

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Mid Sussex District
Council Cabinet held on Monday, 14 March 2016
from 4.00 p.m. to 5.25 p.m.**

Present: Councillors: Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Andrew MacNaughton, Gary Marsh*, Pru Moore, Garry Wall (Leader) and Norman Webster.

Also present: Councillors: Ginny Heard.

Officers: Kathryn Hall, Tom Clark, Judy Holmes, Peter Stuart, Claire Tester, Mark Fisher, Simon Hughes, Lynne Standing, Tim Cusack, Chris Riggott, Elaine Clarke and Hannah Martin.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

48. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Gary Marsh.

49. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

50. URGENT BUSINESS

The Leader advised that there was one urgent item – Property Purchase, which would be dealt with under the exempt session after the scheduled item.

51. PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR THE THIRD QUARTER 2015/16

Tim Cusack, the Business Unit Leader for Performance and Partnerships introduced the report which stated that 24 out of the 38 performance indicators were on or above target and there was a marked improvement from quarter 2 in processing of applications in Building Control and property in rent arrears.

It was noted that the format for displaying the information around NDR collection rates and staff sickness had been improved following comments raised by the Scrutiny Committee for Leader and Service Delivery. The Business Unit Leader also advised that there had been concerns about staff turnover in areas such as Building Control where it was hard to recruit against a competitive private sector and the delay in providing affordable housing units.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Sustainability welcomed the additional explanation in the report concerning the percentage of household waste being sent to recycling. She advised that there had been initial problems in meeting this target as the recycling quality needed to be higher which had resulted in collections being rejected. However, officers had undertaken thorough education work and the target was now being met.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Community commented on the temporary accommodation figures and the no. of people on the housing register. He acknowledged that this was an on-going problem but that officers were working to liaise with the private sector to open up more housing opportunities.

The Leader welcomed the report and said that it was important to monitor performance across all areas of the Council and acknowledged that the Council continues to perform well against a challenging backdrop. It was important to note the work of the Scrutiny Committees in debating the issues facing each portfolio and to help offer solutions to continue high performance.

As there were no further comments, the Leader took Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet:

- (a) Note the Council's performance in the third Quarter of the year; and
- (b) identify any areas where further reporting or information is required.

52. STRATEGIC RISKS FOR 2016/17

Judy Holmes, the Assistant Chief Executive, introduced the annual report which outlined the key strategic risks for 2016/17 along with mitigation measures. She advised that this was a tried and tested policy and urged the Cabinet to agree the recommendations.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery commented that this had been a successful process over time and noted that the risks identified in the report were all significant and was confident in the mitigation work which would be carried out by the Heads of Service.

The Cabinet Member for Planning stated that the failure to get the District Plan through Examination would be vitally important he was confident that the Council had secured the best external advice and hoped there would be a successful outcome in the summer.

The Leader stated that this was a professional process and that officers were adept in identifying the key risks which would have the most impact on the running of the Council's services. He advised that careful monitoring of the risks will be carried out by the Portfolio Holders and the Heads of Service.

As there were no further comments, the Leader took Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet:

- (i) Agrees the strategic risks for 2016/17 as set out at appendices A and B; and
- (ii) Agrees the existing Strategic Risk Management Policy, as set out at Appendix C.

53. ACCEPTANCE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE ASHURST WOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION REPORT

Claire Tester, the Head of Economic Promotion and Planning, introduced the report and advised that this was the 10th Neighbourhood Plan to reach a successful Examination. She advised that the report outlined minor modifications to the Plan which had been accepted by the Village Council and that in the event of Cabinet's approval the Neighbourhood Plan would go to referendum on 5 May 2016 and be formally adopted by Council at the next available meeting.

The Leader welcomed the report and offered his congratulations to all those involved and commended them for their hard work in a complex area.

The Cabinet Member for Planning added his congratulations and confirmed that a lot of work was involved for small parishes. The Cabinet Member for Health and Community drew Members attention to page 51 of the report to highlight that this was the culmination of 4 years work and that it reflected the residents' views for their village.

As there were no further comments, the Leader took Members to the recommendation which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet agrees the District Council formally accept the recommendations of the Independent Examiner in relation to the Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood Plan.

54. PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS 2016/17

Mark Fisher, the Head of Leisure and Sustainability, introduced the report which outlined the proposed funding for 5 key organisations over the next three years. He advised that the report provided further detail for all applications and the process for determining the level of funding and the work that would be carried out.

