

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISIONS

(in terms of Access to Information Rule 18)

CABINET

Thursday 17 December 2009

Present: Councillor Roy Bullock (Chairman)

Councillors Paul Barrington-King, Len Horwood, Mrs Catherine Mayhew, Mrs Elizabeth Thomas and Frank Williams.

Officers in Attendance: William Benson, Director of Change and Business Support; Diane Brady, Estates Surveyor; David Candlin, Head of Economic Development and Regeneration; Lee Colyer, Head of Finance and Governance (S151 Officer); Paul Cummins, Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer; Trevor Gasson, Interim Director of Regeneration and Sustainability; Phil Gillgan, Leisure Client Officer; Andrew Goy, Scrutiny Officer; Mel Henley, Parks Manager; Nazeya Hussain, Head of Community and Corporate Planning; Daryl Jones, Economic Development and Business Liaison Officer; Wendy Newton-May, Senior Committee Administrator; Di Talbot, Communications and Marketing Manager; Raymond Warren, Delivery Unit Manager; and Sheila Wheeler, Chief Executive.

Members of the Public in Attendance: Mrs Blackburn, representing the Rusthall Village Association, and Mr Kerrison, representing Tunbridge Wells' Cricket Club.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

CAB124/09 No apologies for absence had been received.

DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

CAB125/09 In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Part 5, Councillor Mrs Mayhew declared a personal interest in decision CAB132/09 due to the fact that she was a member of the Commons Conservators. Councillors Barrington-King and Williams declared a personal interest in decision CAB135/09 as they were both employees of West Kent College.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

CAB126/09 No visiting members attended the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD DATED 5 OCTOBER 2009

CAB127/09 Cabinet was informed that these minutes had previously been received at 13 November 2009 Cabinet meeting and were attached to this agenda in error. Therefore no discussion took place on this item.

APPROVAL OF CABINET MINUTES DATED 13 NOVEMBER 2009

CAB128/09 The minutes of the Cabinet meeting dated 13 November 2009 were considered and confirmed as a correct record.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

CAB129/09 There were no questions submitted from members of the Council.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

CAB130/09 There were no questions submitted from members of the public.

CABINET DECISIONS

DECISION NO. CAB131/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

HOUSING, HEALTH & WELLBEING

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Mrs Mayhew

REPORT TITLE:

Capital Grant Application – Tunbridge Wells' Cricket Club (091217/CAB012)

PRIORITIES:

(1) Healthy
(2) Confident

DISCUSSION:

Cabinet was informed that an application had been received from Tunbridge Wells' Cricket Club for a capital grant of £5,000 towards the cost of providing a replacement, fenced, four-lane outdoor cricket practice net facility at the Nevill Ground to replace the current two-lane facility.

Members were informed that the Club already had sufficient funds to proceed with the project without any financial assistance from the Borough Council. The Leisure Client Officer advised that if members were minded to approve the application, a supplementary capital estimate would need to be provided.

Mr Kerrison, representing the Cricket Club, attended the meeting and expressed his disappointment at the officer's recommendation. He referred to the Council's 'Confident' priority which encouraged the delivery of healthy, positive activities for younger and older people and explained to members how the funding would enhance the facilities at the cricket club

Members considered that funding could not be allocated for this project when it was evident that the club had sufficient funding themselves. They expressed regret at not being to assist the club, but stressed that due to the economic downturn, money was very tightly constrained and there were other priorities to consider.

DECISION MADE:

That the application from Tunbridge Wells' Cricket Club for a capital grant of £5,000 be refused as the applicant had sufficient funds of its own.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The applicant has sufficient funding of its own to complete the project without assistance from the Borough Council.

Contact Officer: Phil Gillgan, Leisure Client Officer

Tel: 01892 554242 or e-mail: phil.gilgan@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB132/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

LEADER

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Bullock

REPORT TITLE:

Urban Parishing (091217/CAB010)

PRIORITIES:

Urban parishing would potentially support the Council's priority of improving the confidence of its communities.

DISCUSSION:

The Chief Executive reminded members that at its meeting in December 2008, Cabinet had considered a report from the Corporate Services Select Committee relating to Urban Parishing. A further report was presented in April 2009 which recommended that the proposal should be taken forward by the Council's Delivery Unit.

Since that time, the Rusthall ward members, Councillors Atwood and Edwards, had approached the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council and requested that the Council should conduct a Community Governance Review as to whether or not Rusthall should be parished; no other requests or petitions had been received.

The report before members sought their views as to whether or not the proposal should proceed to the next step which would be a Community Governance Review (CGR). Details of how the review would be undertaken were provided in the report.

Members were provided with a timetable of the actions required, however it was noted that staff within the Elections and Electoral Registration section would not be able to progress this issue during the period March to June due to the Borough/Parish Council and Parliamentary elections.

