

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CABINET ADVISORY PANEL B**

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the Cabinet Advisory Panel B held on Monday 2 September 2019 at 7.00 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor M J Davis (Chairman)  
Councillor E H Ben Moussa  
Councillor J Burrell  
Councillor R M Currans  
Councillor L H K Edie  
Councillor D A Hammock  
Councillor P M Harman  
Councillor R A S Jones  
Councillor D J Mote  
Councillor V Oguntope  
Councillor T Oliver  
Councillor A S Sandhu, MBE  
Councillor Mrs R F Storey

**ABSENT:** Councillor D Swinerd  
Councillor A Gaskin  
Councillor C S McLean  
Councillor A J Oakley-Dow  
Councillor R S L Perfitt

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gaskin, McLean, Oakley-Dow, Perfitt and Swinerd.

Councillor Oguntope attended the meeting as a substitute Member.

**2. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

**3. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DEBATE**

The Chairman advised that the following agenda item had been drawn down for debate:

9. Review of Charging Periods for Highfield Road Car Parks

He had also been advised that clarification might be sought on one aspect of item 13, Minutes of the Policy Overview Committee held on 18 June 2019.

Accordingly, Members endorsed the Officer recommendations in respect of the following items:

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10. Kent Health and Safety Flexible Warrants
11. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review Letter
12. Corporate Plan Key Actions and Performance Indicators Report for Quarter 1 – 2019/20
13. Minutes of the Policy Overview Committee held on 18 June 2019 (subject to a point of clarification)
14. Minutes of the Strategic Housing Board held on 10 July 2019

**4. CHANGE OF ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS**

The Chairman announced that he proposed a change of the order of items on the agenda and that he would take agenda items 8 and 9 before item 7 in order to allow the Officers in attendance for those items to leave once the items had been considered, no Officer being in attendance for item 7.

**5. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS ON ITEMS RESERVED FOR DEBATE**

There were no declarations of interests in respect of items in Part A of the agenda or relating to items drawn down for debate.

**6. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

There were no references from other committees.

**7. CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE TRANSPORT FOR LONDON BUS SERVICES 428 AND 492**

The Temporary Principal Transport Planning Officer presented a report detailing proposed changes to Transport for London bus services 428 and 492 from January 2020, which were currently subject to public consultation until 10 September 2019. The proposed changes would result in a reduction in connectivity between certain parts of the London Borough of Bexley, including Erith and Sidcup, and the north-west part of Dartford through to Bluewater and vice-versa. The report detailed specific impacts likely to arise as a result of the proposed changes including the likely additional pressures on remaining bus services and impacts on users, including school children, people travelling along London Road and users of Darent Valley Hospital. The report highlighted concerns which it was recommended should form the basis of a formal objection to the proposals in respect of proposed changes to the 492 bus route and detailed work being carried out with TfL and KCC to seek to alleviate and mitigate the impact on customers in the Dartford area. It was noted that the London Borough of Bexley and Kent County Council also intended to object to TfL's proposals. One of the major issues, should the proposals relating to the 492 route be implemented, would be the need for

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users to change buses to get to their final destination and the lack of availability of cross boundary ticketing between the TfL area and the County with cost implications for travellers. The proposals had generated considerable local concern and campaign groups, including 'Save our 492', had been set up to oppose the changes.

The Chairman ascertained that a number of members of the Cabinet Advisory Panel had already responded to the TfL consultation and he encouraged the remaining members of the Panel to do so. A Member commented on whether a change to the frequency of the running of the 96 bus could help to mitigate the change to the 492 route and said that the 96 already ran every 10 minutes and suggested that frequency was not the issue but that the bus needed to stop at more locations between Dartford Town Centre and Bluewater as it currently only stopped at Darent Valley Hospital. A Member said that a local petition against TfL's proposals had already attracted 1,178 signatures and that there was strong opposition to the proposals from residents, despite the consultation period taking place during the holiday period. A Member also questioned whether TfL was fully aware of the effect that the proposals would have on the staff and pupils at the new secondary school opening in Stone and the safety implications for pupils having to use multiple bus journeys.

