
Cabinet

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 9 February 2022 from 7.00 pm - 7.52 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney, Angela Harrison, Ben J Martin, Richard Palmer, Julian Saunders, Roger Truelove (Chairman) and Tim Valentine.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Philippa Davies, Lisa Fillery and Larissa Reed.

OFFICERS PRESENT (Remotely): Jayne Bolas, David Clifford, Debbie Fallis, James Freeman, Zoe Kent, Jo Millard, Emma Wiggins and Phil Wilson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Ghlin Whelan and Mike Whiting.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Remotely): Councillors Cameron Beart, Lloyd Bowen, Derek Carnell, Alastair Gould, Ken Ingleton, Hannah Perkin, David Simmons, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen, Eddie Thomas and Corrie Woodford.

APOLOGY: Councillor Mike Baldock.

579 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 December 2021 (Minute Nos. 485 – 496) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendment to Minute No. 489, Review of Fees and Charges 2022/23, recommendation (1), to read '£130.00':

That the proposed fees and charges 2022/23 as set out in the report as amended to include the total charge of white bar markings to be rounded-up to £155.00 for the installation of new white bar markings, and **£130.00** for the re-painting of existing white bar markings be agreed.

580 Tributes to Former Councillor and Mayor of Swale, Honorary Alderman Colin Prescott

The Leader paid tribute to former Councillor Colin Prescott who sadly passed away earlier in the week. He spoke of Colin's devotion as a ward member and as a member of the Planning Committee. The Leader's sentiments were echoed by other Councillors.

581 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Monique Bonney and Richard Palmer declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in respect of the Urgent Item – National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) Covid Additional Relief Funding Scheme, due to their business interests. Councillors Bonney

and Palmer left the meeting during consideration of the item and as such did not take part in the discussion or vote on the matter.

Part A Minutes for Recommendation to Council

582 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2022/23

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which set-out and sought approval of the proposed Treasury Management Strategy and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators for 2022/23. He said that interest rates would rise because of increased inflation and the Council's approach was to borrow and invest at low risk. The Council borrowed through internal means as this was the best way to ensure lower costs. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance explained that the Council did not borrow for income purposes only and said the Sittingbourne Town Centre development was classified as regeneration investment, rather than for income. He thanked officers for the sound report.

In response to a question on the approved sources of long-term and short-term borrowing, the Director of Resources explained that the Council was a member of the Kent Pension Fund and as such could not borrow from that fund.

Recommended:

(1) That the Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators be approved.

583 Medium-Term Financial Plan and 2022/23 Budget

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which set-out the Council's Revenue and Capital budget proposals for 2022/23, the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Capital Strategy. The report had been submitted to Cabinet on 8 December 2021 and since then there had been some updates. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance explained that the Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23 had been issued in December 2021 and this included an additional £984,000 in grants and he advised that this was for one year only, rather than a multi-year settlement. The funding needed to be balanced against increased costs. Following the Government Settlement, the gap of £2.3 million had now reduced to £1.6 million of funding required from the budget reserve fund. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said the Council was in a similar position to other Local Authorities.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance drew Members' attention to the tabled paper which set-out the two recommendations, in relation to Fees and Charges, submitted by the Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 26 January 2022.

(1) That the appropriate committee, post May 2022, consider the creation of an intermediate fee between minor and major applications for pre-application advice; reviewed the whole pre-application advice charging structure; and charges for individual households also be considered.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said that consideration needed to be given on the impact of the recommendation on the Council's budget, and that it would not be sound to make changes when the budget had already been set. The Director of

Resources said that fees and charges could be changed in-year, but this would need to be looked at overall to address any loss in income to be compensated by budget savings.

A Member reminded Members that the planning fees had been discussed at previous meetings, with comparisons made with other Local Authorities, and she considered there was no need for the matter to be debated each year, but looked at every couple of years going forward. There was some discussion on the planning fees being considered by the relevant committee, post May 2022, and that it was not up to Cabinet to make the decision to change the fees, but the relevant committee. A Member highlighted that the category of 'intermediate' was not included within planning guidance and other authorities did not include that category in their planning fees.

Councillor Richard Palmer moved the following motion: That Cabinet do not progress the recommendation from the Scrutiny Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Angela Harrison. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

(2) That the fee for replacement bins be removed.

