

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CABINET**

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 21 July 2022 at 7.00 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillor J A Kite, MBE (Chairman)  
Councillor C J Shippam (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor S H Brown  
Councillor A R Lloyd  
Councillor D J Mote  
Councillor Mrs P A Thurlow  
Councillor R J Wells

**ALSO PRESENT:** Peter Dosad, Director of Housing & Public Protection  
Caroline Hicks, Director of Growth & Community  
Tim Sams, Head of Finance  
Alan Twyman, Democratic Services Manager

**26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**28. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 23 JUNE 2022**

The Cabinet considered the minutes of its meeting which took place on 23 June 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23 June 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record.

**29. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

**30. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE CABINET ADVISORY PANEL HELD ON 18 JULY 2022**

The Cabinet considered the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet Advisory Panel B which took place on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and had regard to the Panel's views throughout the meeting.

The Chairman noted that many Members had been unable to attend the Advisory Panel meeting and, whilst he recognised the extreme temperature

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on the day of the meeting, he stressed the importance of good attendance at Advisory Panel meetings to inform the Cabinet decision making process.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet Advisory Panel B held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022 be noted.

**31. REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEES**

There were no references from other committees.

**32. STONE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Cabinet considered a report which provided background to the production of the Stone Neighbourhood Development Plan which had been considered by an independent Examiner who had recommended modifications which were accepted by the Borough Council. The Stone Neighbourhood Plan was then updated by Stone Parish Council. On 26 May 2022, a referendum of eligible electors living in the Neighbourhood Area was held on whether they wished the Plan to be used by the Borough Council to help it decide planning applications in the area and 89% of those who voted in the referendum agreed.

Where a referendum results in a majority Yes vote (i.e. over 50% plus 1), the Borough Council must make the Neighbourhood Plan as soon as reasonably practicable after the date of the referendum, and, in any event, within 8 weeks of the day after the referendum. Once made and adopted, the Stone Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for Dartford Borough. This means that it will have the same status as the adopted Dartford Local Plan documents (currently the Core Strategy 2011 and the Development Policies Plan 2017) and the adopted Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (currently the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan 2013-30 and the Kent Mineral Sites Plan 2013-30). The Borough Council will determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Chairman noted the importance of the Plan and the implications that it would have for Stone, and the additional funding that would accrue to the Parish Council. The Borough Council would work with Stone Parish Council to help it to participate in co-funding important projects in the parish.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Stone Neighbourhood Plan be made, and form a part of the Development Plan for Dartford Borough; and
2. That the Borough Council determines planning applications in the Stone Neighbourhood Area in accordance with the Stone Neighbourhood Plan and other parts of the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

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**33. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND INVESTMENT PLAN**

The Cabinet considered a report which provided an overview of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the conditional financial allocation of £1M for Dartford over three years. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is the Government's domestic replacement for the European Structural and Investment Programme (ESIF) and was launched on 13 April 2022, providing £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The primary goal of the UKSPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. The scheme was specifically designed to support the Government's Levelling Up commitment through three investment priorities; Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business, and People and Skills. The report also explained the need to prepare and submit an Investment Plan by 1 August 2022 and sought delegated authority to be given to the Director of Growth & Community to submit the Plan to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund by the required deadline.

The Director of Growth & Community confirmed that preparation of the Investment Plan was on track and feedback was that the Council's intended uses of the funding were in accordance with the funding criteria.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Prospectus and the funds awarded to the Council, in the sum of £1m over three years, be noted;
2. That the establishment of a local partnership group with external stakeholders to guide the development of the Investment Plan, be endorsed;
3. That the use of the available £20,000, to undertake initial preparatory work for the UKSPF, including developing the local investment plan for submission, be approved;
4. That the use of the UKSPF 4% administration allocation, to support the productive delivery and administration of the fund, be approved; and
5. That the Director of Growth & Community, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be granted delegated authority to administer and deliver the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**34. DRAFT TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY 2022-2024**

The Cabinet considered the draft Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2022-2024 which set out the Council's strategy for the provision of temporary accommodation for eligible homeless households in the Borough. The Strategy had been developed following an audit review of the temporary accommodation service in December 2021 and looked at the Council's approach to procuring temporary accommodation, now and in the future, the challenges in procuring accommodation, and how existing options and

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schemes can be maximised to ensure that the service and provision of accommodation is future proofed. The Strategy had been consulted with the public.

