

Cabinet

Tuesday, 19 December 2023

Attendees: Councillor Michelle Burrows, Councillor Mark Cory, Councillor Alison Jay, Councillor David King , Councillor Andrea Luxford Vaughan, Councillor Paul Smith, Councillor Natalie Sommers

No. Publication and Call In Arrangements

Date Published 20 December 2023

Date when decisions may be implemented (unless 'called in') 5pm 3 January 2024

All decisions except urgent decisions, those subject to pre-scrutiny and those recommended to Council may be subject to the Call-in Procedure.

Requests for the scrutiny of relevant decisions by the Scrutiny Panel must be signed by at least ONE Councillor AND FOUR other Councillors to countersign the call-in form OR to indicate support by e-mail. All such requests must be delivered to the Proper Officer by no later than 5pm on 3 January 2024.

809 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

810 Have Your Say! (Hybrid Cabinet Meetings)

David Grocott attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to express his concern about the accessibility of the new adventure playground at Highwoods. Contrary to the publicity at the opening this was not accessible or inclusive. There were several features about the design of the playground that made it inaccessible to wheelchair users. It also gave no consideration to others with accessibility issues. Explanations given relating to tree roots and the design been chosen through a public vote were inadequate. It was for the Council to guide such a vote and ensure its facilities were accessible. Funding could have been sought for the extra costs of making it fully accessible. The creation of advisory panel of disabled people and their advocates could prevent this happening again. None of the feedback given by access groups had been taken on board in the final design.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, responded and explained that he was aware of the local views on this issue and it was important

that the Council learnt from this and see what adjustments could be made. Councillor Burrows, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage emphasised the need for inclusivity to be central to any Council facility or development. She would explore what work had been done with access groups on this project and would look to engage with the speaker and other interested parties to see whether improvements could be made, within the constraints of the budget.

Ian Drew attended and addressed Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to represent Essex Residents Association, which was a group of local volunteers who had come together in response to a number of concerns including lockdown, climate change and vaccines. This was part of a national residents association that had been set up to counter the introduction of 5G across the country. Concern was expressed about the continued expansion of 5G and how this could be used to create a surveillance state and control citizens through smart cities. These issues had been referenced in a recent planning application. Concerns were also emphasised about the potential health impacts of electromagnetic radiation generated by 5G networks. Monitoring had shown that emissions were in excess of permitted levels. Whilst government guidance prevented Council from taking account of health issues when considering planning applications for telecommunication masts, the Council had a duty of care to its residents which overrode this legislation.

Councillor Luxford Vaughan Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environment and Sustainability, expressed her concerns about the process for determining planning applications for telecommunications masts and the limited grounds Councils could consider when assessing such applications.

Councillor Harris, Councillor Smalls and Councillor Scordis attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet raising issues relating to the inclusion of Middlewick in the Local Plan, the marketing of the site by the Ministry of Defence and the opportunity that the review of the Local Plan provided to remove the site from the Plan. Issues raised included the lack of infrastructure to support the development, the value of Middlewick as a green lung for local residents, the feasibility of the proposal to mitigate the impact, particularly in respect of recreating acid grassland, the lack of transparency by the Ministry of Defence, the potential of an adjacent site being incorporated into the development and the potential impact on the delivery of housing numbers should developers choose not to purchase the site due to concerns about its viability.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained that he understood the concerns and passion around this issue. The Local Plan had imposed strict conditions on the development of the site. The issue of viability was for developers and the market to determine. To date no application for the site or the adjacent site had been received. This not an issue for Cabinet, but was a matter for the Local Plan Committee and Full Council, but he would be willing to look at engagement with the Ministry of Defence.

Councillor Luxford Vaughan Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environment and Sustainability, stressed that the Council had no influence on decision making by the Ministry of Defence or Defence Infrastructure Organisation. As Portfolio Holder her role was to ensure policy was properly applied should an application be received. The

policy had been strengthened through the inspection process. An independent ecologist had been appointed to do a full year survey of the site which would feed into the review of the Local Plan.