Mrs Blackburn, representing the Rusthall Village Association, attended the meeting and spoke on this item. She welcomed the proposal and fully supported the officer's recommendation.

The costs associated with the review and the establishment of a parish council were detailed in the report for members' information. Discussion took place on whether the costs could be bared by the new parish council, if established. Members considered that Tunbridge Wells residents should not have to incur costs for the benefit of Rusthall residents; however the difficulties of passing on costs to a body that did not yet exist were explained.

The Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer advised that, although the legislation was silent on costings, other authorities had dealt with similar situations in the way proposed in the report.

The Director of Change and Business Support reassured members that the Manor of Rusthall and the Commons Conservators would be included in the consultation process. In addition the Cabinet stated that the consultation should be extended to other parts of the urban area (i.e the Town Forum).

In response to a question raised regarding combining a poll of Rusthall with the forthcoming elections, members were advised that this could not be undertaken alongside an election. A postal consultation exercise or using volunteers to deliver the paperwork was suggested.

Members requested that a further report be presented to the next appropriate Cabinet detailing the costs associated with the review, how they would be met and the possible consultation arrangements.

DECISION MADE:

1. That the legal framework governing the establishment of parish councils be noted;
2. That a Community Governance Review be conducted, however a further report would be submitted to Cabinet on 11 February 2010 detailing costings and methods of consultation arrangements; and
3. That consideration be given to recharging the costs involved in the process of Urban Parishing to the new parish council over a period of years, to be agreed; and
4. That the Clerk to the Commons Conservators be consulted on the process of possible precepting any new parish council for the costs of the Rusthall Common and whether the boundaries of the Common are contiguous with the Ward boundaries.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Cabinet at its meeting of 16 April 2009 requested that further steps should be taken to look at the possibility of urban parishing.

Contact Officer: Sheila Wheeler, Chief Executive
Tel: 01892 526121 or e-mail: lesley.simpson@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

CAB133/09 Cabinet considered and agreed the Forward Plan (091217/CAB001) published on 9 December 2009.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be approved.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT FROM CORPORATE SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE – SCRUTINY BUDGET REVIEW

CAB134/09 Cabinet was advised that the Corporate Services Select Committee had considered the draft budget 2010/11 at its meeting on 15 December 2009. Members were informed the Committee had agreed that further discussion was required on this item and therefore it would present its comments to the Cabinet meeting on 4 February 2010.

RESOLVED – That the comments from the Corporate Services Select Committee be presented to the next Cabinet meeting on 4 February 2009.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT FROM LOCAL ECONOMY AND HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE – WEST KENT INVESTMENT STRATEGY

CAB135/09 The Scrutiny Officer presented a report (091217/CAB003) notifying Cabinet of the recommendations made by the Local Economy and Housing Select Committee at its meeting on 3 December 2009.

The Select Committee had discussed and welcomed the Strategy as a starting point but requested that Cabinet considered the following areas:

1. The 'Skills' area of the document mixes 'core skills' e.g. employee behaviour and attitude, with 'trade skills'. Clarity should be given to the difference in the level of various skill sets and the individual approach that should be adopted to address their deficiencies.
2. West Kent has a high number of retired/semi-retired people with extensive business experience. The Strategy should make provision for exploiting this resource, to allow these people to provide economic activity in West Kent.
3. There should be some consideration of the experiences of other areas in using business incubators. An examination of best practice in other business incubation initiatives should be considered.
4. The Strategy should have a stronger approach to accessing investment and funding.

5. The Actions outlined are weak. Defined targets and baselines should be attached to these actions to strengthen them.
6. West Kent has several critical constraints, including high housing costs, a lack of higher education and connectivity problems. Recognition must be made of the length of time that these constraints are likely to exist and a commitment for hard investment in these areas would strengthen the Strategy. Until the weaknesses of West Kent's position are rectified, the positive actions of this Strategy will prove difficult to progress.
7. Those finalising the Strategy could look at areas of Surrey and the South East that face similar restraints to West Kent to establish what successful approaches have been undertaken in those areas. This information could contribute to a stronger Investment Strategy.
8. More should be said about the Rural Economy in the Strategy, to identify particular opportunities in that area.
9. There are crossovers between sectors and issues that have not been recognised in the Strategy, for example the crossover between business incubation and higher education providers' activity in that area. Recognition of crossovers and the opportunities they present should be recognised in the Strategy.

In response to a question regarding the status of the Strategy, the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration advised that the Strategy had been through the consultation process and the final draft was attached to the agenda at report 091217/CAB004. However members were informed that the Action Plan required further work and their comments were invited.

