

CABINET

11 March 2019



Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 11 March 2019 at 11:00am.

Cabinet Members present: Councillors C.R. Maynard (Leader), Lord Ampthill, J.J. Carroll, Mrs S. Hart, Mrs J.M. Hughes, G.P. Johnson, M.J. Kenward (Deputy Leader) and Mrs E.M. Kirby-Green.

Other Members present: Councillors A.K. Azad, J. Barnes, Mrs M.L. Barnes, K.P. Dixon, R.V. Elliston (in part), K.M. Harmer, I.G.F. Jenkins, J.M. Johnson, B. Kentfield, P.N. Osborne, J. Potts and M.R. Watson.

Advisory Officers present: Executive Director (TL), Executive Director (MJ), Assistant Director Resources, Head of Service Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration, Head of Service Housing and Community, Customer Services Manager, Property Investment and Regeneration Manager, Programme Office and Policy Manager and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: 1 member of the press and 7 members of the public.

Publication Date: 13 March 2019

The decisions made under PART II will come into force on 21 March 2019 unless they have been subject to the call-in procedure.

CB18/74. MINUTES

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2019 as a correct record of the proceedings.

CB18/75. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Executive Member Councillor I.R. Hollidge.

PART I – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL – not subject to call-in procedure under Rule 16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

CB18/76. CAMBER WESTERN CAR PARK GROUND REINFORCEMENT
(6.1)

Members gave consideration to the Executive Director's report on proposed ground improvements to Camber Western Car Park (CWCP).

CWCP was the largest of three car parks owned by the Council in Camber. It consisted of 1,800 spaces and measured approximately 35,000sqm. The surface was primarily laid to grass on a thin layer of topsoil. As a result of the high volume of traffic during summer seasons and localised flooding during the winter months, temporary repairs had been carried out in the past and an upgrade was now required for a more permanent solution.

During October 2018, three independent specialist companies assessed the car park; they recommended reinforcing the ground with heavy duty grass blocks, with a plastic interlocking grid system which was estimated to last approximately 20-25 years, minimising the need for further maintenance costs over the period. The indicative cost, plus contingencies and other associated costs amounted to £330,000. Provision would be made in the Capital Programme and the work completed during October 2019 to March 2020. As a result of this investment, it was anticipated that income would increase by £19,000, reduce maintenance costs by £6,500 and that £625,000 saving would be realised over 20-25 year period. Therefore it was proposed that provision be made for the works from the Car Park Earmarked Reserve and the financial forecast for 2020/21 be amended to take account of the changes in income and costs.

The estimated cost of the improvements was below the current EU limit and procurement would follow the Council's procurement process with companies being invited to tender for the works.

Cabinet agreed that the upgrade and financial recommendations be forwarded to full Council for formal approval. It was agreed that the improvements would secure the future of CWCP, reduce the health and safety risks associated with its current operation, provide additional income and reduce ongoing maintenance costs to the Council. Investment in the infrastructure would reduce traffic congestion and improve/maintain economic viability of Camber.

The Leader thanked the officer team that supported the operation of CWCP and associated project.

RECOMMENDED: That the:

- 1) improvements to the surface of Camber Western Car Park as outlined in the report be approved;
- 2) 2019/20 Capital Programme be updated to make provision for £330,000 for these works funded from the Car Parks Earmarked Reserve; and
- 3) financial forecast for 2020/21 be amended to increase income by £19,000 and reduce maintenance costs by £6,500.

PART II – EXECUTIVE DECISIONS – subject to the call-in procedure under Rule 16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules by no later than 4:00pm on 20 March 2019.

CB18/77.
(6.2)

CUSTOMER HELP POINT AT BATTLE ALMONRY

Cabinet received and considered the report of the Executive Director that set out proposals to relocate the Council's Battle Customer Help Point (CHP).