The Cabinet Advisory Panel unanimously expressed strong support for the actions recommended in the report to object to TfL's proposals relating to the 492 bus route and welcomed the ongoing activity between the Council, TfL, KCC and non-TfL bus service operators to seek solutions which would alleviate the impact of the proposed changes for users of the current services and urged the Cabinet to support the recommended action.

**8. REVIEW OF CHARGING PERIODS FOR HIGHFIELD ROAD CAR PARKS**

The Parking Services Supervisor presented a report which reviewed the operation of the Highfield Road (Spring Vale) and Highfield Road (South) pay and display car parks following changes introduced following the review of Fees and Charges applying from 1 April 2018 and the making of the Dartford Borough Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2018. The new order had revised the operating hours of off-street car parks in the town centre area from 0800-18.30 to 08.00 to 20.00 hours and subsequently included a new pay and display car park at the former informal car park at Highfield Road (South). The Joint Transportation Board (JTB) on 11 June 2019 received a petition and deputation from local residents and the users of the Gurdwara asking the Council to shorten the hours of operation of the Highfield Road (Spring Vale) car park back to 18.30 hours as they considered that the extended hours had impacted heavily on users to the point that the car park was now severely under-utilised during the evenings. The JTB had asked for a report to be prepared detailing usage levels and revenues generated by the town centre car parks and, arising from this, that Cabinet be asked to review the charging periods and possibly to reduce them if justified by the usage levels. The data collected suggested that the trend in town centre car parks over the last 12 months remained largely unchanged indicating that there had been no significant factors that had affected car park usage after 18.30 but that there

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was reluctance to pay to use the Highfield Road (Spring Vale) car park after 18.30.

Cabinet had considered objections to the proposal to create a formal pay and display car park at Highfield Road (South) at its meeting on 24 May 2018. Cabinet had confirmed the proposal but asked that a review into usage and any displacement arising from this should be reviewed after 6 months. Due to the need to carry out preparatory works the pay and display operation did not come into effect until February 2019. Usage figures collected since that time suggested that the car park had previously attracted a significant level of parking linked to residential properties, unauthorised long stay uses (dumping of vehicles) and by employees working in the town centre. The car park had subsequently become little used but there had been no evidence of disproportionate displacement into adjoining residential streets and no complaints from local residents or Members.

Members questioned the level of displacement from the Highfield Road (South) car park and said that parking along Highfield Road was severely restricted due to yellow lines and that local residents had to compete with other road users for parking with the result that cars were also parking in neighbouring roads, causing considerable upset to residents. It was noted that the car park was now not being used and given the degree of upset caused to local residents and the minimal amount of revenue generated by the car park, Members felt that the charges should either be removed or that some form of dispensation or permit should be given to residents. It was noted that all of these options were available if Cabinet so wished but that where residents permit schemes were operated elsewhere in the borough there was an annual charge of £50 to residents. The Chairman reminded Members that if free car parking was to be re-introduced it would need to be seen to be fair in the context of the wider parking arrangements across the borough and that the costs of removing abandoned vehicles might increase. Another Member highlighted the effect that the change to the hours of operation of the Highfield Road (Spring Vale) was having on users of the Gurdwara and the Church and felt that the hours should revert back to the original hours of operation.

The Cabinet Advisory Panel agreed to recommend that the Cabinet should reconsider the charging regimes for both of the car parks in light of the impact on residents arising from the changes and the level of displacement observed by local Members. In particular that the hours of operation of the Highfield Road (Spring Vale) car park should revert to 08.00 to 18.30 and that the Highfield Road (South) car park should either be a free car park or that some form of dispensation or permit scheme should be introduced for local residents.

**9. FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND BID**

The Cabinet Advisory Panel received a report detailing progress with the Council's bid for funding from the Future High Streets Fund in respect of the Co-Op development scheme and setting out the next stages in the bid process. The Council's initial 'Expression of Interest' had been selected to go

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forward to the next assessment stage which would involve producing a full business case for submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in November 2019 (MHCLG).

The MHCLG was looking for schemes that were 'shovel ready' and could progress quickly and had advised that to be considered as 'shovel ready', the scheme would need to have planning permission in place. In order to progress the Co-Op project so that it could form a central part of the Council's bid, the developer for this project now needed to submit a planning application. In normal circumstances the developer would wait until any viability issues with the scheme had been identified and addressed before submitting a planning application. Given the timescales involved this would not be possible and in order to submit an application the developer was therefore looking for the Council to underwrite the costs of moving the scheme to the planning stage to the sum of £1.4m to mitigate the developer's risk in the event that the scheme was unable to proceed.