Concern was expressed that, when compared to the averages for the South East and to the economies to the West (including East Surrey), West Kent performed poorly in comparison. Members were reassured that the role of the West Kent investment Strategy was to set out what actions needed to be implemented locally to ensure the economy of West Kent remained buoyant.

In addition, it was stressed that one of the most important issues for the Strategy to address was related to local skills issues, in order to enable young people to achieve the skills and learning improvements across West Kent that are required.

An issue of clarity was raised regarding partners identified in section 4 - Action Plans and the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration agreed that, where appropriate, this would be clarified in the document.

Cabinet agreed that the Select Committee's comments were very useful and thorough and should form the basis of the Cabinet's formal response to the West Kent Partnership.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Select Committee be thanked for their report;

(2) That the comments set out above be adopted as the Cabinet's response to the West Kent Partnership.

DECISION NO. CAB136/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Mrs Thomas

REPORT TITLE:

West Kent Investment Strategy (091217/CAB004)

PRIORITIES:

Prosperous.

DISCUSSION:

This item was taken in conjunction with CAB135/09 above.

DECISION MADE:

As set out in CAB135/09 above.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

To enable formal comments to the West Kent Partnership in advance of proposed adoption by March 2010.

Contact Officer: David Candlin, Head of Economic and Regeneration
Tel: 01892 554038 or e-mail: david.candlin@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB137/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Mrs Thomas

REPORT TITLE:

Sherwood – A Strategic Vision (091217/CAB005)

PRIORITIES:

Prosperous, Confident, Green and Healthy.

DECISION MADE:

Cabinet was informed that the Town and Country Housing Group (TCHG) had commissioned AZ Urban Studio, in collaboration with Studio Egret West and Martin Stockley Associates, at the beginning of 2009 to create a Strategic Vision for Sherwood, focusing on the housing stock owned by the TCHG. The Strategic Vision was delivered to the TCHG in August this year entitled 'The Sherwood Project – A Strategic Vision'.

Members were informed that the Vision had evolved initially from joint discussions with the Council from the beginning of 2009. The Vision established an urban design for Sherwood, with a focus on key sites across the ward, articulating local needs and aspirations for development of the next 20 years.

It was noted that the Strategy would help to inform the Council in its preparation of the Local Development Framework in terms of policies and allocations. Officers stated that a feasibility study had been undertaken to inform the drafting of the Vision document and urban design statement. A number of major issues had emerged from this which would affect the deliverability of the potential changes and therefore affect the potential outputs which would benefit present and future residents of Sherwood. These issues had been identified within the feasibility study and an option to address or mitigate them where possible had been provided.

The Interim Director of Regeneration and Sustainability advised members that the Vision had outlined a number of challenges and these were identified in the report. Planning officers had made comments and these had been collated with a view of drafting a Council response to the TCHG. It was noted that a number of key tasks would still need to be undertaken to move the Vision forward and in order to progress with the implementation, a joint Officer Steering Group comprising of both Borough Council and the TCHG representatives had been established, with a meeting arranged for the early New Year with the Homes and Communities Agency to access the support that might be forthcoming from that body.

Members discussed the need for a Steering Group to consider the operation of the project and a further Project Board to manage its operation, comprising members of the Cabinet, Board members from the TCHG, representatives from the regeneration company, and possibly the Kent County Council Portfolio Holder for Regeneration.

Cabinet requested that a further report be presented to a future meeting detailing the governance arrangements for these groups, if agreed with the TCHG.

DECISION MADE:

1. That the vision being developed by the TCHG be noted;
2. That a joint partnership be developed with the TCHG to move forward the Strategic Vision;

3. That discussions be held with the TCHG on the principle of setting up an overarching Project Board, comprising members of the Cabinet, Board members from the TCHG, representatives from the regeneration company, and the Kent County Council Portfolio Holder for Regeneration; and
4. That a further report be presented to Cabinet detailing the governance arrangements for the Steering Group and Project Board.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Sherwood is one of the priority wards within the Borough of Tunbridge Wells. The Council would benefit from joining a partnership with the TCHG as it would enhance and support both our community development and our regeneration service delivery.

Contact Officer: Daryl Jones, Economic Development & Business Liaison Officer
Tel: 01892 554128 or e-mail: daryl.jones@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB138/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

LEADER

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Bullock

REPORT TITLE:

[Draft Strategic Plan \(091217/CAB006\)](#)

PRIORITIES:

The Strategic Plan underpins all the corporate priorities, activities and partnership arrangements that the Council undertakes.

DISCUSSION:

Members considered the draft Strategic Plan 2010-2015, which built on the 2009-2014 Plan and set out the Council's approach to delivering its corporate priorities over the next five-year period.

Members were advised that the Plan outlined a number of strategic objectives under the four corporate priorities, which, together, underpinned the design, and delivery of Council services, the prioritisation and allocation of resources and the achievement of value for money.

