

# Canterbury City Council

## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

### Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday, 25 January 2024 at 7.00 pm in The Guildhall, St Peter's Place, Westgate, Canterbury

**Present:** Cllr Paul Prentice (Chair)  
Cllr James Flanagan (Vice Chair)  
Cllr Dane Buckman  
Cllr Elizabeth Carr-Ellis  
Cllr Roben Franklin (substitute)  
Cllr Liz Harvey  
Cllr Keji Moses  
Cllr Harry McKenzie  
Cllr Peter Old  
Cllr Naomi Smith  
Cllr Jeanette Stockley  
Cllr David Thomas (substitute)  
Cllr Clare Turnbull

**In attendance** Councillor Alan Baldock - Leader of the Council  
Councillor Pip Hazelton - Cabinet Member for Housing  
Councillor Mike Sole - Cabinet Member for Finance  
Councillor Mel Dawkins - Cabinet Member for Climate Change  
and Biodiversity  
Councillor Michael Dixey - Deputy Leader of the Council

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

#### 489. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dan Smith and  
Councillor Rachel Carnac.

**490. Substitute members**

Councillor Roben Franklin was present as a substitute for Councillor Dan Smith and Councillor David Thomas was present for Councillor Rachel Carnac.

**491. Declarations of interest by Members or Officers**

The Chair advised that one of the speakers was known to him and to other Labour councillors.

Councillors James Flanagan and Jeanette Stockley also advised that a speaker was known to them.

In relation to Item 8, Councillor David Thomas made a voluntary announcement that his brother was a taxi driver.

In relation to the Draft Housing Revenue and Capital Budget item, Councillor James Flanagan made a voluntary announcement that he was a co-opted member of Canterbury Housing Advice Centre.

**492. Public participation**

The Chair advised that there were two public speakers for the meeting who would be heard directly before the relevant items.

**493. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 were agreed as a true record.

**494. LUF HIGHWAYS PROJECTS - DECISION TO IMPLEMENT**

(Oliver Waldron, representing Spokes, spoke after the officer introduction.)

The Head of Transport and Environment introduced the report which set out the main improvements to the public highway that were included in the Levelling up Fund (LUF) bid. The report also provided a summary of the public consultation responses to the outline designs and set out the proposed changes and sought a recommendation for project implementation.

Councillors debated the proposal and made comments including the following, with the Head of Transport and Environment providing clarification where necessary:

- In response to a question, the officer explained that root balls of planted trees would be contained in cells that have space to allow roots to grow.
- The use of permeable surfaces was difficult in highways areas, but officers were looking at catching as much rain runoff as possible in

landscaped areas, and sustainable urban drainage would be used on pathways where possible.

- There was concern over congestion in Pound Lane following busy Marlowe performances or other events. The officer explained that the majority of respondents, including residents, supported the proposal but at busy times there would be increased congestion there. It was possible to control traffic flow within the car park ANPR to an extent, but not once on The Causeway.
- With regards to landscaping, the species used must be fit for purpose and conform to Kent County Council standards. These would be included in future drawings once known.
- Councillors did not want the planters to be used as bins and asked if bins could be installed at the same time to prevent that from happening. This would be looked at.
- In response to a question, the officer explained that accessible toilets were not included as part of the current LUF objective.
- When the separate consultation on the bus station was considered, accessible toilets and signage for accessible toilets could be considered.

The Head of Transport and Environment and Director of Corporate Services also made comments including:

- The intention was to move cycle parking and to increase capacity, not to remove it. A cycle hire scheme with a docking system was currently being considered.
- A key point in the draft specification for cycle hire was to ensure that hired bikes were returned to a docking hub and not dumped.
- There was no room to put in a cycle contraflow in St George's Lane.
- There would be two new changing places toilets opening in the Spring this year, one at the Beaney and one at Kingsmead Leisure Centre, improving accessibility within the city centre.

It was proposed, seconded and agreed by general assent to:

Recommend (to Cabinet):

- 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.
- That a Section 278 agreement is entered into with Kent County Council for the implementation of these projects.
- That 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 KCC.

495. **PROPOSED CHANGES TO CHARGES AND CONDITIONS IN COUNCIL CAR PARKS (pages 47-102) (7.27pm)**

(Clare Millett, a member of the public, spoke prior to the discussion.)

The Head of Transport and Environment introduced the report setting 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 response.

Councillors debated the report and comments included:

- There was a reluctant acknowledgement from some councillors that changes were needed in order to make the budget balance.
- There was concern for areas where sustainable transport was not available to residents.
- Was charging for parking at Faversham Road worth it, was the council making any money with such limited parking?
- A councillor asked how much money the increases would generate and asked if the parking increases would be permanent or would they be reduced once the council was in a better financial position?
- A councillor stated that Herne Bay and Whitsable were not a 12 month economy and were disappointed to see seasonal parking removed.
- The high parking charges at destinations like Reculver were putting people off from visiting and it was very important that seasonal charges remained. If charges were too high, nobody would use the parking.
- A councillor asked if museums that were free for example, had seen a decrease in visitor donations due to the cost of parking. The officer stated that although he had concerns from businesses previously, he had never heard from the museums.
- Was there any help for businesses with the cost of parking?
- The free parking period for blue badge holders would increase.
- Why should transport be cheaper than for those who could not afford a car?
- With regards to females having to park further away at night, a councillor suggested that the city should be made safer, not car parks cheaper.
- Giving residents somewhere in the evening would encourage the night time economy.
- Residents would not pay to park in car parks overnight, when they could park on the streets for free.
- A councillor claimed that Herne Bay residents were paying for the reopening of Sturry Road Park and Ride.