The Director of Housing & Public Protection said that the Strategy brought together all aspects of the Council's approach to dealing with temporary accommodation in an aspirational way but that ultimately there were many variables in the demand for, and supply of, temporary properties. In response to a question he confirmed that it was not possible to accurately quantify how many residents of other authorities had been placed in temporary accommodation in Dartford as not all authorities complied with the voluntary requirement to inform the host authority. He also confirmed that the duty to house remained with the original authority. However this did have a knock on effect and around 40% of Dartford residents in need of temporary accommodation were currently having to be placed outside of Dartford due to the lack of suitable properties, with self-contained facilities, being available in the Borough.

The Cabinet noted the comments made by the Cabinet Advisory Panel.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2022-2024, attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.

**35. PLAYGROUND REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME 2022/23**

The Cabinet considered a report which sought agreement to the draft playground refurbishment programme 2022/23 and an increase to the programme's capital budget, to facilitate the programme's implementation. The Council owns and maintains 27 playgrounds at various sites across the borough. The Council's last playground refurbishment programme was carried out between 2009 and 2011. Since that time equipment at some sites had degraded and deteriorated over time and was in need of replacement. In 2019 the Council made a commitment to improve the play experience of young people across the Borough and to refurbish existing playgrounds or deliver new facilities where appropriate. A capital budget of £1,000,000 was created in 2020/21 for a playground refurbishment programme. Initial scoping and planning works were undertaken but the programme could not be progressed, as the playground industry effectively had to shut down for two years because of Covid-19 and playgrounds had to be closed during lockdowns to help prevent the spread of Covid-19.

In late 2021, it became apparent that the programme would be able to restart in early 2022. It was agreed that trial works would be undertaken at two sites to develop a blueprint for the wider programme. The Council's existing playground at Queens Gardens was identified for refurbishment and The Bridge development was identified as needing an entirely new playground. The works at the two sites were successfully completed in April and May 2022 and it was proposed to build upon this with a programme of works to other playgrounds.

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The next phase of the playground refurbishment programme, which was formulated following lead member site visits and discussions, and analysis of equipment condition appraisals would include the following works:

- Central Park – complete removal of existing play equipment (with refurbishment of the water play area) and replacement with an entirely new playground and related facilities – estimate £1,000,000
- Jessamine Place - refurbishment of existing play equipment – estimate £100,000
- Hesketh Park – refurbishment of existing play equipment – estimate £100,000
- Worcester Park - refurbishment of existing play equipment – estimate £100,000
- Central Park – new outdoor gym equipment – estimate £50,000
- Worcester Park – new outdoor gym equipment – estimate £50,000
- Darenth Country Park – removal of remaining play equipment and replacement with an entirely new wooden playground – estimate £100,000

The total cost of the programme amounted to £1.5M and the Cabinet was being asked to recommend an increase of £514K to the original playground refurbishment capital budget (M5335) to the General Assembly of the Council to facilitate the implementation of the programme.

The Chairman said that this was an important project and that the Council had made a commitment in 2019 to carry out a comprehensive programme of playground works to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of the borough's playgrounds so that they could be enjoyed by all families across the community. Whilst this involved spending a considerable amount of money he considered that this would be well spent and would deliver an excellent end result for residents that he believed would be welcomed and justified. The playground at Central Park would be the centrepiece of the programme and was also likely to attract people from outside of Dartford to come to the town centre. He also welcomed the refurbishment of the playground at Hesketh Park, which was particularly anticipated by local residents and park users, and the playground at Jessamine Place, which had been heavily supported by local ward members.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That for the reasons detailed in the body of the report, the draft playground refurbishment programme 2022/23, as detailed in para. 3.7 of the report, be approved; and
2. That the General Assembly of the Council be recommended to approve an increase to the playground refurbishment capital budget (M5335), from £986,000 to £1,500,000, to facilitate the programme's implementation.

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**36. REVENUE BUDGET 2021/22 - OUTTURN**

The Head of Finance introduced a report which informed Members of the detailed final pre-audit 2021/22 figures for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts, including reasons for significant variances compared to the probable outturn.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance congratulated the Head of Finance and his team for their strong management of the Council's finances amidst all the uncertainties of the Covid pandemic.