Councillor J. Young attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet. In respect of fees and charges, concern was expressed about some proposed pest control charges. The charge for bed bugs treatment seemed particularly high, particularly for those in receipt of benefits. The proposed fees for civic events could make attendance by residents unaffordable with the result that they become elitist events. The possibility of sponsoring the events to reduce costs should be explored. The proposals for the purchase of land to support the Heart of Greenstead project was welcomed. This was an important scheme that would transform the area and bring substantial benefits to residents.

Councillor Sommers, Portfolio Holder for Communities, responded on the issue of pest control charges. Whilst she shared the concerns it was not possible to lower the charges further. Two officers needed to attend for a case of bed bugs and it took on average six visits to complete the treatment. Therefore there was a significant cost involved, and whilst the costs to residents was subsidised, it could not be decreased further.

Councillor Law attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Cabinet. A number of community minded residents in Highwoods expended considerable time and effort clearing leaves in Highwoods, particularly in autumn. This saved the Council's Neighbourhoods Team time and money. Under the new garden waste scheme was there scope for the Neighbourhoods Team to make a one off collection of such material? Clarification was also sought about the timescales for the introduction of the new community composting scheme.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained he would arrange for the queries to be passed to Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste. Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing, drew attention to a scheme run by the Welshwood Park Residents Association who similarly cleared leaf fall in the autumn and had an arrangement whereby they hired a vehicle from the Council but the cost was reduced according to the amount of material collected, which could be a model that would work in Highwoods.

811 2023 End of Year Update and Forward Look to Reset the Council

The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained that the report provided an update on how the Council had responded to the challenges it had faced in 2023 and how it was positioning itself for transformation so that it was fit for the future.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) The significant progress in preparing the Council for the transformation and cost reduction changes required in 2024 be noted.

(b) The proposed next steps be noted and Cabinet's commitment to ensuring the Council is fit for the future, living within its means be confirmed.

REASONS

To ensure the Council is ready for the significant structural changes, staff and service changes required in 2024 and that the public and partners have confidence the Council will be able to close the budget gap, unlike others.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

There were no appropriate alternative options.

812 North Essex Councils and Shared Services

The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Sunnucks attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet. It was noted that the previous report considered by Cabinet had set out the scale of the financial challenge facing the Council and proposed fundamental change. However, he queried whether anything the administration was proposing would deliver the scale of savings required or at the pace required. There was an absence of detailed, costed proposals. The proposals in this report would result in the saving of some senior management costs but would not deliver savings on the scale required. The Council had three years to make the necessary changes. The Conservative Group had some ideas but needed a proper opportunity to put forward their alternative vision.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained that the administration's vision and costed proposals for change would be shared early in the new year and it would welcome hearing alternative visions and proposals at that point. It was accepted that this was a long term process and it would take several years to fully transform the organisation and achieve the necessary savings. Shared services also brought benefits in terms of capacity and resilience and enabled Colchester and its partners to attract a higher calibre of candidate than if they acted independently.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, explained that working with other authorities was part of the solution to the challenge facing the Council. There were strategic and operational opportunities from shared services, although the administration recognised the need to maintain the Colchester standard of service. Councillor Smith, Portfolio for Housing, appreciated the concerns expressed about the pace of change, but given that public money was being spent, it was important that due process was followed. The proposals for shared services were not intended to

meet all the necessary savings but were just one element of the strategy. It was noted that the two authorities the administration was in partnership with were Conservative led authorities. The Council was not in a position of facing bankruptcy as it had a history of taking the difficult decisions that were necessary.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Colchester City Council will work in partnership with those Councils set out in paragraph 3.1 of the Chief Operating Officer's report and will be collectively referred to as the North Essex Councils (NEC).

(b) £20,000 be contributed from the Strategic Plan Reserve in 2023/24 to enable resources to be put in place to manage the work of the partnership.

(c) Further funding in 2024/25 of up to £40,000 will be considered as part of the 2024/25 budget process, for the purposes of establishing a team to collectively represent North Essex Councils, establish a detailed terms of reference for NEC and develop a clear programme of work.

(d) The Council should work with Braintree District Council and Epping Forest District Council to develop a full business case and proposed model of delivery for a single shared back office for the corporate services referenced in the Chief Operating Officer's report and to approve the release of £60K from the Strategic Plan Reserve to support development of the business case.

