



RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

***Tuesday, 28th July, 2015 at 4.30 pm
at the Council Offices, Farnborough***

Councillor P.J. Moyle
Councillor K.H. Muschamp, Deputy Leader and Business, Safety and Regulation Portfolio Holder

Councillor Hughes, Health and Housing Portfolio
Councillor Sue Carter
Councillor P.G. Taylor, Corporate Services Portfolio Holder
Councillor R.L.G. Dibbs
Councillor A. Jackman

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of .

The Cabinet considered the following matters at the above-mentioned meeting. All executive decisions of the Cabinet shall become effective, subject to the call-in procedure, from **11th August, 2015**.

30. MINUTES –

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 14th July, 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

31. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2014/15 –
(Corporate Services)

The Cabinet considered the Solicitor to the Council's Report No. LEG1513, which proposed the approval of the Council's Annual Governance Statement for the year 2014/15, which had been considered and approved by the Standards and Audit Committee on 2nd July, 2015, and also that the Statement should be signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

The Cabinet was advised that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, as amended in 2006 and 2011, required local authorities to conduct a review, at least

annually, of the effectiveness of its system of internal control, prepare an Annual Governance Statement and publish this with the Statement of Accounts.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) had produced guidance and a proforma statement, which had been used to develop the Council's Annual Governance Statement. The Council's revised Local Code of Governance had been adopted in 2014 and formed part of the Council's Constitution. The Statement was required to include notification of any significant internal control issues and an action plan to address them. The Cabinet was advised that no significant issues had been identified but that a number of actions for the current year had been identified and these would be addressed during the year.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement, as set out in the Solicitor to the Council's Report No. LEG1513, be approved for adoption and publication alongside the Council's Statement of Accounts.

32. PREVENTION AND DETECTION OF FRAUD - NEW APPROACH – (Corporate Services)

The Cabinet considered the Audit Manager's Report No. AUD1503, which set out the results of a review of the Council's fraud investigation service and options for its future delivery.

The Cabinet was advised that, in recent years, extensive guidance and legislation had brought about a number of changes to the way that this work was carried out. Looking forward, the introduction of Universal Credit and the associated formation of the Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) would require the Council to further consider how work should be carried out, particularly around the area of housing benefit fraud. The new SFIS would be operated by the Department of Work and Pensions and the investigation of most Housing Benefit fraud work would transfer to it, meaning that this would no longer be a responsibility of the Council's Investigations Team. There were, however, further areas of work that the Council now had sole responsibility for that carried local risk and would require some anti-fraud work, including the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the Business Rate Retention Scheme.

The Council currently employed two full-time Investigation Officers, with one further post currently vacant. There was an option to apply to transfer trained investigations staff to the new SFIS. It was reported that some local authorities had decided to reduce or even remove their internal investigation service in light of the coming changes. It was, however, proposed that it was in the Council's interest to retain a level of fraud investigation capability. The three options set out for consideration were:

- Option 1 – Retain two officers and delete the one vacant post
- Option 2 – Retain one officer, transfer one officer to SFIS and delete the one vacant post

- Option 3 – Retain no officers, transfer two officers to SFIS and delete the one vacant post

In considering the Council's obligations under the Audit Commission's guidance 'Protecting the Public Purse', it was considered that Options 2 and 3 would represent a high risk approach. Option 1 would still place the Council at the lower end in terms of resources but the risk would be judged to be at a medium level. It was confirmed that, if Option 1 were selected, there would be capability to continue to investigate residual housing benefit requirements and meet other existing commitments as well as start to address situations where families had a number of varied issues in a more holistic way.

The Cabinet was supportive of retaining fraud investigative expertise 'in-house' and requested that opportunities to provide this service to neighbouring authorities should be explored in due course.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that Option 1, to retain two officers to provide the services set out in the Audit Managers Report No. AUD1503 and to delete the one vacant post from the establishment, be approved and that a review of the suitability of the arrangements be carried out, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, within two years.

33. FARNBOROUGH INTERNATIONAL LIMITED - PERMANENT EXHIBITION FACILITIES –
(Leader of the Council/Corporate Services)

The Cabinet considered the Chief Executive's Report No. CEX1503, which set out a proposal to provide a loan of £4.5 million to Farnborough International Limited (FIL) for the development of new permanent exhibition facilities at the Farnborough Airshow site.