RESOLVED:

That the 2021/22 outturn for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts, together with the reasons for significant variances compared to probable outturn detailed in the report, be noted.

**37. CAPITAL BUDGET 2021/22 - OUTTURN**

The Head of Finance introduced a report which informed the Cabinet of the final pre-audit figures for the 2021/22 Capital Programme, the capital resources that were used to fund it and those that remain available to fund future investment.

RESOLVED:

1. That the draft outturn for the capital programme for 2021/22, be noted;
2. That the draft outturn position for 2021/22, on capital resources, and the balance available to be carried forward into 2022/23, be noted;
3. That the General Assembly of the Council be recommended to carry forward the total capital budget into 2022/23, as set out in Appendix C to the report; and
4. That the outturn position on the Capital Prudential Indicators, as shown in Appendix D to the report, be noted.

**38. ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT 2021/22**

The Head of Finance introduced a report which informed Members of the outturn position (subject to audit) of the Council's investments and borrowing for the 2021/2022 financial year and of the outturn position of the Council's treasury indicators. He highlighted the challenging economic situation in the wake of Covid recovery and unexpected global events such as the war in Ukraine. The Council continued to pay-off the HRA debt incurred when it purchased its housing stock and had paid off a further £9.4m during the year, in accordance with the debt repayment schedule at fixed, pre-determined rates of interest. Investment income had also been higher than expected at

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£2.9m (rather than the £2.65m estimate). One treasury indicator had been exceeded but was not an issue for concern.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance commended the Council's treasury management and said that the Council had now repaid more than half of the £90m loan that it had taken out ten years ago to acquire the housing stock. The Council was benefitting from a fixed schedule of repayments and interest rates. The Council's investments represented a balanced portfolio, with around half being cash and half in pooled funds (stocks and shares). Previously income from pooled funds had been good but this was now being impacted by rising interest rates and the balance of income from investment was likely to change as a result.

RESOLVED:

1. That Members note the outturn for the Council's treasury management operations for 2021/2022, as detailed in the report; and
2. That Members note the outturn for the Council's treasury indicators, as detailed in section 3.11 of the report.

**39. REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23 MONITORING**

The Head of Finance presented a report which updated the Cabinet on financial performance against the 2022/23 budget to date for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. He noted that there continued to be pressure on the budget for temporary accommodation and that the position on business rates appeared to be worsening, but that it was still early in the financial year and that there was still expected to be a business rate re-set at some point.

The Chairman noted that the number of drivers applying to renew private hire and hackney carriage licences had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels and wondered whether some thought could be given to ways that the Council could help to address this. He also asked for officers to look at the operation of the Priory Centre car park as Members were receiving reports of mismanagement and over-zealous parking enforcement.

RESOLVED:

1. That the monitoring update, for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account, at Appendix A to the report, be noted; and
2. That key general fund income streams, at Appendix B to the report, be noted.

**40. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23**

The Head of Finance presented an update on the progress to date on the schemes in the approved Capital Programme and the latest position on

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capital resources. The General Assembly of the Council on 25 July 2022 would be asked to agree an additional £2.2M budget for the Westgate and former Co-Op site following the Cabinet's recommendation at its meeting on 26 May 2022 [Min No. 9].

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet notes the progress made to date on the 2022/23 Capital Programme, and the budget and resources detailed in Appendices A and B to the report.

**41. ACTION TAKEN UNDER STANDING ORDER 38 - LEASE OF LAND AT STONE LODGE**

The Cabinet considered a report which detailed delegated action taken under Standing Order 38(2)(a) by the Director of Growth & Community, in consultation with the Cabinet Chairman, relating to the lease of a small area of land at Stone Lodge. The land would be used to deliver improved Open Space provision related to the housing development which will be delivered on the residual land left following the provision of a range of community facilities for leisure, recreation and education.

The Director of Growth & Community provided clarification of the reason for leasing the land rather than taking a commuted sum.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet notes the action taken by the Director of Growth & Community, in consultation with the Cabinet Chairman, under Standing Order 38(2)(a), relating to the lease of a small area of land at Stone Lodge to be used to deliver improved Open Space provision related to the housing development which will be delivered on the residual land left following the provision of a range of community facilities for leisure, recreation and education.

The meeting closed at 8.04 pm

Councillor J A Kite, MBE  
CHAIRMAN

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