

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS, at 6.30 pm on Wednesday, 25 January 2023

Present:

Councillors Pope (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Ellis, Everitt, Fairweather, Funnell, Hill, March, Neville, Ms Palmer and White

Officers in Attendance: Stuart Clifton (Housing Services Manager), Gary Stevenson (Head of Housing, Health and Environment), Paul Taylor (Director of Change and Communities) and Emer Moran (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Chapelard and Pound

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

COM30/22 The Chair opened the meeting and outlined procedural matters of the meeting.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

COM31/22 Apologies were received from Councillor Fitzsimmons.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

COM32/22 There were no declarations of interest.

NOTIFICATION OF PERSONS WISHING TO SPEAK

COM33/22 There were no Members or members of the public registered to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2023

COM34/22 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting dated Wednesday 9 November 2022 was a true record of the proceeding.

FORWARD PLAN AS AT 12 JANUARY 2023

COM35/22 **RESOLVED:** That the Forward Plan as at 12 January 2023, be noted.

BOROUGH PARTNERSHIP PLAN: BUILDING A BETTER BOROUGH

COM36/22 Councillor Ben Chapelard, Leader of the Council presented the report as per the agenda.

Questions from Members and Officer clarification included:

- i. In terms of consultation; it was confirmed that consultations were held online since May 2022 and the Members Cabinet on Tour had engaged with residents through meetings. Cllr Chapelard as Council leader had spent time in different areas, such as Parking, Crematorium, Call Centre and the Police side of the CSU among others. The Borough wide survey was scheduled to be launched in the summer once the budget consultation results were reviewed.

- ii. The carbon reduction future actions was for Council owned land.
- iii. Cabinet Members were willing to review the name of the plan, however it was advised that it was the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) Plan in terms of the priorities for 2024.
- iv. An idea to provide more information on the projects was to insert a hyperlink to the projects back to the necessary Cabinet Advisory Board (CAB) agenda rather than have large documents. Future actions were in early stages and were still evolving.
- v. EC Charging points and CCTV
- vi. It was confirmed that monies for the CCTV had already been allocated artificial intelligence (AI) was a function used to pinpoint problem areas rather than having to hire more operators at a ongoing cost.
- vii. Discussions with the YMCA with regard to them taking back their lease on the TN2 Community centre were in the early stages.
- viii. TWBC felt it was important to lead the way by installing the EV Charging points.
- ix. It was stated that it would take time to look at what non operational assets TWBC will dispose of, however that wont be done soon after the installation of new CCTV technology or EV Charging points.
- x. It was understood that the monies for the CCTV had been allocated already. The technology allowed artificial intelligence (A.I.) to pinpoint problem areas rather than having to hire more operators.
- xi. The principle of user pay was supported by the Cabinet Members.
- xii. The TN2 Community Centre for which TWBC had a long lease, was considered a much valued but underutilised centre. Talks were in place with YMCA to take back the lease and use the facility to drive forward its own agenda. Those talks were in the early stages however had positive engagement with linked organisations.

RESOLVED:

1. That subject to the additional points raised at the meeting being addressed, the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.
 - a) That the name of the Borough Partnership Plan be reviewed.
 - b) That more detail about individual points be included.
 - c) Further information needed on User Pay.
 - d) That Cabinet Members review Car parks and EV Charging points, whether they would provide value for money if they were discharged at a later date.

TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF THE HOUSING REGISTER

COM37/22 Councillor Pound, Cabinet Members for Housing and Planning gave an overview of the scheme and introduced Stuart Clifton, Housing Services Manager who presented the report as per the agenda.