Since 1998, the Council had rented 6 Market Square, Battle to run the CHP at an annual cost of approximately £20,000. In order to improve services and reduce running costs it was proposed that the Council entered into an agreement with Battle Town Council (BTC) to share a workspace in the Almonry, Battle from summer 2019. A significant advantage would be providing both district and town council services to residents at a single location, as well as saving approximately £75,000 over five years.

Disability access to the Almonry was queried. It was confirmed that, at present, a temporary access ramp was provided. Solutions were currently being investigated.

Cabinet was in agreement to relocate the CHP and it was agreed that delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director to agree terms and conditions and enter into a licence agreement with BTC. Members concurred that the Council had the opportunity to deliver an improved service to its residents at a reduced cost.

The Leader thanked the officer team that supported the operation of Battle CHP.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Director be authorised to agree terms and conditions and enter into an agreement with Battle Town Council for the occupation of a shared office space in the Almonry, Battle.

CB18/78.
(6.3)

COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME – ROUND 2

The Council's Community Grant Scheme (CGS) made provision for up to £130,000 per annum to be made available to community groups or organisations that met the specific grant criteria of the Scheme. In August 2018, Cabinet awarded a total grant of £67,301 including £1,470 through the Small Grants Scheme (SGS) therefore the opening balance of the Rother CGS was £62,699. Round 2 for 2018/19 closed on the 15 January 2019; five applications had been recommended for approval, subject to specific conditions as detailed within the report.

Members gave consideration to the applications listed in Appendix 1 and each grant was considered in turn as follows:

- **Battle Local Action Planning Group:** the Panel had recommended an award of £25,000 to create a healthy walk / cycle pathway at Battle Recreation Ground.
- **Bexhill Senior Citizens Club:** the Panel had recommended an award of £4,875 to provide an accessible toilet within the club building.
- **Crowhurst Youth Club:** the Panel had recommended an award of £1,478 towards the replacement of an outdated, inadequate and

expensive heating system and install extractor fans in the toilets in the Crowhurst Youth Club building.

- **Guestling Parish Council:** the Panel had recommended an award of £4,984 towards improving the community playing fields used by the local youth team.
- **Westfield Parish Council:** the Panel had recommended an award of £25,000 towards building a new pavilion for Westfield Cricket Club.

Cabinet was reminded that conditions were applied when awarding grants; specifically, that full funding was required to be obtained in advance of any Rother payments being made and that Rother District Council was acknowledged in any publicity and promotional material associated with any project. After discussion, Cabinet approved all five grants as detailed above. Both Battle Local Action Planning Group and Westfield Parish Council who had requested the maximum amount of £30,000 were encouraged to apply for the additional £5,000 during Round 1 of 2019/2020 CGS if they were still short of funding for the project.

Following on from changes to the SGS, the Panel agreed to review the medium/large Grant Scheme with the same objective of making the application process available on-line. It was noted that this would not affect Round 1 of the 2019-20 Grant Scheme, however testing of the on-line platform was expected during Round 2.

The Panel had delegated authority to award grants under £500. Since Round 1, the Panel used its delegated authority to approve £500 to Dallington Old School for the installation of broadband internet into the village hall to support the development of a community library café, and £200 to Northiam Conservation Society for a WW1 Remembrance Parade. Details of all Small Grants awarded for 2018-19 to date, were set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

Members were asked to encourage groups within their Wards to apply for small grant applications (up to £500). These were accepted all year round and prospective applicants were encouraged to make applications through the on-line application process.

The Leader thanked the officer team that supported the community grant process and the Panel Members for their recommendations and the local Members present who had addressed Cabinet. It was particularly pleasing to note that all the applications received had been approved, enabling local communities to achieve their aspirations, through this grant funding.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the Community Grants listed below, as recommended by the Grants Panel be approved, subject to specific conditions relating to each application

Battle Local Action Planning Group – £25,000
Bexhill Senior Citizens Club – £4,875
Crowhurst Youth Club – £1,478

Guestling Parish Council – £4,984
Westfield Parish Council – £25,000

- 2) the changes to the medium/large Grants Scheme agreed by the Panel, be noted; and
- 3) all Members be requested to promote the Community Grant Scheme within their wards.

