

Date published: 19 February 2024

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CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8 February 2024 at 7 pm in The Guildhall, St Peter's Place, Westgate, Canterbury

Present: Councillor Alan Bladock - Chair
Councillor Michael Dixey - Vice Chair
Councillor Charlotte Cornell
Councillor Chris Cornell
Councillor Mel Dawkins
Councillor Pip Hazelton
Councillor Connie Nolan
Councillor Alex Ricketts
Councillor Mike Sole

In attendance: Councillor David Thomas

Officers: Peter Davies - Director of Strategy and Improvement
Tricia Marshall - Director of Corporate Services
Suzi Wakeham - Director of People and Place
Rob May - Head of Finance
Bill Hicks - Service Director for Place
Nicci Mills - Service Director for Finance and Procurement
*Richard Moore - Head of Transportation and Environment
Gary Peskett - Housing Strategy Manager
Marie Royle - Service Director for People
Pippa Tritton - Democratic Services Officer

(* present for part of the meeting)

527. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

528. Declarations of interest by Members or Officers

In relation to Item 11, Councillor Mel Dawkins and Councillor Mike Sole made a voluntary announcement that they were Kent County Council councillors.

529. Announcements

No announcements were made.

530. Public participation

The Chair advised that there were no public speakers for the meeting.

531. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2023

The minutes of the meeting on 4 December 2023 were agreed as a true record by general assent.

532. References from Committees

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 January 2024 were noted.

533. EKS Transition Business Case

Councillor Alan Baldock, the Leader, introduced the report asking for the approval of the transition of outsourced services (Civica UK Limited) to a LATCo service delivery vehicle.

The Cabinet discussed the report and clarification was provided where needed by the Director of Corporate Services.

It was proposed, seconded and when put to a vote RESOLVED:

- a) to exit from the contract with Civica UK Limited for the delivery of Revenue, Benefits and Customer Services.
- b) to approve the LATCo service delivery vehicle as the preferred option for future service delivery.
- c) to approve the business case for the LATCo pursuant to Article 2(2)(b) of the Local Government (Best Value Authorities) (Power to Trade) (England) Order 2009.
- d) to the extent that it is not otherwise authorised to do so, to authorise the East Kent Services Committee to exercise the powers and functions of the Council to form the LATCo and to enter into the contract with it to include (but not limited to) making decisions on behalf of the Council in relation to point 9 of this report.

Record of the vote:

For (9): Councillors Alan Bladock, Charlotte Cornell, Chris Cornell, Mel Dawkins, Michael Dixey, Pip Hazelton, Connie Nolan, Alex Ricketts and Mike Sole.

Against (0)
Abstained (0)

Reason for the decision: With the added ability to generate new revenue income streams, flexibility to attract and retain high calibre staff, due to enhanced terms and conditions, the LATCo was the preferred choice of service delivery vehicle. With an uncertain and challenging financial environment the LATCo was more able to weather the uncertainty by generating additional income streams to support frontline services. The ability of a LATCo to minimise costs and maximise efficiencies and deliver innovative services to communities and residents were a significant factor to support the LATCo approach.

534. Non domestic rates (business rates) discretionary relief policy

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which explained that businesses were currently able to apply for discretionary relief to alleviate the burden of business rates in certain circumstances. There were currently two policies from different years covering the decision making process which meant it was not transparent to applicants. The proposal was to create two 'volumes' for the overall Discretionary Policy.

There were three options available to Cabinet members, which were:

Option 1 - do nothing and leave the policies as they were.

Option 2 - revise the policies as proposed.

Option 3 - revise the policy but use different methodology for assessing and awarding discretionary relief.

The report was discussed and the Service Director for Finance provided clarification where required.

- This was a timely piece of work which fundamentally would help businesses.
- The quickest way for businesses to get support was via the council's website.

It was proposed, seconded and when put to a vote RECOMMENDED to Full Council to:

- a) Approve a revised business rates discretionary relief policy, in two volumes
- b) Approve the automatic award of relief to certain business types
- c) Approve a revised process for making decisions on relief applications in non-automatic award cases, on a case-by-case basis, via a scoring matrix procedure

Record of the vote:

For (9): Councillors Alan Bladock, Charlotte Cornell, Chris Cornell, Mel Dawkins, Michael Dixey, Pip Hazelton, Connie Nolan, Alex Ricketts and Mike Sole.

Against (0)
Abstained (0)

535. Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which explained that Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 required the council to adopt a Pay Policy each year. The report set out the draft policy and sought its endorsement.

There were two options available within the report, to

- a) Recommend the Pay Policy statement to Full Council for adoption or,
- b) To not accept the Pay Policy Statement.

