

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Mid Sussex District  
Council Cabinet held on Monday, 11 July 2016  
from 4.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.**

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

**Also present:** Councillors: John Belsey, Pete Bradbury and Rod Clarke.

**Officers:** Kathryn Hall, Tom Clark, Judy Holmes, Peter Stuart, Mark Fisher, Simon Hughes, Tim Cusack and Mark Bristow.

**9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Jonathan Ash-Edwards and Councillor Gary Marsh declared an interest in relation to item number 8 Sale of Land at Blackwell Farm Road. Both Members had attended a Planning Meeting where this item had been granted planning permission. They decided to withdraw from the meeting during the consideration of this item.

**10. APOLOGIES**

None.

**11. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

**12. URGENT BUSINESS**

None

**13. BUDGET MANAGEMENT 2016/17 – PROGRESS REPORT APRIL TO MAY 2016.**

Peter Stuart introduced the report. He noted positive variations on income specifically Parking and Development Management income.

The Leader of the Council stated that he was pleased to see continuing sound management of the Council's finances.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that early identification of trends allowed the Council to consider how it can support residents better. He was particularly pleased to note paragraph 25 of the report in relation to Neighbourhood Planning Grant received and that he was supportive of the Capital Projects outlined in Appendix B of the report.

A further Member stated that he was pleased with the additional £65,000 investment the Council had made. He was particularly pleased with the £39,000 for car parking in East Grinstead.

The Cabinet Member for Planning stated that the Council should keep watch on income from Development Management fees as this may change once the District Plan was in place. He noted that the plan area investment in Handcross had been

well received by the community and he was pleased that engagement with users had helped shape the project.

The Leader stated that as always additional income and prudent financial management had given the Council the opportunity to invest further for residents despite the challenging environment Local Authorities have been working in since 2008. He then moved as recommended in the Report and this was agreed.

## **RESOLVED**

To recommend to Council for approval:

- (i) that £4,451 grant income relating to additional Local Council Tax Support Admin Subsidy be transferred to General Reserve, as detailed in paragraph 18;
- (ii) that £4,549 grant income relating to New Homes Bonus Returned funding grant be transferred to General Reserve, as detailed in paragraph 19;
- (iii) that £40,000 grant income relating to Neighbourhood Planning be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 25;
- (iv) the variations to the Capital Programme contained in paragraph 35 in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure rule B4; and

To note:

- (v) the remainder of the report.

## **14. COUNCIL PERFORMANCE 2015/16**

Tim Cusack introduced the report giving an overview of performance. .

He drew Members attention to the fact that the leisure centre performance was now above target, complaints had fallen and the number of compliments received had increased.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that this item had been taken to the Scrutiny Committee for Leader and Service Delivery which robustly scrutinised the Council's performance. He stated that receiving these reports provided a good opportunity to look at the bigger picture. Furthermore he drew attention to paragraph 77 of the report and stated that it was important that the work of both Scrutiny Committee for Leader and Service Delivery and the Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and Community should not duplicate and overlap.

The portfolio holder for Leisure and Sustainability stated that she was pleased to see that indicators relating to the three leisure centres were now above target and that it was tremendous to see the upturn in visitor numbers which reflected the investments made.

The Deputy Leader stated it was important to always strive for improved performance and he was particularly pleased to see Land Charges, Building Control and Benefits were areas that the Council have been delivering an improved service.

The portfolio holder for Economic Development was pleased to see the wellbeing service delivering for residents and he confirmed he had himself made use of this service previously. He recommended the service to everyone.

The portfolio holder for Planning noted the report in relation to affordable housing provision. He stated that delivery of this indicator was beyond the control of the Council and subject to market fluctuations. However, performance across the last 2 years had exceeded target.

The Leader agreed and said that it was important to look at long term trends and confirmed that the Council has a clear set of priorities to support vulnerable people.

He then took Members to the recommendation which was agreed.

## **RESOLVED**

That Cabinet note the Council's performance throughout the year and identify any areas where it requires further reporting or information.

## **15. LEISURE CENTRE INVESTMENTS**

Mark Fisher, the Head of Leisure and Sustainability introduced the report and stated that the paper provided details regarding a package of proposed investment works to be undertaken at the leisure centres. The investment will be jointly funded by the Council and its contractor Places for People Leisure. The investment would assist in attracting new users to the leisure centres and modernise the facilities in key areas.