It was explained to Members that the hosting of the Airshow every two years currently involved the construction of a number of temporary structures as exhibition halls. It was proposed that permanent facilities should be erected in respect of Halls 1 and 1A to replace these temporary structures. This would cater for the known requirements of the Airshow but would also provide a purpose built, high quality venue available for exhibitions, conferences and seminars throughout the rest of the two-year cycle of the Airshow.

If agreed, the Council's loan to FIL would be repayable at 4% interest, which compared favourably with the average return for investments within the Council's treasury management portfolio and would result in the Council receiving a higher return than currently received. It was acknowledged that there was some risk involved with the loan, however it was confirmed that steps were being taken by the funding partners, through the Due Diligence process, to mitigate the residual risk to an acceptable level. Other funding partners included Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership, Hampshire County Council and Barclays Bank. It was also noted that the completed permanent halls would attract a significant income to the Council by way of Business Rates payments. It was confirmed that the Council would receive its interest quarterly from the outset of the loan.

The Cabinet discussed the proposal and considered that the Council's involvement in this project would be to the advantage of all concerned.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the offer of a loan, to a maximum of £4.5 million, to ADS / Farnborough International Limited for the Farnborough International Hall 1/1A Permanent Venue, be approved, subject to the conditions outlined in paragraph 4.6 of the Chief Executive's Report No. CEX 1503; and
- (ii) the authority to agree all loan terms and documentation in respect of the loan agreement, within the parameters outlined in the Report, be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Financial Officer and the Solicitor to the Council.

34. ALDERSHOT TOWN CENTRE - PARKING –
(Environment and Service Delivery)

The Cabinet considered the Head of Community and Environmental Services' Report No. COMM1514, which sought approval for the introduction of a number of parking concessions on a one-year trial basis, aimed at encouraging more shoppers to Aldershot town centre and assisting residents living in the area.

Members heard that the proposals had been devised in response to concerns expressed by residents, Members and businesses that:

- the current parking charges were discouraging shoppers from using the town centre
- it was difficult for residents living in the town centre to find free overnight parking
- due to the popularity of the free Westgate car park, it was difficult for those using the complex and the Princes Hall in the evenings to find a parking space

Members were reminded that the one-hour on street parking restriction had been introduced at the request of retailers to encourage pop in trade and to prevent the bays from being used for long periods by commuters, people working and residents living in the town. This had been a success with the bays being well used and for this reason, it was not felt that reducing the cost of parking or offering free parking would increase the number of customers visiting the town. It was, however, proposed to trial the provision of 20 free one hour parking bays in the High Street Multi Storey Car Park to encourage the use of this currently underused car park. It was explained that the Birchett Road Car Park was designated as short stay but that, given the low cost of all-day parking at £5 compared to the cost of £7.50 for all-day parking at the private Railway Station Car Park, this car park was being used primarily by commuters. Whilst this brought an income to the Council of

£115,000 per annum, there could be significant benefit to shoppers if the all-day tariff was removed, with a maximum stay of three hours imposed. It was proposed to carry out a consultation with commuters using the car park to see whether, in the event of this restriction being introduced, they were likely to displace to either of the available private car parks at the Railway Station or the Wellington Centre or to one of the Council owned car parks at the High Street Multi Storey or Parsons Barracks. The information received would inform whether or not to make these changes at the Birchett Road Car Park. Regarding evening parking, it was proposed to consult with businesses about whether to offer time-limited free on street parking after 6 p.m. It was further proposed to offer free overnight parking in the High Street Multi Storey Car Park in order to encourage local residents to use this facility and ease street parking issues. It was further proposed to offer a 60p all-day charge on Sundays in all the Aldershot Council car parks, in line with the rate charged by the Wellington Centre.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the following initiatives relating to parking in Aldershot town centre, as set out in the Head of Community and Environment's Report No. COMM1514, be approved:

- to provide 20 dedicated bays with up to one hour free parking in the High Street Multi Storey Car Park on a one-year trial basis;
- to provide free overnight parking in the High Street Multi Storey Car Park from 6 p.m. to 9 a.m.;
- to carry out consultation with town centre residents on their overnight parking;
- to introduce 60p all-day on Sundays in the Council's Aldershot car parks on a one-year trial basis;
- to carry out consultation to assess the implications of Birchett Road Car Park becoming a three hour maximum stay car park and whether this would encourage commuters to use the long stay car parks at Parsons Barracks and High Street Multi Storey; and
- carry out consultation with businesses to assess the support for free evening on street parking.