The Head of Community and Corporate Planning informed Cabinet that the draft Plan also took into account the Council's partnership commitments and the priorities arising from the County-wide Kent Agreement Two. In addition the current economic climate and the proposed restructure were also reflected.

Cabinet noted that services were categorised as: priority, important and non priority issues and provided a clear framework for resource allocation. These priorities were reflected in budget savings for the forthcoming year but were also reflected within individual service budgets as resources were redirected and realigned to support new emerging strategic projects and reflect the current financial climate.

It was noted that the draft Strategic Plan would be subject to wider consultation including:

- (i) Key Partners including the Police, West Kent NHS, Kent County Council;
- (ii) Tunbridge Wells Together;
- (iii) Local communities and community organisations;
- (iv) Parish and Town Councils; and
- (v) All members.

The Head of Community and Corporate Planning advised that an on-line method of consultation would be used, known as Limehouse software.

The Leader urged Cabinet members to respond to the consultation, the results of which, and any recommendations from the Select Committee, would be reported to the February Cabinet meeting.

DECISION MADE:

That the Draft Strategic Plan be approved for wider consultation.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

To ensure the Council is well positioned to achieve its Corporate Priorities (Prosperous, Green, Healthy and Confident) which, together, underpin the design and delivery of council services, the prioritisation and allocation of resources and the achievement of value for money.

Contact Officer: Nazeya Hussain, Head of Community & Corporate Planning

Tel: 01892 554158 or email: nazeya.hussain@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB139/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

LEADER

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Bullock

REPORT TITLE:

**[Draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2026](#)
(091217/CAB007)**

PRIORITIES:

This report contributes to each of the Council's corporate priorities.

DISCUSSION:

Members were reminded that in 2006 the Council implemented its Sustainable Community Strategy 2006-2011 (SCS); the Plan had now been in place for three years and a number of actions had already been met. Cabinet was informed that Tunbridge Wells Together had agreed to refresh the Plan in light of the new vision.

The drivers for refreshing the Plan were outlined to members in the report. In addition, members were informed that the thematic Delivery Groups had now all agreed a draft version of their sections for the SCS. To ensure the refreshed SCS was strategic in its focus, a core set of indicators for the long-term had been developed which would help measure how Tunbridge Wells Together was achieving its vision towards 2026.

Members' attention was drawn to the joint pledge on page 17 of the Strategy which encouraged the public to be more proactive and assist the Council to achieve its ambitions.

In response to a question regarding the disposal of chewing gum, the Head of Community and Corporate Planning assured members that this would be included in the Strategy.

DECISION MADE:

That the draft of the refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2026 be approved for further consultation.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The 2000 Local Government Act charged local authorities with "preparing a local community strategy" with their partners in the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The draft Strategy sets out a long term ambition of the LSP and underpins the Council's commitment to achieving Vision2026.

Furthermore the SCS will underpin the work of the Council, and ensure we deliver against our Kent Agreement 2 priorities and inform future CAA assessments.

Contact Officer: Nazeya Hussain, Head of Community & Corporate Planning
Tel: 01892 554158 or email: nazeya.hussain@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB140/09**NON-EXEMPT****PORTFOLIO:****LEADER**

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor Bullock

REPORT TITLE: Organisational Assessment Report 2009
(091217/CAB008)

PRIORITIES: All

DISCUSSION:

The Chief Executive presented a report outlining the details of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Organisational Assessment result for 2009. Members were reminded that the Organisational Assessment, as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, replaced the CPA as the performance assessment framework for local government and was conducted by the Audit Commission during 2009.

The Chief Executive explained that there were two components that contributed to the overall organisational assessment score, namely Use of Resources (score out of 4) and Managing Performance (score out of 4).

The assessment process was outlined for members in the report and it was noted that the overall organisational assessment score awarded to the Council was 3. Members considered the key messages that had been received from the Audit Commission and agreed that the outcomes illustrated that the Council was continuing to perform well.

The Chief Executive advised that this Council was only one of seven to achieve this level of performance. It was noted that, although the new process was intended to be a light touch at a lower cost, this was not being felt locally.

It was mentioned that Sevenoaks District Council had achieved a higher score and therefore their practices should be investigated further.

DECISION MADE: That the Organisational Assessment Report 2009 be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION: To outline to Cabinet the result of the 2009 Organisational Assessment.

Contact Officer: Jo Davis, Corporate Policy and Improvement Officer and Raymond Warren, Business Delivery Unit Manager
Tel: 01892 526121 or e-mail: jo.davis@tunbridgewells.gov.uk and raymond.warren@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB141/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

LEADER

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Bullock

REPORT TITLE:

Basket of Economic Indicators for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – October 2009 (091217/CAB009)

PRIORITIES:

The monitoring of these economic indicators will help the evaluation of strategic risk across all services and therefore supports all corporate priorities and commitments.