Several Members welcomed the report and were happy that the Council was in a secure financial position to enable the continued support for the voluntary organisations and provide a degree of certainty for a 3 year period in the face of continuing budget cuts.

The Leader stated that he was proud the Council was able to help support the voluntary sector and advised that through working with colleagues on the Mid Sussex Partnership they would be able to support financial management models to help them to safeguard against continuing budget cuts.

As there were no further comments, the Leader took Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet noted the contents of the report and agreed to the following payments for the existing Partnership Agreements with:

- (a) Central and South Sussex Citizens Advice Bureau £119,404

Enter into three year agreements, as detailed below, at the following recommended level of support,

- (b) Action in Rural Sussex £7,050
- (c) Age UK East Grinstead £15,071
- (d) Age UK West Sussex £52,166
- (e) Horsham and Mid Sussex Voluntary Action £37,553

55. CORPORATE GRANTS REVIEW

The Head of Leisure and Sustainability introduced the report which reviewed the current grant application process and outlined a set of proposed improvements. It was noted that the purpose of the improvements was to make the application process more accessible.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery welcomed the proposed changes which would allow the Cabinet Grants Panel more flexibility in assessing each application due to the diverse nature of the organisations who apply for these grants. He advised that the clearer guidance would help smaller organisations and would make the process more transparent and objective.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Sustainability also welcomed the proposed changes to the criteria as this was a difficult area and not an area where a one size fits all approach can be applied. She thanked the Community Services Officer for her work in this area and for guiding people through the process.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Community added that the improvements to the assessment matrix will be extremely helpful.

The Leader agreed with the comments raised and stated that the Corporate Grants Scheme was important as it provided support for those organisations that cannot access other avenues of assisted funding.

As there were no further comments, the Leader took Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet noted the contents of the report and agreed to:

- (i) combine the Small Revenue and Community & Economic developments grants, and
- (ii) agree to the suggested improvements to the grants assessment process, guidelines and application form.

56. COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER FOR 125 QUEENS ROAD, EAST GRINSTEAD

Lynne Standing, the Head of Housing, Environmental Health and Building Control, introduced the report. She advised that the property in question was a long term empty property and had taken up a lot of officer time to persuade the owner to bring the property back into use or to sell it on. She stated that the Council had now

exhausted all other avenues and requested the authorisation of a Compulsory Purchase Order to buy the property.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Sustainability stated that this decision was not taken lightly but as all other avenues had been exhausted she felt this was in the best interests of the community.

The Leader concurred and stated that this was a rare decision faced by the Council and not without cost or complexity. However, the budget had set aside funds for this purpose if needed and he hoped this would resolve this longstanding issue.

As there were no further comments, the Leader took Members to the recommendation which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet approves action to obtain a Compulsory Purchase Order of 125 Queens Road, East Grinstead.

57. SALE OF LAND AT BLACKWELL FARM ROAD FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Head of Housing, Environmental Health and Building Control introduced the report which outlined an opportunity for the Council to secure affordable housing. She advised that the site in question has outline planning permission for a residential development and that the next step was to sell the site to a Registered Provider. She said that the report outlines the bids and the mix of housing schemes that have been submitted.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery welcomed the report as it considered the concerns raised by the Scrutiny Committee for Leader and Service Delivery about the need to utilise the Council's assets to deliver affordable housing. He stated he was happy that officers had carried out the relevant value for money exercises.

The Cabinet Member for Planning noted that it was a small site but it was essential to bring these schemes forward as they will be able to secure much needed housing for vulnerable families.

As there were no further comments, the Leader took Members to exempt session.

58. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Leader proposed that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the exempt items on the agenda and this was seconded by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery. This was agreed.

RESOLVED

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item in accordance with Section 1100A of the Local Government Act 1972, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

59. SALE OF LAND AT BLACKWELL FARM ROAD FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING – EXEMPT APPENDIX

Following the consideration of the exempt appendix, the Leader brought the meeting back into open session. The Leader took Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet agreed to delegate to the Solicitor to the Council to enter into a contract with Bidder B for the sale of the Council's land at Blackwell Farm Road for the provision of affordable housing substantially on terms outlined in the exempt appendix.

Chairman.