The Head of Transport and Environment and the Director of Finance made comments and provided points of clarification including:

- The revenue for the Faversham Road car park was above what was estimated when introduced a couple of years ago.
- It was easier to give an EV discount than to charge other vehicles a higher amount.
- There were understandable concerns about sustainable transport and the current bus service, but these formed a key component of the Bus Strategy, part of the forthcoming Transport Strategy, and it was hoped that there would be more bus services at night and weekends.
- The proposed changes would raise in the region of £650k.
- The council had to provide a balanced budget and parking fees were

taken into consideration as part of the whole budget.

- It was acknowledged that if prices continued to increase, there was an eventual tipping point where people would stop using the car parks. Officers would monitor usage through the ANPR data and this would be reviewed next year.
- Abstraction figures had been included on all financial spreadsheets.
- Parking at the park and ride with a resident discount would be £3.20 and was probably the cheapest in the country. For regular visitors, who were residents, every fifth visit in a calendar month was free which represented a saving of 20%.
- The council offered business permits which could be purchased on a pay monthly basis. Although they sounded expensive at £1000 per annum in Canterbury, they represented excellent value compared to the hourly rate.
- The reopening of Sturry Road park and ride would not be directly funded by Herne Bay residents. However it would primarily be used by Herne Bay, Sturry and Thanet residents.
- William Street car park had been free between 6pm-9pm for residents with online accounts for a number of years but usage was still low.
- Comments were appreciated and all would be taken into account.

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

Recommend (to Cabinet):

(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 voting:

For(10): Councillors Dane Buckman, Elizabeth Carr-Ellis, James Flanagan, Roben Franklin, Keji Moses, Harry McKenzie, Peter Old, Naomi Smith, Clare Turnbull

Against (3): Councillors Liz Harvey, Jeanette Stockley and David Thomas

Abstained (0):

#### **496. GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET**

(Councillor David Thomas made a voluntary announcement that his brother was a taxi driver.)

The Service Director, Finance introduced the report which set out the key financial issues facing the council from 2023 to 2025 and advises councillors in key budget assumptions and puts forward budget recommendations for 2024/25 for consultation.

The Service Director, Place explained the markets and licensing

consultation contained within the report.

Councillors were asked for their comments on the report, specifically on the three consultations for markets, licensing and the general fund consultation and advised that these would be passed to Cabinet for consideration.

Councillors debated the report and made comments including:

- Could anything be done to stop the sale of vapes on market stalls, or to increase the rates for those selling vapes. The officer explained that illegal products would not be permitted. Vapes were currently still legal and unless that guidance changed it would not impact the sale of such products. The situation would be monitored.
- A councillor applauded the return of the market and market manager and stated that they would like to explore bringing a market back to Whitstable too.

Comments and points of clarification were provided by both the Service Director, Finance and the Service Director, Place:

- Although concentrating on Canterbury at the outset, the market manager's role would be district wide.

Comments were noted.

#### **497. HOUSING REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET**

(Councillor James Flanagan make a voluntary announcement that he was a co-opted member of Canterbury Housing Advice Centre.)

The Housing Strategy Manager 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.

Councillors were asked for their comments which would then be passed to Cabinet for consideration when making their recommendation to Council.

Councillors debated the report and made comments.

- There was concern regarding the large increases in service charges, particularly heating, and a councillor asked if this could be spread out so that the impact was not so large.
- Was the council keeping energy contracts under review to ensure best value for money and was renewable energy included in that in order to meet the climate emergency carbon neutral targets?
- As there was very little money to deal with the energy efficiency of the housing stock, it was important to take advantage of any government schemes to help residents with energy costs.

- Were figures for damp and mould included within the report?

Where required, clarification was made by the Housing Strategy Manager and the Service Director, People:

- Officers were also concerned about the proposed increase, particularly in regards to utilities. Some of the figures received through the contract were huge but if they were not passed on it would mean some tenants were subsidising other tenants' heating which would not be fair. The council could be subject to a legal challenge if a proper scheme was not put in place.
- It would be possible to spread payments out over a long period, but that would mean under recovering costs this year and next and the fear was that the costs would constantly outstrip the increases.
- Officers were collating data in order to prepare bids for government schemes, however the biggest issue was having the right level of data to submit.
- Every case of damp and mould was reported, along with the investigations carried out, repairs and solutions but overall the cost was included in the day to day repairs maintenance budget.

**498. OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEAR CANTERBURY**

The Housing Strategy Manager introduced the report 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 asked for their comments on this item, which would be passed to Cabinet. Due to the nature of the confidential appendix, the Chair advised that the discussion would take place following the exclusion of the press and public and the item would be taken later in the meeting.

**499. Date of next meeting**

7pm, Thursday 29 February 2024

**500. Any other urgent business to be dealt with in public**

There was no business under this item.

**501. Exclusion of the press and public**

RESOLVED - That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act or the Freedom of Information Act or both.)

**502 OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEAR  
CANTERBURY - CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX**

Councillors welcomed the report and made comments as relevant which would be passed on to the Cabinet.

**503. 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.

The meeting closed at 9.04 pm