DISCUSSION:

The Business Delivery Unit Manager submitted a report updating members on the economic performance of the Borough. The report covered the latest data available and aimed to help members evaluate and mitigate strategic risks.

A selection of performance indicators, known to be sensitive to economic conditions, had been put together, including a number that were new.

Members were advised that the current economic conditions appeared to be improving in some areas, and close monitoring of certain areas of performance by officers and members had ensured timely action. It was noted that unemployment in the Borough was now the lowest it had been since January 2009.

It was suggested that continued monitoring might not be necessary as the Council entered the New Year. It was agreed that Cabinet should now concentrate on fewer, selective indicators up to the end of the financial year, then revert to quarterly reporting.

DECISION MADE:

1. That the report shown in Appendix A to the report be noted; and
2. That the map in Appendix B to the report showing the vacant retail premises in Tunbridge Wells town centre be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- i) In response to previous Cabinet recommendations.
- ii) In response to Cabinet's recommendation.

Contact Officer: Jo Davis, Corporate Policy and Improvement Officer
Tel: 01892 554324 or e-mail: jo.davis@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB142/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

HOUSING, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Mrs Mayhew

REPORT TITLE:

[Grounds Maintenance Procurement and Future Service Options \(091217/CAB011\)](#)

PRIORITIES:

Maintenance of the town's parks contributes to the Council's four corporate priorities:

Prosperous Contributing to Royal Tunbridge Wells being the 'best town centre in the South East to live, work and visit' Enhancing the Borough's natural and built assets.

Green Contributing to Tunbridge Wells remaining 'a beautiful place to live, work and relax'

'The citizens of the borough will continue to enjoy easy access to open space for recreation, including parks and play areas'

Healthy Providing venues and opportunities for communities to 'be active with very high levels of participation in leisure and cultural activities'

Confident Enabling young people to participate in a range of activities.

The proposals contained within this report will further contribute to the Council's Green agenda by improving bio diversity.

DISCUSSION:

Cabinet was informed that the current grounds maintenance contract was due to end on 31 December 2010, which provided an opportunity to review the service specifications to ensure that a Zero Budgeting approach was taken and obtain efficiency savings through both the review and the market testing process.

The Parks Manager stated that options in relation to service delivery had been explored, namely:

1) in-house service; 2) extension of existing contract; 3) parks and open spaces Independent Charitable Trust; and 4) review the current specification and market test the service.

It was suggested to members that option 4) above be pursued to completion in accordance with the schedule shown in Appendix A of the report.

The options for the security service had also been reviewed and these were set out for members' consideration in the report.

Officers suggested that option (1) identified in the report should be agreed, which would remove the site based staff presence currently in place in the evening and weekend (except Hawkenbury) and replace this with a rapid response unit, consisting of a person and vehicle equipped for appropriate response.

The saving was an estimated £50,850; however a review of the risk assessment of the lake in Dunorlan would be required.

The handyman service had also been reviewed and it was proposed that this be reduced to 2 days per week. In addition the grassland, Town Hall bedding and allotments had all been examined to ensure service efficiencies and identify any possible financial savings. The officer's proposals were identified in the report for members' consideration.

The report had identified an estimated maximum savings that could be achieved, however the Parks Manager provided the members with an update at the meeting advising them that there was now a 3% difference in the cost, increasing the total by approximately £4,000.

Members considered all the options and proposals. In response to members' questions, the Parks Manager advised that a corporate review of the handyman service would be undertaken across the Council and a contract could then be drawn up that incorporated several options to ensure flexibility.

The Parks Manager confirmed that he would be meeting with all the town and parish councils to discuss their maintenance contracts and the possibility of partnership working.

Members were advised that the intention was not to reduce the grassland, but to maintain it.

The Parks Manager explained that, if cut less regularly then more seed heads would develop, therefore increasing and improving bio-diversity.

Members requested that the frequency of hedge cutting in parks also be considered and were advised that it was intended to carry out this function every two to three years, depending on the species of hedgerow.

In response to a question, the Parks Manager confirmed that the automated watering system, proposed at the bowling greens, would reduce watering costs as the watering could take place at night to reduce evaporation and a saving would be made on reduced labour costs.

The Cabinet discussed the possibility of using volunteers to maintain the carpet bedding by the Town Hall. It was considered that this was important for the visual effect it provided for visitors, residents and employees of the town.

