

Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held in Court Room at Eastbourne Town Hall, Grove Road, BN21 4UG on 1 November 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Stephen Holt (Chair).

Councillors Margaret Bannister (Deputy-Chair), Peter Diplock, Robin Maxted, Jim Murray and Colin Swansborough.

Officers in attendance:

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Ian Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning), Oliver Dixon (Lawyer and Data Protection Officer), Sarah Lawrence (Committee Team Manager), Bill McCafferty (Lead for Income Maximisation and Welfare), Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer) and Kate Slattery (Head of Legal Services).

22 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 were submitted and approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

23 Apologies for absence

None were reported.

24 Declaration of members' interests

Councillor Holt declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 11 (Future options of delivery of council housing services in Eastbourne) as a leaseholder of Eastbourne Homes Limited (EHL). He remained in the room and voted on the item.

25 Appointments

Councillor Holt reported that he was creating a new executive post titled "Water Champion" and incorporating it into Councillor Murray's portfolio responsibilities.

Councillor Murray then addressed the Cabinet and outlined the key areas of focus, including sewage discharges into seas and local rivers, sea defences and Marine Conservation Zone.

26 **Stability and Growth Programme**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Executive, updating them on the Stability and Growth programme.

Section 2.13 of the report detailed the emerging pressures for local authorities around homelessness. In response to the pressures, the council co-hosted, jointly with the District Council's Network, an emergency homelessness summit, which was attended by 158 local authorities. The outcome of the summit was a letter that would be submitted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, signed by as many authorities as possible, which contained six main requests:

- Raise Local Housing Allowance rates to a level that will cover at least 30% of local market rent and commit to annual uprating.
- Provide £100m additional funding for Discretionary Housing Payments in 2023-24 and an additional £200m in 2024-25.
- Provide a £150m top-up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2024-25.
- Review the cap for housing benefit subsidy rate for local authority homelessness placements.
- Develop policy to stimulate retention and supply in the privately rented sector.
- Give councils the long-term funding, flexibility and certainty needed to increase the supply of social housing.

Thanks were conveyed to officers for their work in setting up the summit.

Resolved (Non-key):

To note the report and agree in principle support to the proposed areas for savings set out at paragraph 2.18 of the report, subject to further Cabinet decisions or delegated authority as appropriate.

Reason for decision:

The Stability and Growth programme will work to drive improvement and efficiency, in line with the needs of the organisation, and also the recommendations made by the Assurance Reviews and the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge.

27 **Updated and Aligned Scheme of Delegation to Officers**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, which set out the need for an updated and aligned scheme of delegations to officers, and to outline key amendments to the current version.

The Lawyer and Data Protection Officer was in attendance remotely to present the report, on behalf of the Monitoring Officer. The document had extensive consultation prior to Cabinet, which included a meeting of the cross-party

Constitution Working Group and consideration by the Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on 5 October 2023.

Resolved (Key decision):

(1) To consider the draft updated and aligned Scheme at Appendix 1 to the report and approve all executive delegations.

(2) To refer its approval to Full Council for noting.

Reason for decision:

Eastbourne's existing Scheme has not been fully updated since 2015, leading to lack of clarity over certain officer powers and difficulty with implementation.

28 Housing Benefit War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Policy

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery, seeking their recommendation to Full Council for the disregarding, in the assessment of Housing Benefit, War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation income above the statutory disregard in the assessment of Housing Benefit.

For several years, Eastbourne Borough Council has used its discretion to fully disregard any income that residents receive from War Widow's (Widower's) Pension, War Disablement Pension and the Armed Forces Compensation Schemes if they claim housing benefit. The report recommended that the council continue its support.

Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):

To recommend to Full Council, the disregarding in full of War Pensions income and the Armed Forces Compensation income above the statutory disregard in the assessment of Housing Benefit.

Reason for decision:

As set out in the report.

29 Future options for delivery of council housing services in Eastbourne

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Executive, seeking their agreement to undertake a consultation exercise with the tenants of Eastbourne Homes Limited (EHL) with regard to the future delivery of housing services.

Resolved (Key decision):

(1) To note and endorse the conclusions drawn by the project team following the high-level internal assessment process (set out at Appendix 1 to the report).

(2) To note that the options presented may offer a better opportunity to respond to revised national regulatory and legislative requirements.

(3) To note that any decision around the future of housing management will require a thorough consultation and engagement exercise with all tenants and stakeholders before the Council is in a position to change the service delivery model.

(4) To approve a consultation and engagement exercise with EHL tenants and leaseholders, in line with the proposals set out in the report.

Reason for decisions:

To enable a consultation exercise to be undertaken to inform future options for delivery of housing services.

The meeting ended at 6.26 pm

Councillor Stephen Holt (Chair)