REASONS

To establish a team to collectively represent North Essex Councils, establish detailed terms of reference for NEC and develop a clear programme of work and to ensure resilient and efficient corporate services.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

To not commit to the development of North Essex Councils and/or develop a single shared back office.

813 Local Government Association Peer Challenge Action Plan Progress

The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) The progress in responding to the Peer Challenge recommendations be noted.

(b) All outstanding work to respond to the Peer Challenge recommendations be reported through the normal performance reporting mechanisms.

REASONS

To ensure the Council responds appropriately to the key recommendations made by the Local Government Association Peer Challenge and in turn support the continuous improvement of how the Council is operated.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options were presented to Cabinet.

814 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024-25

The Head of Operational Finance submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor T. Young attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet to express his support for the changes made to the scheme and in the move to a banded system. However, concern was expressed about the two child limit and that families of three or more children would not receive additional support. The Child Poverty Action Group had highlighted the impact this would have on larger families. Such a policy was regressive, discriminatory and would accentuate the impacts of the cost of living crisis on large families. This was contrary to national Liberal Democrat policy and should be reconsidered.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, and Samantha Preston, Head of Operational Finance, responded and explained that the policy was designed to be consistent with national rules set by government around Universal Credit. In addition, the scheme disregarded child benefit for existing claimants. The Council had an excellent record of supporting families and would look at how new families joining the scheme and were subject to the cap could be supported further. The scheme had been extensively modelled and was designed to be cost neutral.

A banded scheme would be simpler and more efficient to administer and would be more straightforward for recipients. Transitional arrangements would be put in place to protect families and to ensure no one lost out as they moved to the new system. It was suggested that as the scheme would be reviewed in a year's time this issue could be examined at that point.

Cabinet considered that the scheme should be adopted subject to further examination of the two child limit.

RESOLVED that a 'banded' Local Council Tax Support scheme be adopted for 2024/25 subject to further consideration of the two child limit.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that the Local Council Tax Support scheme 2024/25 be approved and adopted.

REASONS

The process of Universal Credit Managed Migration is now underway from July 2023 in East Anglia. This means more people will be moving over to Universal Credit from 2024/25 so it is vital processes are put in place to try and simplify Council Tax payments for the most vulnerable residents.

Some key benefits of adopting a 'banded' LCTS scheme include, but are not limited to:

- Improved Council Tax recovery;
- Quicker decision(s) for our customers;
- Fewer bills sent to customers;
- Back-office admin savings;
- Cost neutral – overall level of support remains the same (£9.31m);
- Reallocating of resource to other areas to maximise savings and concentrate on generating revenue;
- Improved customer journey – simple application form, digitalisation;
- Improves possibilities for shared working;
- Reduced customer contact;
- Protection for those customers who will be worse off.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

That no changes are made to the LCTS scheme for 2024/25.

815 Fees and Charges 2024-25

The Director of Finance submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, introduced the report and stressed the need to be prudent whilst maintaining efficient Council services. In particular it was important that non statutory services were largely self-financing through fees and charges. The impact of inflation also needed to be taken into account when setting fees and charges. Council services were still on the whole cheaper than comparable services in the private sector. The fees and charges provided an important source of funding and helped ensure that Council services were sustainable.

Councillor Luxford Vaughan, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environment and Sustainability, queried why some car parking charges were increasing above inflation and it was explained that this reflected the need to use pricing to promote the use of non-town centre locations to help address issues of congestion and pollution.

Cabinet noted the issues raised by Councillor J. Young during Have Your Say! about the cost of attending civic events and undertook to review the charges for civic events and to look at the possibility of sponsorship to bear some of the costs of the events and to increase charitable income.

RESOLVED that the fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out in the Appendix to the report by the Director of Finance be agreed subject to a review of the charges for civic events.

REASONS

To respond to the significant budget gap created by the coronavirus pandemic and the associated recession and cost of living crisis, and the impact of these on Council income.

To make reasonable increases in fees and charges that help fund and support Council services.

To ensure that the charges for civic events remained sustainable and did not result in the exclusion of Colchester residents.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not to update fees and charges. This would reduce the funding available for Council services and necessitate additional savings or service reductions.

816 Accuracy in Financial Reporting

Cabinet considered the motion on Accuracy in Financial Reporting approved and adopted by Full Council at its meeting on 7 December 2023, a copy of which had been circulated to each member.

Cabinet noted that the motion had been fully discussed at the meeting of Full Council and that the administration had demonstrated that it took the issues raised seriously.

RESOLVED that the contents of the motion be noted.

REASONS

The motion had been subject to full debate at the Full Council meeting and therefore did not require further detailed consideration.

817 Purchase of Five Fields Court, St Edmunds House and Two Adjoining Areas of Land in Greenstead

The Associate Director of Alliance Integrated Strategic Partnerships submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor T. Young attended and with the consent of the Chair and addressed Cabinet. The Heart of Greenstead project was a once in a generation opportunity to transform the centre of Greenstead into a hub that would meet the wishes and needs

of local residents. Tribute was paid to the work of Rory Doyle and Lindsay Barker in negotiating with Notting Hill Genesis. It was important the Colchester Borough Homes were involved in the scheme going forward and that current staff and tenants were well looked after. They needed to be treated in a respectful and considerate manner. The scheme was well understood by ward councillors.

Councillor Sunnucks attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Cabinet and congratulated the team for securing the deal with Notting Hill Genesis. However, the detailed plans for the scheme and the costs involved were not clear. It was noted that building costs had increased by more than 50% since the scheme was put into the capital programme. Once the land was obtained would development begin quickly or would there be a further period of discussion and consultation? Detailed plans for the scheme and its implementation needed to be made available with more focus on the practical elements of the scheme.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained that further details about the scheme would be circulated. It was a fundamental part of the Heart of Greenstead project. This proposal removed a significant risk from the project. The role of the Town Deal Board in overseeing projects funded by the Town Deal provided an extra layer of scrutiny and reassurance.

In discussion, Councillor Luxford Vaughan, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environment and Sustainability, also considered that there was a need for further information about the scheme and the potential impact of inflation on the costings.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing, emphasised that the area was in desperate need of renovation. This proposal would enable provide the Council with control of the land needed for the scheme, which was key to the development. If all the details of the scheme had been released this may have had an impact on the negotiations. A full business plan had been submitted to the Department of Levelling Up and Communities. The scheme would provide an opportunity to build sustainable additional housing and the land would evolve and develop. Some staff would be transferred to the Council under the TUPE arrangements and the housing would be managed by Colchester Borough Homes. This housing would not be available to purchase under the Right to Buy scheme.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, emphasised that were a number of parties involved who were also providing funding, which reduced the risk to the Council. The viability of the scheme and what could be delivered would continue to be assessed, in view of the rising costs. There was an Oversight Board for the scheme on which ward councillors sat. The scheme would deliver real social benefits.

Lindsay Barker, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director Place, explained that the Town Deal Programme had been reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny, However the focus had largely been on the Community Hub as there had been some doubt as to whether this land would be secured. Now that the land had been secured the full business case would need to be revisited. The project had been set up to ensure that a long term view was taken and that the local community were involved to ensure it delivered what they needed.

Following further consideration during Part B of the meeting (see minute 826) Cabinet resolved to agree to the recommendations set out in the Associate Director's report.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The purchase of Five Fields Court, St Edmunds House and two adjoining areas of land outlined in the Appendix to the Associate Director's report from NHG as per the Heads of Terms appended to the Associate Director's report be approved.
- (b) Authority be delegated to the Associate Director of Alliance Integrated Strategic Partnerships in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources to negotiate terms, conclude the legal documents or any relevant consequential matters to complete the acquisitions.
- (c) Funding for the purchase as follows be agreed - £2.3m funding award from Estate Regeneration Fund, in line with the funding terms plus additional funding from the Council's General Fund which under the proposals within the associate Director's report will see the assets appropriated to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

REASONS

The purchase of these properties and land will facilitate the regeneration of Greenstead in line with the Heart of Greenstead scheme phase two objectives. Phase two will see the development of new affordable homes, new retail, and wider public realm improvement across the site.

This specific part of the Town Deal programme enables a once-in-a-generation investment in this strong and proud community, which now requires renewal of its physical environment.

In the light of the overall Town Deal award received by Colchester being £6.8m smaller than the original Town Investment Plan, the Town Deal Board agreed in June 2021 to the principle that wherever possible, projects would seek other complementary sources of funding to boost their viability and deliverability.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Do not purchase the properties and land as set out in this report. This would be detrimental to regeneration plans for Greenstead and will mean the Council cannot deliver the objectives set out in the business plan submitted to DLUHC for use of Town Deal funds.

The ERF grant was awarded for the purpose of acquiring the land. The Council will likely be required to return the £2.3m fund.

Cabinet considered the recommendation in minute 428 of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 14 November 2023, a copy of which had been circulated to each member.

Councillor Jay, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Transformation and Performance, noted the recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel that the Council seek to collect and publish annual data on skills provisions. Following further discussion with the partners who had attended the Scrutiny Panel meeting, officers had reported that rather than duplicating the work of other organisations and commit further officer resource to data collection, these organisations were best placed to continue to collect this data.

In discussion Cabinet members noted the quality of the debate at the Scrutiny Panel and the time and expertise given by partners. Cabinet members stressed the value of skills development and the potential role of the Council in providing information on the skills provision available. There were real skills shortages in the local economy and the investment in a broader range of skills such as construction was welcomed.

There was a particularly strong emphasis on digital skills development in Colchester through initiatives such as the Digital Skills Hub. However, there was also a need to ensure that the needs of those with learning difficulties and autism were not overlooked and to ensure they were given a route into meaningful employment.

Lindsay Barker, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director Place, was invited to contribute and highlighted the Shared Prosperity Fund which was approved in July 2022 to distribute some EU funding. This was now entering its final year and in this period the funding would be directed towards skills development. In addition, one of the Town Deal projects had been the development of the Digital Skills Hub, which was now operational.

Councillor Jay undertook to follow up on the issues raised about harnessing the skills of those with learning difficulties and autism.

RESOLVED that Council will liaise with relevant local partners accessing and aggregating their data to inform the Council's engagement on the skills agenda.

REASONS

Cabinet accepted the spirit of the recommendation from Scrutiny Panel but considered that it needed to avoid duplication of the work of partners and committing officer resource to work already underway.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

It was open to Cabinet to agree the recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel.

819 Future of Sport and Leisure Strategy

Cabinet considered the recommendation made by the Policy Panel at its meeting on 29 November 2023, a copy of which had been circulated to each member.

Councillor Law attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Cabinet, in her capacity as Chair of the Policy Panel to highlight the Panel's recommendations. The Panel had been keen to give input into the future Sport and Leisure Strategy and looked forward to receiving an update to its March meeting. The Panel were particularly keen that members be given an opportunity to feed into the Strategy through briefings and involvement in engagement events. The Panel had also recognised the opportunities for partnership working in this field, particularly with health partners, which could help address cost concerns. There were also potential benefits to other Council services from a focus on sport and leisure. The need to move at pace had also been emphasised by the Panel.

Councillor Sunnucks attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed Cabinet to emphasise his concern at the time it was proposed to take to develop the new strategy. If decisions were not taken quickly the Council would need to continue with the salami slicing of its services.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) A workshop be organised for all members on the future of Sports and Leisure;
- (b) That all members are invited to engagement events for the Future of Sports and Leisure Strategy;
- (c) In the development of the Future of Sports and Leisure Strategy further consideration be given to the interdependencies with other strategies.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

It was open to Cabinet not to approve the recommendation from the Policy Panel.

820

Knife Crime

Cabinet considered the motion on Knife Crime which stood referred direct to Cabinet by Full Council at its meeting on 7 December 2023, a copy of which had been circulated to each member.

Councillor Sommers, Portfolio Holder for Communities, stressed that she fully supported the motion. It was also supported by Essex Police and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex. The approach taken by the Council and its partners was working and the figures were falling. This was an excellent example of partnership working. The Knife Angel and the associated messaging had been well received.

RESOLVED that the motion on Knife Crime be approved and adopted.

REASONS

The motion highlighted valuable partnership working on Knife Crime, which the

Cabinet supported.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

It was open to Cabinet not to approve and adopt the motion.

821 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Cabinet considered the recommendation made by the Policy Panel at its meeting on 29 November 2023, a copy of which had been circulated to each member.

Councillor Law attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Cabinet in her capacity as Chair of the Policy Panel, to introduce the recommendations made the Panel. The Panel had been very impressed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the work to promote this across the Council. This would have clear benefits and ensure Council staff were best placed to understand the needs of all residents and support them appropriately. However, the Panel felt it was important that the policy apply to all areas of the Council and its companies and also that the importance of the issue be highlighted to Councillors.

In discussion, Cabinet indicated its support for the recommendations. The importance of fully embracing issues of inclusion and accessibility and not approaching it as a tick box exercise was stressed. It was suggested that consideration should be given to including the concept of “belonging” within the title and scope of the policy. The need to ensure that these values were also applied to the Council’s website and to ensure that it was easy for all users to navigate was emphasised.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy be applied to the entirety of the Council, and its subsidiaries and partners.
- (b) That all Group Leaders be asked to work with the Member Development Group to ensure their Members are trained in EDI.
- (c) That the methods used to provide EDI Training for Members be reviewed with a view to moving from its current online form and other options including lived experience training be explored.
- (d) Consideration be given to the appointment of an EDI Councillor Champion.
- (e) The Council work with its system partners sharing best practice on EDI training.
- (f) The Monitoring Officer be asked to remind Parish Councillors and their staff of their duties under EDI legislation.
- (g) The Portfolio Holder for Communities give further consideration to including the concept of “belonging” within the scope and title of the policy and to ensuring the

website was fully accessible.

REASONS

Cabinet fully supported the recommendations made by the Policy Panel which reflected the importance it placed on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

It was open to Cabinet not to agree the recommendation by the Policy Panel.

822 Calendar of Meetings 2024-25

The Head of Governance submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Cabinet expressed concern that the proposed date for the budget setting Council meeting in February 2025 fell in a half term week which could restrict some member availability and asked that this be reviewed. It was noted that the change in the date of the Crime and Disorder Committee meeting to March could leave a gap of one year between meetings and asked that a further meeting be scheduled using one of the reserve dates.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) The draft Calendar of Meetings for the next municipal year, from May 2024 to April 2025 be approved, subject to a review of the date of the budget Council meeting in February 2025 and the scheduling of an additional Crime and Disorder Committee meeting.

(b) Authority to cancel meetings be delegated to the Chair of the relevant Committee/Panel in conjunction with the Head of Governance.

REASONS

The Calendar of Meetings needs to be determined so that decisions for the year can be timetabled into the respective work programmes and the Forward Plan.

Advance notice of the Calendar of Meetings needs to be made available to Councillors and to external organisations, parish councils and other bodies with which the Council works in partnership, and to those members of the public who may wish to attend meetings of the Council and make representations.

Rooms will also need to be reserved as soon as possible so that room bookings can be made for private functions by private individuals, external organisations and internal Council groups.

A formal arrangement needs to be in place for the cancellation of meetings that no

longer need to be held.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

This proposal has been largely devised based on the current meeting structure and frequency. It would be possible to devise alternative proposals using different criteria.

823 Progress of Responses to the Public

The Democratic Services Manager submitted a progress sheet a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Progress Sheet be noted.

REASONS

The progress sheet was a mechanism by which the Cabinet could ensure that public statements and questions were responded to appropriately and promptly.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options were presented to the Cabinet.

824 Minutes - Part B

The Cabinet resolved under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012 to exclude the public from the meeting for the following item as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED that the not for publication extract from the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

825 Purchase of Five Fields Court, St Edmunds House and Two Adjoining Areas of Land in Greenstead - Part B

The Cabinet resolved under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012 to exclude the public from the meeting for the following item as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

This minute is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person, including the authority holding the information).