DECISION MADE:

1. That option 4 for the future delivery of the service be pursued to completion in accordance with the schedule shown in Appendix A of the report;
2. That option 1 for the security service be taken saving an estimated £50,850 and that a full review of the risk assessment for the lake in Dunorlan be undertaken;
3. That the handyman service continue but reduced achieving a saving of £29,700;
4. That the new contract include the RPI inflationary rate with the potential to achieve further savings both through this and the market testing process;
5. That consideration of the proposed changes to grass management be delegated to the Parks Manager, in consultation with the Housing, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, noting the impact on the efficiency saving achievable;
6. That that the carpet bedding be permanently deleted from the contract, achieving a minimum saving of £4,000;
7. That the number of maintained vacant plots be reduced to the actual, achieving a saving in the region of £2,000;
8. That it be noted that a total estimated saving of £86,550 would be achieved from the recommendations, with further savings expected at the time of the market testing the service; and

9. That the spend to save option for an automated watering system at both bowling greens be agreed.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The above recommendations are made to gain increased efficiencies within the service and contribute positively to the financial position of the council.

Contact Officer: Mel Henley, Parks Manager, ext. 2033
Tel: 01892 554033 or e-mail: mel.henley@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB143/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

POLICIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Williams

REPORT TITLE:

Draft People Strategy (091217/CAB013)

PRIORITIES:

The draft People Strategy summarised the key issues for the Council's staffing resource including their contribution to the four draft priorities in the Vision 2026 document and Strategic Plan: Healthy; Confident; Green and Prosperous. This recognises that the majority of the Council's workforce not only live in the Borough, but over a quarter of our staff actually live in priority areas (TN2). It also recognises the importance of the Council's role and reputation as a quality employer both within the Borough and within Kent.

DISCUSSION:

The Director of Change and Business Support presented a report advising Cabinet of the draft People Strategy 2010-2015, which was a key document supporting the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan. Members noted that whilst the Budget ensured that financial resources were aligned to delivering the Council's key priorities, the People Strategy ensured that our human resources (by far the most significant area of spend) had the necessary skills, focus and training to deliver on the Council's ambitions.

Members were made aware of the achievements to date from the previous strategy. In addition the Council would continue to face increased workloads in some areas and as the economy began to recover, other areas would also see increases in demand. It was noted that the Council would need to be flexible to cope with the demands but at the same time, would have to deliver significant savings as outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Cabinet agreed that the draft People Strategy should be circulated for wider public consultation with staff and partners.

DECISION MADE:

That the People Strategy 2010-15 be approved for wider consultation.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The report fulfils the requirement to have in place a workforce plan, and also sets a framework for the Council as a key employer and partner within Tunbridge Wells.

Contact Officer: Val Green, HR Manager

Tel: 01892 526121 or e-mail: val.green@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB144/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

POLICIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Williams

REPORT TITLE:

[MKIP Business Transformation Programme – Review of Volume and Bespoke Printing 091217/CAB014](#)

PRIORITIES:

This arrangement would support the Prosperous, Confident and Green priorities.

DISCUSSION:

Cabinet was asked to agree in principle to enter into a contract for the provision of external print, along with the rest of the MKIP partners. Members were informed that this would be on the most favourable terms agreeable and would result in a four-year contract being awarded.

The Communications and Marketing Manager stated that printing and graphic design were a cornerstone to the authorities' communication functions, both internally and externally and with residents. A more efficient and robust service would contribute positively towards all authorities' communication needs. She went on to say that all four authorities were committed to the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership, with the objective of maximising efficiencies and improving services through shared or collaborated working.

The options were shown in the appendix attached to the report and showed that the most advantageous option for external printing was to procure externally and to award the contract to AccessPlus.

The report also advised that the Council's Publications Team take on the design work for Maidstone Borough Council. Analysis had shown that across MKIP the most efficient solution would be to increase the internal capacity within MKIP and Tunbridge Wells would host and manage the resources.

The Director of Change and Business Support mentioned that assessments were continuing into the viability of a shared or consolidated print room function and a report would be presented to the Corporate Services Select Committee and Cabinet in due course.

DECISION MADE:

1. That the final decision to enter into a contract for the supply of externally printed materials be delegated to the Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Policies and Partnerships and Finance and Governance;
2. That the introduction of shared provision for graphic design support, subject to the formal agreement of the other MKIP partner (in this case Tunbridge Wells) be agreed in principle;
3. That the approach outlined to reduce the volume of printed material being produced be endorsed;
4. That all spend for printing and/or graphics be authorised by the Communications and Marketing Manager; and
5. That should the review of internal print room facilities across MKIP demonstrate that efficiencies be achievable by consolidating the number of facilities without risk to the delivery of the service, that the Communications and Marketing Manager, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Policies and Partnerships be granted delegated authority to progress such an approach.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

To achieve savings across the four councils in the cost of print.

**Contact Officer: Diane Talbot, Communications and Marketing Manager, 01892 554270
Tel: 01892 554270 or e-mail: diane.talbot@tunbridgewells.gov.uk**

DECISION NO. CAB145/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Horwood

REPORT TITLE:

[Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010/11 – 2014/15 \(091217/CAB015\)](#)

PRIORITIES:

The Medium Term Financial Strategy should contribute to all of the Council's objectives whilst ensuring that we are well managed, proactive and deliver value for money services.

DISCUSSION:

The Head of Finance and Governance introduced a draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for Cabinet's consideration along side the budget process. It was noted that the document specifically considered the extent and longevity of the economic downturn and the impact on the Council's finances.

Members were advised that, in order to support the principles of maintaining a balanced budget and setting the framework for a robust and sustainable budget framework, the Council had projected budgets over a ten year term, in line with the contract period for the street cleansing and household waste and the regeneration partnership.

This had allowed officers and members to focus their attention on key areas of expenditure increases and to introduce other scenarios, such as income flows from the development partner process. The modelling not only identified budget deficits for the future but also focused attention on how the Council would look and change during that period thus aiding the strategic nature of the document.

DECISION MADE:

That the Medium Term Financial Strategy be agreed for public consultation.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The Medium Term Financial Strategy outlines key financial considerations that the Council needs to consider in order to deliver its priorities.

Contact Officer: Lee Colyer, Head of Finance and Governance

Tel: 01892 554132 or e-mail: lee.colyer@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB146/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Horwood

REPORT TITLE:

[Draft Asset Management Plan 2010/11 – 2014//15 \(091217/CAB016\)](#)

PRIORITIES:

The Asset Management Plan contributes to all of the Council's priorities as set out in the Strategic Plan 2010-2015 and the overall 2026 Vision for the Borough.

DISCUSSION:

Members were reminded that the Asset Management Plan had been agreed by full Council on 19 February 2009. The Head of Finance and Governance advised the Cabinet of a number of key developments that had impacted on asset management since that time, including the progression of the Joint Venture Company with John Laing to deliver regeneration and development projects in the Tunbridge Wells area and the successful operation of the Gateway in partnership with Kent County Council. Another key issue that had impacted on asset management had been the current economic position.

Members noted that the first draft of the Asset Management Plan had been presented to Corporate Asset Working Group (CAWG) who monitored the performance of asset management and the achievement of its aims and objectives throughout the year. The draft plan was attached as an appendix to the report for Cabinets' comments and consideration.

In response to a question, the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration advised that the missing Appendix 1 – Asset Register, and Appendix 2 – Ten Year Maintenance Plan had recently been updated and he would circulate them to members after the meeting.

DECISION MADE:

That the draft Asset Management Plan be endorsed for wider public consultation.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

1. To ensure that Cabinet is content with the commitments made in the AMP.
2. To ensure that Cabinet has approved the document prior to public consultation.

Contact Officers: Diane Brady, Estate Surveyor and Keith Delves, Property Surveyor
Tel: 01892 554152 or 554011 or e-mail: diane.brady@tunbridgewells.gov.uk or
keith.delves@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB147/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Horwood

REPORT TITLE:

Draft Budget 2010/11 – 2014/15 (091217/CAB017)

PRIORITIES:

A robust and sustainable budget will contribute to all of the Council's objectives whilst ensuring that we are well managed, proactive and deliver value for money services.

DISCUSSION:

The Head of Finance and Governance submitted a report outlining the current budget projections for 2010/11 through to 2014/15 and set out the assumptions that had been built into the proposed 2010/11 and subsequent years' budgets.

The Cabinet considered the report in detail and agreed that the budget had been compiled to ensure that the Council met its statutory duties and its objectives. Members were aware of the serious decline of the economy into recession and had received a number of reports on how this had impacted on the Council's investments, budget position for 2010/2011 and the impact on future years.

It was considered that the final budget should reflect actions that the Council would be taking to support its residents and businesses.

The Head of Finance and Governance advised members of an error in the figure given in paragraph 12 of the report - "the final formula grant settlement is expected to total £7.0m for 2010/11, a cash increase of just £35,000 from 2009/10".

DECISION MADE:

1. That the Draft Budget be agreed for public consultation; and
2. That officers bring back options on how to close the budget deficit to 4 February 2010 Cabinet.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

A legal budget must be set for the forthcoming financial year and resources need to be made available if the Council is to meet its vision.

Contact Officer: Lee Colyer, Head of Finance and Governance
Tel: 01892 554257 or e-mail: lee.colyer@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

DECISION NO. CAB148/09

NON-EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Horwood

REPORT TITLE:

**Council Tax – Calculation of Tax Base 2010/2011
(091217/CAB018)**

PRIORITIES:

The report supports the corporate commitment of “ensuring that we are well managed, proactive and deliver value for money services”.

DISCUSSION:

Members were informed that, as part of the council tax setting process for the coming year, the Council was required to calculate the Tax Base in the period 1 December 2009 to 31 January 2010.

