
Urgent Decisions Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Friday, 20 December 2024 from 11.00 am - 12.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock (Vice-Chair), Monique Bonney (Substitute for Councillor Elliott Jayes), Lloyd Bowen, Tim Gibson (Chair), Angela Harrison, Hannah Perkin and Julien Speed (Substitute for Councillor James Hunt).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Lisa Fillery, Robin Harris, Kellie MacKenzie and Larissa Reed.

OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Ian Harrison and Emma Wiggins.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Dolley Wooster.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Simon Clark, Mark Last, Ashley Shiel, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen and Mike Whiting.

APOLOGIES: Councillors James Hunt and Elliott Jayes.

523 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

524 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Julien Speed declared an interest as he was involved with the Teynham and Highsted Community Action Group which was a Rule 6 party at the Inquiry.

Councillor Monique Bonney declared an interest as she was a member of the Five Parishes Action Group which was a Rule 6 party at the Inquiry.

525 **Highsted Inquiry Costs**

The Chief Executive introduced the report which set-out potential approaches for the Highsted Inquiry, and associated costs. The report made suggestions for discussion for potential areas of compensatory savings.

In response to a concern from a Member, the Director of Resources agreed that the tabled budget proposals would not be published as they were an illustrative example only.

The Chair proposed recommendations (1), (3) and (4), these were seconded by Councillor Mike Baldock.

Councillor Mike Baldock moved the following amendment to recommendation (4): That the second sentence be removed as it was unnecessary. This was seconded by Councillor Julien Speed.

Members considered the amendment, and the following points were made:

- The second paragraph of recommendation (4) was not required as it was up to

the administration as to what they put forward in the budget;

- considered it was important and responsible to have a clear 'indication' of where the money would be coming from to pay for the Inquiry;
- removal of the paragraph took away the accountability for the public about where the money would come from, and it was important to show it would have to come from the budget; and
- the specific items were for the administration to consider which made the paragraph 'superfluous'.

The Director of Resources clarified that the sentence just highlighted that the compensatory savings to fund the Inquiry would be taken from the budget.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That the range of estimated costs for the Highsted Inquiry be noted.***
- (2) That all Contract Standing Orders (procurement) waivers necessary to enable the timely procurement of the required services be endorsed.***
- (3) That compensatory budget savings be made to reduce the growth within the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to cover the additional costs to be incurred in the delivery of the Inquiry.***

526 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

That under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A of the Act:

- 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).***

527 **Exempt Appendix I - Highsted Inquiry Costs**

The Chair proposed recommendation (2) in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Mike Baldock.

The Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer responded to questions and points raised by Members. The Planning Manager (Planning Applications) explained that the fees quoted were for the worst-case scenario and lots of the preparation would be done in-house.

Resolved:

- (1) That the preferred option for Legal support be agreed.***

Chair

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