

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2020 at 5.30 pm in Online Viewing Only.

Present: Councillor Rick Everitt (Chairman); Councillors Helen Whitehead, Albon, Duckworth and Yates

In Attendance: Councillors Ashbee, R Bayford, Dexter, Hart, Pugh, Rogers, Towning and D Saunders

679. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received at the meeting.

680. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

681. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Everitt proposed, and Councillor Albon seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 23 September 2020.

682. ASSET MANAGEMENT - RAMSGATE MARKET

In compliance to COVID-19 Regulations, the Ramsgate market was relocated in June 2020 to allow for safe social distancing which would not have been feasible in its long-standing position on the junctions of Queen Street and King Street. This was because of the need to provide queuing spaces in front of each commercial unit whilst still allowing for pedestrian thoroughfare.

As an alternative, Staffordshire Car Park was proposed and intended to provide a market facility on a Friday and Saturday. There were, however, no traders willing to attend on a Saturday. The trial period was for four weeks and it required the suspension of car parking in part, and temporarily relocating the disabled parking bays throughout the remaining car park.

The trial market was widely advertised through posters, leaflets, banners, social media and newspaper articles. The early stages of the trial identified a significant decrease in traders willing to participate in the market, with no traders willing to attend on Saturdays. The low numbers of traders and low income generated left the market operator prepared to cease trading. Alternative locations for the market have been considered, but they would not comply with existing COVID restrictions.

Cabinet considered the outcome of the market trial month at Staffordshire Street Car Park, Ramsgate and recommendations for future dispositions.

The Leader of Council said that Cabinet recognised the importance of the market to Ramsgate. He further said that this was the right decision which would be discussed with Ramsgate Town Council.

Councillor Duckworth proposed, Councillor Everitt seconded and Cabinet agreed the following:

1. To agree to cease the current arrangement, and procure a new market operator that will operate capably, maximising the benefits for the market traders, consumers and the wider community;
2. To agree to market proposals for the market under the “Canterbury model” outlined in paragraph 2.2 of the report;
3. To give delegated authority to the Director of Estates, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Estates and Economic Development, to choose an appropriate operator following the procurement exercise and enter into the relevant Agreement(s) with them, on terms to be agreed;
4. To give delegated authority to the Director of Estates to agree the Heads of Terms for the Agreement(s) under which the new operator will operate.

683. CREMATION AND FUNERAL SERVICES - RECLAIMING FEES FROM GOVERNMENT

Members were advised that the fees and charges for funerals for children under the age of 18 years were removed following a decision at a Full Council meeting held on 6 December 2018. All services for those under the age of 18 years are eligible regardless of the nationality or residence of the child or applicant and the claim is not means-tested.

On 23 July 2019, the Children’s Funeral Fund was set up by the Government and families suffering from the loss of a person under the age of 18 could reclaim some associated costs. The introduction of the Children’s Funeral Fund is an opportunity to reinstate fees for these services, without impacting financially on families suffering bereavement. Cremation and burial authorities are re-introducing fees for those under 18 years of age to cover costs associated with providing this service.

Councillor Albon proposed, Councillor Everitt seconded and Cabinet approved the reintroduction of cremation and burial fees for those under the age of 18 on the basis that these fees can be claimed from the Government via the Children’s Funeral Fund.

684. NEW BUILD PHASE 4 AFFORDABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Members were advised that the council had an ambitious affordable homes programme which included the construction and acquisition of new homes and the acquisition and refurbishment of existing homes. Since 2015, Thanet District Council constructed or acquired around 120 new affordable homes and a further 34 homes were currently under construction.

The council’s housing strategy sets a target for the council to continue this programme into the future and to specifically deliver a further 40 homes. As part of this commitment the council had allocated a further £8.8m to the acquisition and construction of affordable homes.

The report presented to Members set out a proposal for the use of this funding to deliver around 36 additional homes, including both acquisition and construction. This would take the overall total so far to 191 homes at a total cost of £33.7m. This represented a significant contribution to meeting local housing needs which would be more than any other provider of affordable housing operating in Thanet.

These new homes were urgently required to help meet the needs of the 1,828 households currently on the council’s housing register, including 70 homeless households currently living in temporary accommodation provided by the council.

Councillor Whitehead proposed, Councillor Everitt seconded and Cabinet agreed that the capital funding of £8.822m for the approved phase 4 development programme be allocated as set out at paragraph 2.4 to the Cabinet report.

Meeting concluded: 5.40 pm