The Head of Finance and Governance advised that the Tax Base must be notified to Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority and Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority by 30 January 2010.

The calculation took into account the number of dwellings in each tax band; the estimated additions and subtractions during the year; the exemptions; disabled persons’ relief adjustments; discounts for single occupancy/empty property; and collection rate.

The Head of Finance and Governance concluded by stating that the Tax Base for the whole borough for 2010/11 was 44,795.62, which represented a 0.11% an estimated decrease on 2009/10.

DECISION MADE:

1. That the calculation of the Council Tax Base for the year 2010/11 be approved; and
2. That pursuant to the Head of Finance and Governance report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2003, the amount calculated by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council as its Council Tax Base 2010/11 be as shown below:

	2010/11	2009/10 for comparison
For the whole area	44,795.66	44,844.40
Tunbridge Wells Special Expenses	20,351.27	20,410.08
Southborough Special Expenses	4,378.17	4,381.34
Bidborough Special Expenses	530.64	525.48
Capel Special Expenses	919.37	934.07
Benenden	888.35	892.05
Brenchley	1,378.47	1,357.58
Cranbrook	2,624.32	2,629.42
Frittenden	393.66	398.68
Goudhurst	1,318.32	1,312.01
Hawkhurst	1,934.95	1,925.86
Horsmonden	991.50	987.59
Lamberhurst	721.14	716.33
Paddock Wood	3,046.46	3,036.85
Pembury	2,352.43	2,355.36
Sandhurst	601.10	604.01
Speldhurst	2,365.51	2,377.69

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As part of the council tax setting process for the coming year the Council is required to calculate the Tax Base in the period 1 December to 31 January.

Contact Officer: Lee Colyer, Head of Finance and Governance
Tel: 01892 554257 or e-mail: lee.colyer@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

EXEMPT ITEM

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100A (4)

RESOLVED – It was proposed and seconded that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the item of business referred to below on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of the Schedule 12A of the Act namely: -

DECISION NO CAB149/09

Paragraph (3) - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

DECISION NO. CAB149/09

EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Horwood

REPORT TITLE:

Property Investment Portfolio (091217/CAB019)

PRIORITIES:

The proposal contained in the report supports the aims and objectives of the Asset Management Plan, which are derived from the Strategic Plan and the 2026 Vision and will assist in providing finance to enable the Council to achieve all of its corporate priorities.

DISCUSSION:

The report sought members' agreement to purchase investment property assets to create a property investment portfolio to secure future income streams and the appointment of a specialist firm of Chartered Surveyors to identify and recommend potential investment opportunities to the Council.

It was noted that the base interest rate set by the Bank of England had been 0.5% since March 2009 and it was now expected that rates would not start to increase until the third quarter of 2010 and at a slower rate. The future constraints on Government funding was acknowledged and as the property market remained subdued it made economic sense for the Council to use capital reserve to purchase appropriate investment property assets to secure future income streams.

In response to a question raised regarding staffing levels, the Estate Surveyor confirmed that this proposal could have an impact on the staffing levels, especially within Legal Services, depending upon the nature of the investment.

Members considered that as this was a significant policy change the Risk Register should be amended. In addition, it was agreed that this item should be presented to the Audit Committee at its next meeting for its information.

DECISION MADE:

1. That the proposal for the purchase of investment property assets to secure future income streams be endorsed subject to appropriate risk analyses;

2. That the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration, in consultation with the Head of Finance and Governance and the Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder, be authorised to acquire such property assets in accordance with the previous Cabinet decision made for the Acquisition of Assets (090416/CAB013);
3. That the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration instruct a specialist firm of Chartered Surveyors to act on the Council's behalf in the acquisition of investment properties; and
4. That the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration reports progress to Cabinet at six monthly intervals.

NOTE: Councillor Mrs Thomas abstained from voting on this item.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

To enable the Council to maximise the return on its capital holding. To ensure that the necessary authorities are in place to exploit all suitable investment opportunities. To ensure that full and appropriate risk analyses of each investment opportunity is undertaken. To ensure that there is effective review of the Policy's implementation and operation.

Contact Officer: Diane Brady, Estates Officer

Tel: 01892 526121, ext 3152 or email: diane.brady@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

CAB1050/09 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

As this was the last Cabinet meeting for the Chief Executive, the Leader thanked her for the support and advice she had provided to the Cabinet over the years she had been employed by the Council.

(NOTE:

- (1) Items 11(E) and 12(B) were taken out of sequence from the agenda;
- (2) In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12 on public speaking at Board/Committee meetings, the following member of the public attended and spoke on the decision indicated: Mr Kerrison minute CAB131/09; and Mrs Blackburn CAB132/09
- (3) The meeting closed at 12.55pm).