At this point, the Cabinet Member for Environment introduced his tabled report on replacement recycling and residual bin costs following concerns raised by members of the Scrutiny Committee. He acknowledged that measures needed to be put in place to mitigate any problems with the addition of the new charge. The Cabinet Member outlined the financial pressure of having to replace damaged/missing bins and drew attention to Table 2 which set-out the costs to provide/replace bins to Swale residents. The cost of replacement bins was rising rapidly and this was a pressure on the budget. The Cabinet Member said that the charge would provide a contribution to costs and would also 'dampen down' demand for replacement bins and promote a more sustainable approach to the care of bins. The majority of Local Authorities had introduced charges for the replacement of their bins. The Cabinet Member said that bins damaged by the contractor would still be replaced free of charge, and there would be no charge for the food waste caddies or garden waste bins. The scheme would be monitored in the first 12 months. The Cabinet Member added that the charge was one of the lowest in Kent and he acknowledged that there would be challenges, but this was a responsible thing to do and the costs to the Council were significant if the charge was not introduced.

A Member said that bins should be left in the appropriate position for collection and then taken back and stored at the property and not left in the street, and this should be enforced to minimise the loss of bins. The Member added that if contractors were aware of residents having more than one bin, then they should take surplus bins away. She was concerned that some residents presented their bins for collection some way from their property, and said that contractors needed to be aware of what was happening with the bins, such as them being lost in the refuse lorry.

A Member referred to Table 1 and noted that the £30 charge did not cover the full cost of replacing the bin. He welcomed the no charge aspect for food and garden waste and said the reserve fund would run out and it was unsustainable to continue to carry on with no charge.

A Member supported the charge and noted that the Council was in the lower half of the charges set-out in Table 1.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Head of Environment and Leisure for the tabled report.

Councillor Julian Saunders moved the following motion: That Cabinet continued to progress with the charge for replacement bins. This was seconded by Councillor Tim Valentine. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Members then voted on the recommendations in the report.

Recommended:

- (1) That the 2022/23 Revenue Budget proposals be approved.**
- (2) That the proposed Council Tax Band D increase for 2022/23 to £189.27 be approved.**
- (3) That the Medium-Term Financial Plan be noted.**
- (4) That the Capital Strategy be approved.**
- (5) That the Capital Programme proposals be approved.**
- (6) That the additional amount of Council Tax for Parish Precepts be noted.**
- (7) That the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out in Appendix VII of the report be approved.**

Part B Minutes for Information

584 South Thames Gateway Building Control Business Plan 2022 - 2025

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Planning, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which set-out the draft South Thames Gateway (STG) shared Building Control Partnership Business and Delivery Plans 2022 to 2025 for consideration and comments for referral to the Joint Committee.

Resolved:

- (1) That the draft South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business and Delivery Plans for 2022 to 2025 be agreed.**
- (2) That continuation as a STG partner authority into a fourth term be agreed.**

585 Procurement of Agency Staff Services

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which sought approval to enter into a new contract for the supply of agency staff.

Resolved:

- (1) That the appointment of Matrix SCM Ltd as the recommended provider for vendor neutral agency service provision for an initial three-year period with an option to extend for two years be approved.**

586 Urgent Item - NNDR Covid Additional Relief Funding Scheme

Councillors Monique Bonney and Richard Palmer left the chamber.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which set-out a new Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund of £1.5 billion, announced by the Government on 25 March 2021. The report considered how the support should be awarded to businesses. It was submitted as an urgent item because of the tight timescales for implementing the

decision. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance drew attention to paragraph 3.1 in the report which set-out business sectors and property types which were excluded from the scheme.

The Revenue and Benefits Manager explained that guidance for the scheme was issued in December 2021. A lot of businesses had received assistance through extended retail relief, but this had not covered other businesses which had been adversely affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic. She explained that the funds needed to be awarded in this financial year.

Members spoke on the disappointment in the delay in receiving guidance from the Government and applauded staff for progressing the scheme. A Member welcomed the section on fraud and the steps that would be taken if this took place.

In response to a question, the Revenue and Benefits Manager explained that the photovoltaic installation listed in paragraph 3.1 of the report referred to solar farms, which were not adversely affected by the pandemic.

Resolved:

(1) That the Covid Assistance Relief Scheme (Appendix I of the report) be approved.

Chairman

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel.