

**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
28 March 2017**

Present:

Councillor C.A. Davis (Chairman)
Councillor S.C. Mooney (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

R.O. Barratt	M.P.C. Francis	O. Rybinski
S.M. Doran	N. Islam	B.B. Spoor
Q.R. Edgington	J.G. Kavanagh	

Apologies: Councillors S. Capes and D. Patel

In attendance: Councillors: N. Gething – Cabinet member for Environment and Compliance, J.M. Pinkerton OBE – Cabinet member for Housing, H.R. Williams – Cabinet member for Finance and Councillor H. Thomson, ward councillor for Ashford Common.

Announcement by the Chairman

The Chairman made an announcement to address rumours circulating in social media in relation to an incident that occurred on 25 February 2017 and which had caused him serious distress.

354/17 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2017 were approved as a correct record.

355/17 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

356/17 Call-in of Cabinet decisions

No Cabinet decisions had been called in for review.

357/17 Welfare Reform and Universal Credit Update

The Housing Benefits manager outlined his report providing an update on welfare reform and the introduction of Universal Credit. He explained how Spelthorne Borough Council was addressing the challenges relating to:

- the introduction of Universal Credit
- the application of the Benefits Cap
- the under occupancy charge and
- the administration of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

and the effects they were having on Spelthorne claimants.

Councillor Pinkerton, the portfolio holder for Housing, advised that the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) affected very few Spelthorne residents at the present time but that the Housing team offered support and advice as needed. Once the migration of existing working age Housing Benefit claims to UC was underway, the Council would be able to provide more specific advice to each family.

Resolved to note the update on welfare reform and Universal Credit.

358/17 Parking in Ashford

The Group Head for Neighbourhood Services presented her report on a review of the parking situation in Ashford.

She outlined the Council's plans for improving parking in Ashford following the sale of Ashford multi-storey car park and addressed the issues raised by residents about the management of the private car park behind Ashford Antiques in Church Road.

Councillor Gething, portfolio holder for environment and compliance, commented that he was aware parking in Ashford had been a concern for residents for many years. He explained that Ashford multi-storey car park (MSCP) was well beyond its expected lifespan and with it estimated to cost £1 million to repair the upper floors, replacement of the car park was inevitable. As it was no longer a practical option for providing parking in the town, the Cabinet had decided to dispose of it and set aside money from the sale to identify alternative parking options. One possible option was removal of the islands forming the service roads to allow cars to park nose on to the pavement, accommodating many more vehicles than at present. He confirmed that there were no current plans to charge for on-street parking but that ultimately this was a decision for Surrey County Council.

In response to the suggestion from residents that the car park could be used for airport parking, Cllr Gething said that not only would repairing the car park to accommodate such a business be commercially unviable but that previous marketing exercises had shown there was no interest in running an airport parking business from this site due to its size and lack of good access to the airport.

Councillor Williams, portfolio holder for finance, advised that the Council has a legal obligation to deliver value for money to its council tax payers, so it must look at the most cost effective way to provide parking in Ashford. Spending £5m to £6m to rebuild Ashford multi-storey car park would not provide value for money to the residents as we would be spending a disproportionate amount of the Council's scarce funds.

In relation to the private car park behind Ashford Antiques, Cllr Gething stated that ward councillors had attempted to reach a compromise with the owners. They had been unable to secure agreement on a ten minute grace period for obtaining a valid ticket but did agree that the car park wardens would provide

change for the ticket machines if needed. The owners agreed to erect signs to this effect.

The Group Head, Neighbourhood Services advised that anyone receiving a penalty ticket should follow the procedure on the parking company's website and if not happy with the outcome of their appeal to raise their case with the parking ombudsman and/or follow the company's complaints procedure.

The deputy Group Head, Neighbourhood Services confirmed that it was still intended to provide some public car parking spaces in the redeveloped site of Ashford MSCP and that full details including the number of spaces, would be made public when negotiations with the current purchaser were finalised.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Mooney, commended Michelle Arnold for raising this key issue for the Ashford community and the Committee joined in thanking her for raising the profile of this matter.

As this matter was likely to remain a concern to residents until the situation was resolved, the Chairman suggested the matter be reviewed again in six months' time.

Resolved to:

1. note the actions taken by officers to address residents' concerns re parking in Ashford town centre and
2. to include a review of parking in Ashford in six months' time on the Committee's work programme.

359/17 Capital Monitoring

The Committee received the Capital Monitoring report covering the period April to December 2016.

The Committee noted that for the period ending December 2016, capital expenditure including commitments was £412m (79.5%) of the revised budget (excluding the Knowle Green and Housing Opportunity projects).

The projected outturn showed that the Council was anticipating spending £454.5m which represented 87.7% of the revised budget.

Resolved to note the current capital spend position.

360/17 Revenue Monitoring

The Committee received the Revenue Monitoring report providing the net revenue spend figures to the end of December 2016.

The Committee noted the forecast outturn at net expenditure level was £5.421m against the revised budget of £14.890m; which was a projected favourable variance of £9.468m. The Committee noted that after taking into

account the use of carry forwards, the net overall position was approximately £9m favourable variance.

The Chief Finance Officer highlighted the reason for this dramatic change of position was as a result of purchasing the BP site in Sunbury. This resulted in a net rental income being received from the end of September 2016 onward. Additionally the Council was receiving income from the purchase of the BP South West Corner site and Elmbrook House, Sunbury.

Resolved to note the current net revenue spend and forecast position.

361/17 Task Group updates

The Committee received updates from the lead councillors for the Communications and Parks Task Groups which had now finished their work.

The Committee noted that the Communications Task Group, led by Councillor Capes had produced a summary of all communication tools available to councillors and a list of staff contacts, which would be made available to councillors.

The Parks Task Group led by Councillor Francis had reviewed the procedure for booking events in parks and open spaces resulting in a new application form and criteria, and reviewed the income from car parks in Parks and the Public toilet scheme.

Resolved to note the update reports from the Communications and Parks Task Groups.

362/17 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

363/17 Work Programme

As this was the last meeting of the current municipal year, members discussed possible items for inclusion in the Committee Work Programme for 2017-2018.

The Committee had already agreed earlier on the agenda, to add to the Work Programme a review of the situation regarding parking in Ashford in six months' time.

The following suggested topics will be considered along with other suggestions generated at the July meeting of the Committee:

- Review of the Constitution in respect of encouraging better standards of behaviour by councillors
- Impact of third runway at Heathrow and how the Council is preparing for it
- Procurement from local businesses
- Business Rates and avoidance

- Environmental impact of impromptu car wash facilities

Resolved to note the suggested topics to be considered for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme for 2017-2018.