(Councillor Kenward declared a personal interest in the application relating to Bexhill Senior Citizens Club, as he might be involved in decision making on other sources of future funding for the project and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

CB18/79.
(6.4)

DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCIL OWNED SITES

At the last meeting, Cabinet authorised the Executive Director to investigate the long-term future use of a number of Council-owned sites, with a budget of up to £250,000 to be met from the Medium Term Financial Strategy Earmarked Reserve. A more detailed report was also requested, in order for Cabinet to review location plans and consider how the budget was being spent.

Appendices 1, 2 and 3 to the report identified the sites under consideration, development process flowchart and indicative financial expenditure, respectively. Members noted that the sites identified did not necessarily mean that development was achievable. In each case, planning and viability considerations would be paramount and discussions would be held with relevant statutory bodies, as well as Ward Members. Resources would be assigned to the sites most likely to be successful and financially viable. Cabinet would be kept abreast of progress.

The Leader encouraged Members to speak to officers, local residents and Parish and Town Councils on the future development of the sites within their Wards.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CB18/80.
(6.5)

BEXHILL EVENTS PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director on Bexhill Events Promotional Campaign.

Since April 2017, £11,500 had been allocated from the town centre Section 106 funding to support a dedicated online and railway station Modern Vintage Promotion Campaign of posters, postcards and leaflets for summer of 2017 and 2018. Therefore Members' agreement was sought to allocate a further £4,500 towards the same campaign for 2019. £20,054 of funding was currently available and it was noted that 1066 Country had committed 50% of match-funding for the design of the train posters and leaflet.

Cabinet approved the allocation of £4,500.

RESOLVED: That the allocation of £4,500 from the Town Centre Section 106 funds towards the Branding and Vitality Project for summer 2019, be approved.

CB18/81.
(6.6)

**REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME QUARTER 3
2018/19**

Members received and considered the report of the Executive Director on the Provisional Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 3 2018/19. The report contained details of the significant variations of the Revenue Budget and updated Capital Programme.

Overall it was expected there would be an underspend on services of £411,000. This was attributed to underspends/savings on staff vacancies, Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), planning policy, land charge income, rent reviews, beach hut sales, refuse collection, increased car parking income and reduced telephone costs. Overspend/deficits were attributed to office space rental, reduced planning fees income, property management, temporary accommodation, external audit fees, overtime costs for the implementation of the new financial system, software costs and reduced interest from investments.

Due to slippage on items within the Capital Programme funded through revenue, there was expected to be a final spend of £1.493m, a reduction of £0.822m compared to the original budget. Additional income of £105,000 had been received in respect of Section 31 grants, neighbourhood planning and New Burdens Growth Fund. The Council would also be receiving an additional £35,000 in preparation for BREXIT.

The council tax collection rate was slightly lower compared to previous years and a surplus was expected of £1,238,900 as at 30 September 2018.

Business Rates collection performance was slightly higher compared to previous years. However as at 31 December 2018 there was an expected deficit of £1,226,400 attributable to adjustments to previous debt and the settlement of appeals by the Valuation Office Agency. Rother's share of the deficit was estimated to be £490,550.

The provisional outturn for the Capital Programme was £7.246m spend against a £10.262m budget, an underspend of £3m. The estimated outturn for the Capital Programme was appended to the report as Appendix A. Some costs/spend would fall into future years including East Parade Project; solar panels at Amherst Road and Bexhill Museum; development at Blackfriars, Battle; two property investments; community led housing schemes; Bexhill Leisure Centre; and Sidley Sports and Recreation. A further £1.5m DFG had been received in 2018/19 with £797,000 already in earmarked reserves, the actual end of year spend was anticipated to be £1.3m.

Particular attention was drawn to the renovation of East Parade, Bexhill, solar panels, Bexhill Leisure Centre and Sidley Sports and Recreation projects which were positive news stories and would provide significant benefits to the Council and the local community.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 11:47am

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