Members questions and Officer clarification included:

- i. It was acknowledged that a small minority of applicants that needed assistance and based on the previous applications there was support in place to assist those from family members and

- professionals.
- ii. Where additional support was needed, processes were in place to ensure those customers logged their details within the 3 month window so that their priority date was secured.
 - iii. Communication was in place on customers accounts when they logged in to Kent Home Choice, the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) website and information sent directly to customers via email. Officers agreed that other methods of communication could be considered if it was felt necessary.
 - iv. It was advised that Dover District Council had already agreed to the suspension of their housing register however not all districts were implementing a new allocation scheme.
 - v. It was thought that there was a possibility of a reduction in the number of applicants to the housing register if applicants had chosen not to reapply.
 - vi. The priority date was retained for customers that applied. If applicants reapplied within the 3 month period. Reminders were scheduled to be sent during this time and customers that did not reapply within that timeframe would lose their priority date. If there were exceptional circumstances as to why a customer did not reapply Officers would consider this on an individual basis and customers needed to provide evidence as to why they did not reapply within the 3 month window.
 - vii. Officers advised that if they relied on original applications where a lot of that data could be out of date, therefore part of the reason for customers to reapply was to ensure applications can be assessed against the new application scheme with up to date data.
 - viii. One of the changes that was made with the allocation scheme was the different factors for applicants to be placed into different bands therefore, an existing applicant who reapplied may potentially go into a different band which gave them a quicker prospect of being successful with an allocation.
 - ix. There was no link for the allocation scheme in the report as the report before Members was focused on the temporary suspension of the housing register and the recommendation for applicants to reapply. The proposal was for the new allocation scheme which was approved by Cabinet to go out for consultation. The consultation was completed in January 2023 with minor changes made within the delegation by Cabinet. The intention was for the new allocation scheme to go live at the same time as the transfer to the new housing system.
 - x. It was advised that once the new allocation scheme went live it was not possible to enter every customers details in on the same day, that would put some customers at a disadvantage with some being assessed under the old allocation scheme and others under the new allocation scheme. Therefore, customers were asked to reapply while the housing register was suspended for processing time to be allowed.
 - xi. It was confirmed that support was available for customers to be operated out of The Amelia, details of this were to be finalised.

RESOLVED:

1. That subject to the additional points raised at the meeting being addressed, the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

- a. That vulnerable people can be tracked down and contacted to ensure they are assisted in reapplying.
- b. The new allocation scheme linked into the report in some way.
- c. Consideration of extending the 3 month period.
- d. Important that it's noted that there was a reason why the process cannot be done in a different way as it would put some people at a disadvantage.
- e. Agree to write to customers as well as email, messaging on website and Kent home choice and messaging within the Amelia.

HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING AND WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE

COM38/22 Gary Stevenson, Head of Housing, Health and Environment presented his report as per the agenda.

Questions from Members and Officer clarification included:

- i. Urbaser were fully aware of the access issues across Tunbridge Wells especially the rural areas and were looking at that in great detail as part of the re-rounding process to get balance correct and correct vehicles.
- ii. Officers were very much alive to properties with different accesses. All properties that had previous issues were flagged in the database and Urbaser had done a lot of training with their staff to ensure they were aware of these. Staff had experience with the garden waste re rounding which had gone well.
- iii. Hawkhurst assisted collection was listed as a hot spot but was currently okay, if a new crew was allocated they would be informed.
- iv. Further information on the reconfiguring was given which would result in reduced mileage therefore reduced carbon emissions.
- v. It was confirmed that the new fleet would be ordered as soon as TWBC finished its decision making process and then fixed for 8 years on the lease, further purchases after 2027 were market dependent.
- vi. Officers confirmed there was a possibility of other companies challenging TWBC's decision however the risk was considered low. TWBC would not reach out to other companies however they will be aware of the contract through the procurement and the EU and UK journals.
- vii. Paragraphs from 1.3 addressed the one of payments to employees of Urbaser and this was explained in detail.
- viii. Urbaser had identified staff that did not currently drive for them and had put them through training. Exact numbers on that were not known.
- ix. Thanks were given to the officers for the work put into the report.
- x. It was acknowledged that it was hard to look at a stable market.
- xi. Members were excited to look at new fuels to reduce emissions for the fleet and it was acknowledged that electric vehicles may not suit an area such as Tunbridge Wells.

RESOLVED:

1. That the recommendations as set out in the report be supported.

URGENT BUSINESS

COM39/22 There was no urgent business for consideration.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

COM40/22 The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 8 March 2023.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 7.59 pm.