

CABINET

8 November 2021

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 8 November 2021 at 6:30pm.

Cabinet Members present: Councillors D.B. Oliver (Leader), S.M. Prochak (MBE) (Deputy Leader), C.A. Bayliss, K.P. Dixon, H.L. Timpe and J. Vine-Hall.

Other Members present: Councillors J.J. Carroll (in part), S.J. Coleman, Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel and B.J. Drayson.

Advisory Officers present: Chief Executive, Director – Place and Climate Change, Head of Housing and Communities, Head of Neighbourhood Services, Economic Development Manager, Operations Team Leader and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: 2 members of the public in the Council Chamber and 41 members of the public via the YouTube live broadcast.

Publication Date: 11 November 2021

The decisions made under PART II will come into force on 19 November 2021 unless they have been subject to the call-in procedure.

CB21/45. MINUTES

(1)

The Chairman was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2021 as a correct record of the proceedings.

CB21/46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T.J.C. Byrne and K.M. Field.

CB21/47. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(5)

There were no declarations of interest made.

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

CB21/48. STREET LITTER INFRASTRUCTURE AND DRAFT LITTER STRATEGY FOR ROTHER

(7)

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services regarding the adoption of a Litter Strategy for Rother.

The Litter Strategy for England 2017 had been designed to apply best practice to reduce litter and littering behaviour, as well as outlining how tackling litter could be done in partnership with central and local government, volunteers, campaigners and businesses. A fundamental part of the strategy was the development of local government level litter strategies and a review of their 'binrastructure'. Binrastructure meant having the 'right bin in the right place'. Through the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs and Waste and Resource Action Programme, the Council applied for and was granted a financial award of £22,500. This enabled the Council to purchase multiple bins, including solar bins, signage and installation, some of which had already been allocated to appropriate locations. Full information was detailed in the draft Litter Strategy at Appendix A to the report.

It was noted that additional costs would be required to maintain the bins and that Hastings Direct (via the Welcome Back Fund) had provided financial support to empty the additional bins. Additional funding might be available, as a result of local businesses supporting litter bins. A local business sponsorship education and publicity campaign would be launched once the UK Environment Bill had been ratified.

Cabinet congratulated the Head of Neighbourhood Services and her team for achieving the award and were fully supportive of the draft Litter Strategy. It was important that the negative "throw away / throw down" culture was tackled, as this had a detrimental impact on everyday life. Officers would continue to explore all funding options to purchase suitable (affordable) bins and ensure that they were placed in appropriate areas to alleviate accumulated rubbish in high footfall locations e.g. seafront / promenade etc. Partnership working with food outlets and community groups was considered essential to reduce littering and create a clean environment across the district.

RECOMMENDED: That the draft Litter Strategy for Rother attached at Appendix A to the report be approved and adopted.

AND

***RESOLVED:** That the:

- 1) Litter Strategy for England 2017 be noted; and
- 2) successful award of Binrastructure funding and its requirement for a Local Authority Litter Strategy be noted.

*The **RESOLVED** parts of this minute are subject to the call-in procedure under Rule 16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

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 18 November 2021.

CB21/49.
(6) **FEES AND CHARGES 2022-23**

Cabinet gave consideration to the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services that detailed the latest review of the Council's fees and charges for 2022/23 and the proposed recommended increases. Fees and charges were reviewed each year taking into account the increased need to recover the total cost of the services provided and the cost of inflation (Retail Price Index). The anticipated income from these charges was built into the draft Revenue Budget for 2022/23. Charges were rounded to the nearest 25p if under £50.00 or the nearest £1.00 if over £50.00.

Most of the fees and charges within the appendices to the report were recommended to increase at 4.8% with the following exceptions:

Beach and Foreshore (Appendix 3): As beach huts remained in high demand, it was recommended that the fees be increased to £560 per annum and the minimum transfer fee be increased to £2,000 for 2022/23. It was recommended that boat licence fees increased by 5% in 2022/23 and by a further 5% in 2023/24. Other foreshore services e.g. winches and equipment box fees would increase at 10%.

Car Parking (Appendix 4): Since the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE), the Council had introduced car parking charges to car parks that were previously free, created three long-stay car parks with a single "all day" tariff (Gibbet Marsh, Lower Market and Wainwright Road), and standardised chargeable hours across the district. In October 2020, an Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group had been established to consider the impact of CPE on the Council's off-street car parks. Due to COVID-19, it had not been possible to fully assess the impact of CPE on the Council's off-street car parks therefore, it was recommended that the car parking charges remained unchanged for 2022/23 whilst further review was undertaken. It was recommended that parking permit prices across the district be increased by 4.8% plus a further 4.5%. Due to significant increase in costs to manage Camber Western Car park, it was recommended that the summer season tariffs (from 1 April to 30 September) be increased in all Camber Sands car parks. The increased charges would be as follows: £2.50 (up to 1 hour) and £7.50 [not £6.50 as detailed incorrectly in the report] (1 to 3 hours).

Bulky Waste Collection (Appendix 6a): It was recommended that the fee for the Council collecting four to six and seven to nine bulky waste items increased to £75.00 and £110 respectively. A slight increase in the collection of one to three items had been noted.

Garden Waste Collections (Appendix 6b): The charge for garden waste had been increased from 15 July 2021 to £45 for customers subscribing to the service. For comparison the garden waste subscription charges in neighbouring authorities were confirmed as Hastings £70; Eastbourne £52; Lewes £70 and Wealden £55. The total cost of the service was approximately £591,630 per annum. The projected income for 2022/23 at £45 per annum per bin at the current rate of just over 22,400 subscribers was approximately £1m. It was

therefore recommended that the annual subscription be increased to £50 per annum which would result in an income of £1.1m. Officers would continue to investigate ways to promote and incentivise new subscribers to the service.

Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 (Appendix 7): It was recommended that the charges for scrap metal remain unchanged for 2022/23.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) (Appendix 8A): As a revisit to rate a premises under the FHRS was not a statutory duty, it was recommended that the scale of fees in the appendix to the report was introduced.

Health Certificates (for food exported) (Appendix 8B): Food exported to countries outside the EU required a health certificate. It was recommended that the scale of fees in the appendix to the report was introduced.

Houses of Multiple Occupation [HMO] Licences (Appendix 9): A Supreme Court judgement had determined that local authorities must have two sets of fees - one fee to cover the costs of applying for a licence (non-refundable) and one for issuing the licence and on-going enforcement. It was recommended that the Council had a combined fee to reflect the reduced administration costs associated with only one fee being paid. Therefore, it was recommended that the scale of fees in the appendix to the report was introduced.

Cabinet was satisfied that the increases put forward were not considered to be excessive. Members were mindful that to maintain income, a balance had to be struck between covering costs and retaining custom.

RESOLVED: That the charges shown in the Appendices be approved and brought into effect from 1 April 2022, with the exception of charges in Appendix 6 (b) which will be brought into effect from 15 July 2022.

CB21/50.
(8)

FOOD AND DRINK CONCESSIONS

Regular requests (up to 24) had been received from food and drink businesses to operate mobile / static units, permanent, semi-permanent or similar structures on Council owned land. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions these requests had significantly increased and therefore it was important that the Council took steps to offer pitches to market competition, rather than adopt a 'first come first served approach'. Going out to market ensured best value for money and maximised commercial potential of the Council's landholdings.

Officers had identified, in consultation with the Council's Environmental Health and Planning Departments suitable locations across the district, which were detailed in Appendix A to the report.

A 'mobile' concession applied to a vehicle or trailer that was not permanently placed in position and moved at the end of each day. A 'static' concession could be a semi-permanent kiosk, trailer or hut that remained in situ throughout the trading season, but might be removed

out of season. It was noted that in some locations small 'seating' areas could also be permitted.

It was proposed to offer 3-year concessions (reviewed and re-advertised in the third year) on flexible terms, terminable by either party on one-month's notice. Concession operators would be invited to submit their proposals and appropriate locations would be selected. The Council would aim to attract businesses offering food and drink that promoted a healthy lifestyle e.g. plant-based options etc.

Electricity would be provided at all locations at a cost of approximately £2,000; these would be 'one-off' costs that would be recouped through the licence fees received from concessions. Planning permissions would be required with other 'up-front' costs for advertising etc. This opportunity would be advertised to attract existing and new businesses.

Cabinet approved the recommendations and requested that, once the scheme was embedded, other suitable locations (Council-owned land) across the district be identified and advertised to local businesses. To provide infrastructure improvements, it was felt that there could be the potential to use Community Infrastructure Levy funding for this. Interest, costs and all options would be explored to improve the commercial offer to residents and visitors to the district.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the following locations for potential mobile and static food and drink concessions be approved:

Bexhill

East Parade, gravelled area to the east of Bexhill Sea Angling Club

Splash Deck below Pages Gap

Bexhill Leisure Centre Car Park

Rye

Rye Town Salts

Gibbets Marsh Car Park

Western Car Park, Camber

Pett Level Car Park, Pett Level

Dogs Hill Road, Winchelsea Beach

Bus Turning Circle, Rye Harbour

and

- 2) officers be authorised to promote the locations to the market and to enter into concession agreements for a period of three years from April 2022, on such terms and conditions as deemed appropriate by the Chief Executive.

CB21/51.
(9) **HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT GRANT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Housing and Community which outlined proposals for the distribution of Household Support Fund (HSF) in the Rother area.

It was confirmed that the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed that this matter be taken under the special urgency provision rule (Constitution Access to Information Rule 15) as this was a key decision which had not been published on the Council's Forward Plan and could not be reasonably deferred.

Members were advised that £421m had been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need this winter during the final stages of economic recovery. The funding covered the period 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 inclusive. All monies not distributed during this period would be clawed-back by the Government. Rother District Council (RDC) had discretion on how the funding would be used. East Sussex County Council was intending to distribute approximately 50% of the grant to schools, in addition to directing grant awards to the voluntary and community sector within the County in consultation with RDC and relevant partners. An East Sussex project group was formed and led by RDC with support from Wealden District Council to standardise the process for distributing the grant. It was noted that 10-12% of the grant could be used to off-set administering costs.

Eligibility, criteria and the details of the scheme were currently being refined. It was anticipated that grants would be awarded to those residents receiving welfare benefits. Grants would cover household costs including utility costs and food vouchers, but not rental costs. Existing on-line software would be used to distribute the grant and support would be supplied to applicants, if required. The system would be monitored to ensure fraudulent applications were detected / avoided.

The HSF would enable those experiencing financial hardship to adequately heat their homes, promote improved health, wellbeing and resilience over the winter. Once finalised, Members would be encouraged to promote the scheme within their wards.

RESOLVED: That the:

- 1) purpose of the Household Fund from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities be noted; and
- 2) approval of the final eligibility criteria and distribution process for the Household Fund be delegated to the Head of Housing and Community and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management to agree the detailed criteria for the distribution of the grant.

(The Leader had accepted this item onto the Agenda as an Additional Agenda Item in order to establish the process and distribute funding to those in need across the district before the March 2022 deadline).

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 7:53pm