He confirmed that the investment works outlined in the report had been assessed against key criteria. The criterion used was set in paragraph 26 of the report. The indicative timescale for the works was also set out in paragraphs 31- 39 of the report and whilst this will lead to some disruption this should be minimal.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the report and stated that this was a perfect example of partnership working. The three leisure centres were important assets and they were held in high esteem by both residents and visitors to the District. The investment demonstrated the good financial management of this authority.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Sustainability thanked officers for the report and stated that this was an exciting second stage of investment into the leisure centres.

She stated that the climbing wall facilities will help increase participation further (it is already among the highest in the country). The climbing facilities would result in the loss of 2 squash courts which she was aware was causing some concern in the community. However it should be noted that the squash courts were currently utilized 23% of the available operating hours and most of this usage occurred during peak hours. Alternative squash facilities had been identified within a reasonable distance of the current facilities.

The Deputy Leader welcomed the report and stated that it was a good example of partnership working and that visits to the leisure centres had increased significantly on previous years. He was pleased to see £1.2 million of investment being made by the Council at a time of financial constraint as it demonstrated a strong commitment.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development welcomed the report and stated that he was aware that people from other areas used Mid Sussex facilities.

The Leader then moved to the recommendations which were agreed.

## **RESOLVED**

To approve the leisure centre investment proposals outlined in paragraphs 14-23 of the report.

Councillors Ash-Edwards and Marsh withdrew from the meeting.

## **16. SALE OF LAND AT BLACKWELL FARM ROAD**

The Solicitor to the Council, Tom Clark, introduced the report and stated that the sale of this land had been agreed in March 2016. Members of the public were invited to make representations during a four week consultation period and a number of letters were received. The Solicitor summarised the main issues highlighted during the consultation process and drew Member's attention to all the representations received that were included, in full, within the report.

The Leader of the Council encouraged Members to consider this report very carefully and the balance between the provision of affordable housing and the loss of open space.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Communities stated that affordable housing was an important factor. There were many residents within Mid Sussex and indeed East Grinstead who are struggling to afford housing. The proposal was to sell the land for 100% affordable housing. He further noted the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) located across the road that amounted to 65 hectares. He also stated that he had read the letters of objection carefully

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Sustainability noted the letters of objection. It was always an emotive issue when open space was to be lost. In her mind the open space was relatively small and very close to traffic which limits its use for any meaningful purpose, particularly when taking into account the nearby Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Promotion stated he understood that the loss of open space needed to be balanced against the provision of much needed affordable housing. He noted letters of representation received.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged it was a balancing act and the challenges that there were in bringing forward affordable housing. He thanked those who had written in. He also noted the investment that had been invested in the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace. He then took Members to the recommendation which was agreed.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) To note the responses received to the statutory notices placed in the East Grinstead Courier.

- (ii) To reaffirm their decision made on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2016 to sell the Blackwell Farm Road land to Affinity Sutton Homes for the provision of affordable housing, notwithstanding the objections received.

Councillors Ash-Edwards and Marsh return to the meeting at this point.

**17. ACCEPTANCE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE BALCOMBE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AND DESIGN GUIDE EXAMINATION REPORT**

Judy Holmes, Assistant Chief Executive introduced the report stating that the Council continued to make significant progress with Neighbourhood Plans.

The Cabinet Member for Planning stated that he welcomed the report. The Parish Councils of both Balcombe and Bolney had worked hard to produce their respective Neighbourhood Plans.

He went on to say that all Members were aware of how much work goes into producing Neighbourhood Plans and that the experience has been a sharp learning curve for a number of Parish Clerks. He was pleased to see these Neighbourhood Plans reach this point and he moved as recommended.

**RESOLVED**

That Cabinet agrees the District Council formally accept the recommendations of the Independent Examiner in relation to the Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan and Design Guide.

**18. ACCEPTANCE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE BOLNEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION REPORT**

Judy Holmes introduced the report and congratulated Bolney for their success in reaching this outcome.

As the discussion for both neighbourhood plans had been covered under the previous item there were no further comments from Members.

**RESOLVED**

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

**19. 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.

**20. EXEMPT ITEM**

The Leader brought the meeting back into open session on the completion of exempt business and closed the meeting at 5:00 pm.

Chairman.