Cabinet Members debated the report and clarification was provided by the Corporate Services Director:

- The lowest paid staff would probably be on variable hours which is why they would be paid by the hour, rather than an annual salary.
- The council was a responsible employer and had made a previous commitment to pay not less than the Living Wage Foundation living wage from April each year.

It was proposed, seconded and when put to a vote RECOMMENDED to Full Council:

That the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 be adopted

Record of the vote:

For (9): Councillors Alan Bladock, Charlotte Cornell, Chris Cornell, Mel Dawkins, Michael Dixey, Pip Hazelton, Connie Nolan, Alex Ricketts and Mike Sole.

Against (0)

Abstained (0)

536. Council Tax 2024/25 To approve the council tax for the District including KCC, KMFRA, Kent Police and parish council precepts

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report explaining that Full Council was required to set the level of Council Tax for the next financial year. The report set out the various calculations needed to see the Council Tax for the district and each parish within the district.

It was proposed, seconded and RECOMMENDED to Council that:

The formal resolution set out in Appendix B to set the Council Tax for 2024/25 be approved and that, if any of the precepting authorities changed their precept figures before Council on 22 February, the Service Director Finance and Procurement be authorised to present to Council a revised resolution.

Record of the vote:

For (9): Councillors Alan Bladock, Charlotte Cornell, Chris Cornell, Mel Dawkins, Michael Dixey, Pip Hazelton, Connie Nolan, Alex Ricketts and Mike Sole.

Against (0)
Abstained (0)

537. Household Waste & Recycling Centre Lease

(Councillor Mel Dawkins and Councillor Mike Sole made a voluntary announcement that they were Kent County Council councillors.)

The Cabinet Member for Property, performance and oversight introduced the report which was seeking authority to agree the proposed terms of a new lease to Kent County Council for the Canterbury Household Waste Recycling Centre.

Councillors attention was drawn to the confidential annex and advised that they would need to go into closed session if they wished to discuss it.

There were two options available for councillors:

- 1) To grant the new lease on the basis of the agreed Head of Terms
- 2) Not to agree the new letting.

It was proposed, seconded and when put to a vote unanimously agreed:

RESOLVED:

- a) that the Head of Property & Regeneration be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Heads of Terms and to agree the final terms of the lease.
- b) to authorise the Head of Legal Services to enter into any legal documentation necessary to complete the lease.

Record of the vote:

For (9): Councillors Alan Bladock, Charlotte Cornell, Chris Cornell, Mel Dawkins, Michael Dixey, Pip Hazelton, Connie Nolan, Alex Ricketts and Mike Sole.

Against (0)
Abstained (0)

Reason for the decision: The existing use of the site was well established, well used and considered by many to be an essential public facility. By granting a new lease, the council could ensure the site could continue to be used. The letting would provide the council with improved rental income in line with market evidence.

There was a short adjournment at this point of the meeting.

538. LUF Highway projects : decision to implement

The Cabinet Member for Tourism, Movement and Rural Development introduced the report which set out the main improvements to the public highway that were included in the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid, and provided a summary of the public consultation responses to the outline designs, and set out proposed changes. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed with the recommendations at their meeting on 25 January 2024 and their comments were included within the report.

There were two options available:

- a) To resolve that the detailed designs shown on the drawings in Appendices 2-5 relating to the following projects - Westgate Square, St George's Square, St George's Lane, Dane John to Castle (via Castle Row car park) are agreed.
- b) To make changes to the detailed designs shown on the drawings in Appendices 2-5 relating to the following projects, Westgate Square, St George's Square, St George's Lane, Dane John to Castle (via Castle Row car park).

Councillors debated the proposals and clarification was provided by the Head of Transport and Environment. The following points were amongst those raised:

- Discussions had been held at both Joint Transportation Board regarding the Pound Lane closure and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. People were broadly in favour during the consultation.
- Works would be very closely monitored.
- The level of engagement had been pleasing.
- The impact of the closure of Pound Lane couldn't be ignored, but works within the car park such as the repainting of directional arrows would help. Signage to warn of delays and suggesting using other car parks would be installed. ANPR could also help aid the flow in the car park.
- Pound Lane exit by the Westgate Towers had already been closed for some time, so people were already used to it.
- It was important that all LUF project teams talked to each other.
- The co-location of bins and planters was a good idea and should be investigated further.
- There was some concern about the proposals and It was important to remember that Canterbury was a heritage city and appropriate materials should be used.
- It was good to see that the concerns of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were being addressed.
- Although not directly related to this item, It was important that comments related to accessible toilets were not lost.