Members welcomed the scheme and the benefits that it offered for the vitality and development of the town centre. However some Members expressed concern that the Council was being asked to provide a guarantee to underwrite the developer's costs, and ultimately their profits, to the tune of £1.4M when there was no certainty that the Council's bid for Central Government funding would be successful. They were also concerned that the development should not experience the same problems previously encountered with the Lowfield Street development and questioned the impact if the Council had to pay the developer out of New Homes Bonus money.

The Strategic Director (External Services) explained that this was a key site and that the Council would work closely with the developer to ensure that it went ahead, including exploring other options to ensure that the scheme remained viable where appropriate. The project was substantially different from the Lowfield Street development where delays had been due to the approach taken by Tesco as the landowner. The payment of £1.4M to the developer would only be made if the scheme became unviable and could not progress and would be made to cover the costs incurred by the developer in progressing the scheme to the stage when it could be deemed to be 'shovel ready'. This money would not come from revenue budgets but from New Homes Bonus money which was held as a reserve. A Member also asked for an explanation of what viability issues might arise and was advised that this might cover anything which meant that the development was not cost effective for the developer to the point that the scheme then became commercially unviable for them. The Head of Regeneration explained that this would include the rising costs of construction and development and that mixed use schemes such as the one that the Council wished to put in place had quite low margins for developers. However the public benefits from the development, including the Health hub and the public space element would be significant, but that the Council was also seeking a high build quality which would also have viability implications for the developer. Officers were also working closely with the developer and the local Health Authority to explore

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other funding options, including the use of CIL, to support the sustainability of the scheme.

Other Members highlighted the fact that the commitment to underwrite the developers' costs was necessary to stand a chance of attracting £7.7M funding from Central Government and that if the money needed to be paid it was come out of reserves rather than revenue budgets. Members felt that the Council's track record on submitting successful funding bids was robust and that this bid stood a relatively good chance of being successful given the advanced stage of the current scheme proposals and was worthy of support. A Member wondered whether the bid might be a suitable item for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee and also asked whether the creation of the Health Hub would result in the closure of other local GP surgeries and the impact that this might have on elderly and vulnerable residents accessing GP services. The Chairman felt that these were matters to be addressed elsewhere when the matter was considered by the Development Control Board.

Members welcomed the regeneration opportunities arising from the development and strongly supported the bid and endorsed the recommendations contained in the report. It was however suggested that the Cabinet might wish to caveat the underwriting of the developers costs to install a timeframe, or backstop, to the period during which it was prepared to underwrite these costs as well as capping the amount at £1.4M.

**10. KENT HEALTH AND SAFETY FLEXIBLE WARRANTS**

The Cabinet Advisory Panel endorsed the recommendations contained in the report.

**11. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN - ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2019**

The Cabinet Advisory Panel endorsed the recommendations contained in the report.

**12. CORPORATE PLAN KEY ACTIONS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR QUARTER 1 - 2019/20**

The Cabinet Advisory Panel endorsed the recommendations contained in the report.

**13. MINUTES OF THE POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 JUNE 2019**

A Member wished to draw the Cabinet's attention to the first bullet point of the resolution contained in minute 9 of the Policy Overview Committee minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 (page 101 in the agenda). This related to the need for 'sign-posting' on the Council's web site for customers wishing to claim Universal Credit to be improved. She wondered whether it would be

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possible for the Cabinet to stipulate a timeframe for this to happen as claiming universal credit correctly was a time sensitive issue and she felt that this action needed to be put in place as soon as possible so that people were not left waiting for longer due to lack of awareness of their entitlement.

The Cabinet Advisory Panel noted the minutes of the Policy Overview Committee held on 18 June 2019.

**14. MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC HOUSING BOARD ON 10 JULY 2019**

The Cabinet Advisory Panel noted the minutes of the Strategic Housing Board held on 10 July 2019.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

Councillor M J Davis  
CHAIRMAN