions’ and asked for clarification of their role. The Director of Housing & Public Protection said that these were effectively Housing Champions and that, ideally, each of the Council’s 300 communal blocks would have one to act as a channel of communication between tenants and the Council, via which the Council could issue information about housing initiatives or use as a sounding board to ascertain tenants views.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing stressed the importance of tenant engagement under the new legislation and welcomed the Strategy as a means of improving engagement.

RESOLVED:

That the [draft] Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2023-2026, attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.

75. HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT FOR TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS 2021

The Director of Housing & Public Protection introduced a report which explained that, under the Government’s regulatory framework, the Council was required to complete an annual report to tenants and leaseholders, setting out the performance of the housing service and where improvements

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could be made. The regulatory framework included a set of national standards under the headings of Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, Home, Tenancy, Neighbourhood and Community, and Value for Money. This was the ninth housing annual report and had been developed in consultation with the Dartford Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum. The report outlined how the Council continues to develop its services for tenants and leaseholders, how the Council had performed against the national standards during 2021 and the targets that had been established for 2022.

The Chairman commented on the Tenants and Leaseholders Annual General Meeting that he had attended with senior officers and wondered whether the format could be reviewed to make it even more effective and constructive for the participants. The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing felt that there would be opportunities to do so as part of the changes arising from the Social Housing White Paper.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Housing Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders 2021, attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.

76. LOCAL SCHEME OF SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TAX 2023/24

The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services presented a report which proposed that the Cabinet should recommend that the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme should roll forward to 2023/24. The report reminded the Cabinet that a major review of the Scheme had been undertaken in 2019/20 when the original means- tested scheme had been replaced by a simple income grid model and that since then the scheme had been rolled-forward on an annual basis.

RESOLVED:

That the General Assembly of the Council be recommended to roll forward the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/23 to be effective from 1 April 2023.

77. FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS 2023/24

The Cabinet considered a report which detailed the level of proposed financial contributions to be paid to Parish and Town Councils in 2023/24 to compensate for lost council tax income in local areas from the Council Tax Support Scheme. It was proposed to maintain this funding at the same levels as in 2022/23. The Chairman noted that Dartford was one of the few Council's to continue to make financial contributions of this nature to its parish/town council's and felt that it might be necessary to cap these payments in future.

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RESOLVED:

1. That, subject to resolutions 2 and 3 below, the following contributions be made to Parish and Town Councils, to compensate for lost council tax income in local areas from the council tax support scheme:

£

Bean	334
Darenth	1,923
Longfield	631
Southfleet	198
Stone	7,021
Sutton at Hone and Hawley	1,737
Swanscombe and Greenhithe	14,435
Wilmington	1,317

2. That, the contributions be made subject to the Parish and Town Councils submitting suitably analysed details of estimated net expenditure for the ensuing year by 31 January 2023, and actual net expenditure for the preceding year no later than six months after the end of the 2022 financial year, in a format prescribed by the Council; and
3. That the payments be made in two equal instalments, the first on 30 April 2023 (or next working day) and the second, the latter of 30 September 2023 (or next working day) or seven days following receipt of the Parish or Town Councils' 2022/23 accounts, certified as correct by their Clerks.

78. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2022/23 - PROJECTED OUTTURN

The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services presented a report which detailed the projected outturn on the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account, and the reasons for significant variances. The projected outturn on the General Fund showed a potential net underspend on the budget of £321,240. The Housing Revenue Account currently showed a projected surplus for the year of £108K, which was £2.7M lower than the budget mainly due to delayed capital works, and the balance of the HRA to be carried forward into the next financial year was projected to be £7.7M. The report highlighted key budget variances.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet notes the projected outturn position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as set out in Appendices A-C to the report.

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79. CAPITAL PROGRAMME BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 - PROGRESS AND PROJECTED OUTTUN

The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services presented a report which informed Members of the progress to date on schemes in the approved Capital Programme and of the latest position on capital resources.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress made to date, as described in the report on the 2022/23 Capital Programme and appendices A & B to the report, be noted;
2. That the virement of £150,000 from the Columbaria project and £150,000 from the cliff maintenance project, to the Leisure and Open Spaces project, be approved;
3. That the virement of £786,000 from the Stone Lodge project, to the Town Centre Transport and Public Realm Improvements project, be approved; and
4. That the virement of £354,000 from the High Street Improvement budget, to the Town Centre Transport and Public Realm Improvements project, be approved.

80. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING - 2ND QUARTER

The Cabinet considered a report which detailed the Council's performance against its performance indicators for the second quarter of 2022/23.

The Cabinet noted that this was the final report prepared by Adrian Gowan, Policy & Corporate Support Manager, who had recently retired after working for the Council for many years. The Cabinet recorded its thanks to Mr Gowan for his dedicated service and sent him best wishes for a long and happy retirement.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet notes performance against the Corporate Plan Performance Indicators 2021-2023, as detailed in Appendix A to the report.

81. COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Cabinet received, for information, the minutes of the meeting of the Policy Overview Committee held on 6 September 2022.

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RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy Overview Committee held on 6 September 2022 be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.25 pm

Councillor J A Kite, MBE
CHAIRMAN

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