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed:

RESOLVED:

- a) That the detailed designs shown on the drawings in Appendices 2-5 relating to the following projects : Westgate Square, St Georges Square, St Georges Lane, Dane John to Castle (via Castle Row car

- park), are agreed.
- b) That a Section 278 agreement is entered into with Kent County Council for the implementation of these projects.
 - c) The Cabinet Member for Tourism, Movement and Rural Development, in consultation with the Head of Transport and Environment, is given delegated authority to make any changes required by Kent County Council and/or Canterbury City Council.

Record of the vote:

For (9): Councillors Alan Bladock, Charlotte Cornell, Chris Cornell, Mel Dawkins, Michael Dixey, Pip Hazelton, Connie Nolan, Alex Ricketts and Mike Sole.

Against (0)

Abstained (0)

Reason for the decision: The proposed design changes incorporated many of the views and suggestions from the consultation as possible, whilst still ensuring the key outputs of the LUF bid were delivered.

539. Proposed changes to charges and conditions in council car parks

The Cabinet Member for Tourism, Movement and Rural Development introduced the report which set out the proposed changes to charges and conditions in the Off Street Parking Places Order (OSPPO) for the financial year 2024/25 and provided a summary of the public consultation responses. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2024 recommended the resolutions and their comments were included within the report.

There were three options available:

- a) To resolve that the OSPPO proposals set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 (items 1-55) were implemented and the financial impact of item numbers 56-61 included in the 2024/25 budget.
- b) To make changes to any of the OSPPO proposals set out in Appendix 1 or Appendix 2 and these are then implemented, or to make changes to any of the item numbers 56-61 and include these in the 2024/25 budget.
- c) Not to implement any of the OSPPO proposals or to include items 56-61 in the 2024/25 budget.

Councillors debated the proposals and clarification where provided where necessary by the Cabinet member:

- It was acknowledged that nobody liked increasing parking charges but there was no other choice.
- Reinstating the Sturry Road Park and Ride and the three hour blue badge parking were issues that had been supported in the consultation.

- The residents rate had been a long time coming and should be welcomed.
- A percentage of the car parks would be cheaper next year than they were this year.
- If usage dropped off in some of the car parks, things could be reviewed.
- Officers were thanked for their work on the proposals.
- The introduction of three 'bands' was welcomed to give users a choice - pay more to park centrally, or park somewhere cheaper and walk.
- The answer to women leaving venues later at night was to make the city a safe place to move around at all times.
- There were £300K of improvements planned for the Castle Street multi storey but there was a lot of work to be done and monitoring would be needed. However, the best remedy was to make them well used.
- Pound Lane was an issue due to congestion and that was why it had been identified as a Band 1 car park.
- There was a small pot of money available for incentives, such as Christmas parking and it was hoped that would be expanded in the future.
- All changes were part of the bigger transport strategy.
- Bands should encourage use of car parks in less congested areas and be better environmentally.
- Significant funds had been set aside for the marketing campaign which would include colour coded signage.
- People would be encouraged to park in Bands 2 and 3, with Band 1 coming in at a premium.

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously RESOLVED:

- (1) That changes are made to the advertised proposals in respect to item numbers 3, 6, 13, 14, 35 as set out in the report
- (2) That item numbers 1-54 (which include the changes above), as set out in Appendix 1, and the proposed permit charges, item number 55 as set out in Appendix 2 are implemented on 1 April 2024.
- (3) That the financial impact of items 56-61 are taken into account in the 24/25 budget

Record of the vote:

For (9): Councillors Alan Bladock, Charlotte Cornell, Chris Cornell, Mel Dawkins, Michael Dixey, Pip Hazelton, Connie Nolan, Alex Ricketts and Mike Sole.

Against (0)

Abstained (0)

Reason for the decision: The proposals would help to meet objectives of transport, parking and climate change policies that encouraged greater use of sustainable transport and Park and Ride. Rationalising tariffs into 'bands' would provide great consistency and enable informed parking choices. Having a residents rate was fairer

for those living in the district. Restoring the three hour free period for blue badge holders would bring charging back in line with onstreet parking arrangements. Additional income would help reduce the council's overall funding gap. The changes reflected some of the concerns expressed in the public consultation.

540. General Fund revenue and capital budgets 2024/25

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which set out the key financial issues facing the Council from 2023 to 2025 and advised councillors on key budget assumptions, and put forward budget proposals for 2024/25 for consultation.

Options available to councillors were:

- a) To agree the recommendations as set out within the report or
- b) To amend the recommendations

It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed the report at its meeting on 25 January 2024.

Thanks were given to officers who had been working with a new administration and very difficult budgets.