35. **PARKING SERVICE REVIEW –**
(Environment and Service Delivery)

The Cabinet considered the Head of Community and Environmental Services' Report No. COMM1516, which provided an update on the parking review and sought approval for changes to staffing arrangements.

Members heard how the systems thinking review of parking had focussed on enabling customers to park easily in a safe and accessible location. A new radio system had been introduced which provided more reliable coverage and safer working. This had enabled the service to introduce single working in place of the

previous system of working in pairs, which had provided a more visible and comprehensive coverage. Since single working had been introduced, the number of Penalty Charge Notices being issued had increased from an average of 9 per day per officer to 22 per day per officer. The proposed provision of an Operations Manager and an additional Civil Enforcement Officer, along with improved working patterns, would significantly improve the effectiveness of patrols, particularly at peak times around schools, resident parking schemes and the town centres.

Members were informed that new technology had been introduced in April 2015 and this had led to many more transactions being carried out online. New smart phones had enabled the Civil Enforcement Officers to work more efficiently and speedily when checking vehicles and processing Penalty Charge Notices. Members heard that Rushmoor's pay and display machines were now outdated and would, by Summer 2016, be replaced with the latest systems on the market, allowing a wider range of payment methods. It was reported that, due to changes in legislation, the Council was no longer issuing Penalty Charge Notices by CCTV and the areas previously surveyed in this way, such as double yellow lines and on street disabled bays in the town centre, would be covered by the increase in staff and more effective working.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the appointment of an additional Civil Enforcement Officer be approved; and
- (ii) the merger of the Senior Civil Enforcement Officer and Office Manager to create a new post of Parking Operations Manager be approved.

**36. COMPULSORY PURCHASE OF A LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTY –
(Health and Housing)**

The Cabinet considered the Solicitor to the Council's Report No. LEG1514, which sought approval for the initiation of compulsory purchase proceedings in relation to [REDACTED].

Members heard how the property had not been occupied for around fifteen years and was in a poor state of repair. The current owner had inherited the property in January 2000 but had never lived there. His exact whereabouts were unknown and attempts to trace him had been unsuccessful. It was noted that Council Tax arrears in respect of the property exceeded £10,000. It was reported that the use of compulsory purchase powers in respect of long-term empty properties in the Borough was contained within the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2011-2016. The objective was to bring empty homes in the private sector back into use as quickly as possible. It was noted, however, that the use of this power was as a last resort when all other endeavours to persuade, encourage or enforce action to facilitate reoccupation had failed. It was considered that, with complaints having been received from the adjoining owner regarding damp and mice problems, the proposed action was the only reasonable means available to achieve renovation and reoccupation. Upon acquisition of the property through the compulsory purchase procedure, the market value of the property would then need to be paid

into Court, assuming that the owner had not made contact. It would then be for the Council to decide how to dispose of the property and whether or not to renovate the property prior to disposal.

In discussing the proposal, the Cabinet was assured that the Council Tax arrears would be guaranteed to be paid from the proceeds of the disposal of the property.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order, under section 17 and Part XVII of the Housing Act 1985 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981, for the purchase of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] shown shaded grey on the plan in confidential Appendix A of the Solicitor to the Council's Report No. LEG1514, be approved, to enable its renovation and reoccupation as residential accommodation;
- (ii) the Solicitor to the Council be authorised, if contact with the owner can be established, to seek the purchase of the property by agreement, in the first instance;
- (iii) the Solicitor to the Council be authorised to take the following steps in the event that purchase by agreement cannot be achieved:
 - take all necessary steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the Compulsory Purchase Order, including the publication and service of all notices and the statement of reasons for making the order and the presentation of the Council's case at any public enquiry;
 - suspend the Compulsory Purchase Order proceedings, or withdraw an Order, on being satisfied that the reported property will be satisfactorily renovated and reoccupied without the need to continue the compulsory purchase proceedings;
 - dispose of the property in accordance with the proposals set out in the Report;
 - take all other necessary action to give effect to the recommendations contained in the Report; and
- (iv) the Head of Financial Services be authorised to make the payment of appropriate compensation for the acquisition of the property and take all necessary action to recover the compensation from the sale of the property.

The Meeting closed at 5.25 pm.

D.E. CLIFFORD
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