It was proposed, seconded and when put to a vote unanimously agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:**

- a) that the Council approves the net revenue budget amount of £20,817,234 for 2024/25;
- b) that the Council approves a Council Tax for Band D of £239.91 for 2024/25, an increase of 2.99% when compared with 2023/24;
- c) that the Council approves the Financial Plan for 2024/25 to 2025/26 set out in Appendix 1 as the basis for the budget in each of those years with the projected Council Tax increase being limited to not more than 2.99% each year;
- d) that, in order to deliver a robust budget in future years, the Council continues to identify further opportunities to generate additional savings;
- e) that the fees and charges set out in Appendix 3 be approved;
- f) that the movements in reserves set out in Appendix 4 be approved; and
- g) that authority be given to incur expenditure on schemes brought into the capital programme since the Council meeting in February 2023 for 2024/25 set out in Appendix 2;
- h) that, subject to any alterations necessary, the draft capital programme set out in Appendix 2 be adopted as the basis for planning the approved capital budget; and
- i) that authority be given to the Head of Paid Services, Director of People and Place, Director of Strategy and Improvement and Service Directors to incur expenditure and otherwise exercise the powers delegated to them in the Constitution in order to implement the Capital Programme.

j) that for the cost recovery fees and charges (highlighted in amber in Appendix 3), officers are able to further increase or decrease charges during the year by up to 5% if costs vary, in consultation with the Chair of Cabinet.

k) that authority is given to the Director of Finance & Procurement, Section 151 Officer to make any necessary amendments to individual budget lines following the final Local Government Finance Settlement in line with existing virement rules that does not alter the net revenue budget requirement.

Record of the vote:

For (9): Councillors Alan Bladock, Charlotte Cornell, Chris Cornell, Mel Dawkins, Michael Dixey, Pip Hazelton, Connie Nolan, Alex Ricketts and Mike Sole.

Against (0)

Abstained (0)

541. Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets 2024/25

The Cabinet member for Finance introduced the report which presented the responses to the public consultation on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget 2024/25. The report noted that the HRA budget was for one year only (2024/25) and did not contain any projections for the following years because of uncertainty about Government rent policy and the need to keep many elements of the budget under constant review.

Cabinet members noted the comments that had been made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the meeting on 25 January 2024 which were included within the report.

Three options were available:

- 1) Recommend that the draft housing revenue and capital budget should be approved.
- 2) Recommend that the draft housing revenue and capital budget should be amended.
- 3) Recommend that the draft housing revenue and capital budget to Council is not accepted.

Cabinet members discussed the report. Thanks were given to the Service Director for Finance and team and welcomed Rob May, the new Head of Finance. It was noted that mainly operational comments had been made at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Housing Strategy Manager explained that he had met with the Resident Engagement Panel where a robust and wide ranging discussion had taken place. Residents were in agreement with the changes, except for one who had abstained due to not paying service charges.

It was proposed, seconded and when put to a vote unanimously agreed to:

RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL:

That the draft housing revenue and capital budgets in Appendices A to C be approved.

Record of the vote:

For (9): Councillors Alan Bladock, Charlotte Cornell, Chris Cornell, Mel Dawkins, Michael Dixey, Pip Hazelton, Connie Nolan, Alex Ricketts and Mike Sole.

Against (0)

Abstained (0)

542. Opportunity to purchase affordable housing near Canterbury (pages 419 to 428)

The Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the item explaining that the council had an opportunity to purchase a number of new affordable homes for rent to help meet local housing needs.

Councillors were advised that the proposal had been discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2024 and comments were included in the confidential annex. However, if councillors wished to discuss anything within the annex, they need to go into closed session to do so.

Councillors welcomed the item and thanked officers for listening to their priorities and finding high quality new housing stock to add to the council housing portfolio.

The options available to councillors were:

- 1) Recommend the purchase of the new affordable homes for the price specified in the confidential annex to help meet housing needs in the district.
- 2) That the terms of the proposed purchase be renegotiated, which may be unacceptable to the developer.
- 3) That the council withdrew from the proposed purchase.

It was proposed, seconded and when put to a vote unanimously agreed to

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That Council resolves to approve the purchase of the new affordable homes for the price specified in the confidential annex.

Record of the vote:

For (9): Councillors Alan Bladock, Charlotte Cornell, Chris Cornell, Mel Dawkins, Michael Dixey, Pip Hazelton, Connie Nolan, Alex Ricketts and Mike Sole.

Against (0)
Abstained (0)

543. Date of next meeting

7pm, Monday, 11 March 2024 (Special Meeting)

544. Any other urgent business to be dealt with in public

None notified

545. Exclusion of the press and public

546. Household Waste & Recycling Centre Lease - annex exempt from Publication

The confidential annex was not discussed.

547. Opportunity to purchase affordable housing near Canterbury - Annex exempt from publication

The confidential annex was not discussed.

548. Any other urgent business which falls under the exempt provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 or the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or both

There was no business under this item.

Close the meeting.21:03