

CABINET



MONDAY, 22 JANUARY 2024 - 4.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor S Wallwork

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs D Laws and Councillor P Murphy

CAB47/23 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held 18 December 2023 were approved and signed.

CAB48/23 FEES AND CHARGES 2024/25

Members considered the Fees and Charges 2024/25 report presented by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Miscandlon.

Councillor Boden said he would like to put forward an amendment following a suggestion made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in respect of the Council's rental charges for office space and units. There is currently an upper and lower limit of charges, and Councillor Boden proposed that the Council should continue to expect to obtain a market rent for new lettings or lease renewals but that it is no longer appropriate to have an upper limit on any of those charges. Therefore, the recommendation is to remove the upper limit of charges. However, in respect of South Fens Business Centre, there is an issue with the number of tenants compared to the amount of space available. As a result, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel have further suggested that the lower limit be removed at South Fens. Councillor Boden supported this proposal in the hope it would encourage a greater take up of the accommodation available there.

Councillor Hoy seconded the proposed amendments.

Councillor Benney commented that he welcomes the proposals, it makes sense to maximise the rent by removing the upper limit, thus not restricting the market especially as there is not full occupancy at South Fens. The Council should be chasing full occupancy and trying to get as much rent as it can.

Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and AGREED to approve the Fees and Charges for 2024/25 subject to the amendments recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel namely, to remove the upper limit on market rents charged by the business centres but also to remove the lower limit at South Fens Business Centre only.

CAB49/23 PROCUREMENT OF CONTACT CENTRE SYSTEM

Members considered the Procurement of Contact Centre System report presented by Councillor Tierney.

Councillor Tierney commented that whilst a new system will allow the Council to collect data which

can be used to drive service improvements and provide greater efficiency, he does understand that call systems can often be a source of frustration to the public, but he will endeavour to ensure that this does not happen.

Cabinet AGREED that Fenland District Council contract with the preferred bidder once the tender evaluation process has been completed for the provision of its Contact Centre and Telephony Solution via the Crown Commercial Services R6117 Lot b / c framework arrangements.

CAB50/23 WISBECH HIGH STREET UPDATE

Members considered the Wisbech High Street Update report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Boden asked if Councillor Seaton was suggesting that estimates be obtained for all the options within the report or asking for a report on the likely costs before deciding which options to obtain estimates for. Councillor Seaton said he thought it best to have a full discussion about all the options put forward by the consultant, with an assessment of costs for each of the options available.

Councillor Hoy referred to the report's summary analysis, saying she wanted to challenge the RAG rating where it lists the option for a five-storey building as adverse for wider impact potentially because of harm to the conservation area. Councillor Hoy said she could not see how a five-storey building could harm the conservation area any more than the appalling amount of scaffolding already there. Councillor Seaton said bearing in mind this is an experienced company that has a strong relationship with the Heritage Lottery Fund, what the report is saying is not that the five-storey building will be better than having the scaffolding there but rather that the preferred option from their point of view is either a three or four storey building. Councillor Hoy responded that the Council needs to be realistic about costs. Whilst three or four storeys might be nice, she would rather see a five-storey building if it can be afforded, then to not be able to afford it and continue to have scaffolding there because if the other options are unaffordable then the status quo will remain. Councillor Seaton said that is why it is important to get costings for all the options.

Councillor Tierney agreed with Councillor Hoy and said it is frustrating that here is a street containing dilapidated buildings covered in scaffolding which the Council wants to improve and yet constantly hits barriers of endless bureaucracy. He stated his appreciation that Councillor Seaton is doing all he can and thanked him for liaising with the relevant people to get scaffolding moved off the pavement when blocking the street because that has been a huge improvement. Councillor Tierney added that the work done so far is a real credit although it is frustrating to keep hitting obstacles. Councillor Seaton agreed the moving back of the scaffolding made a great difference for better access; he thanked Councillor Tierney for his comments and acknowledged that people are working extremely hard and have had to deal with very adverse conditions of build apart from the weather.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Miscandlon and AGREED to:

- 1. note the current position in relation to the 24 High Street construction project in Wisbech High Street, and**
- 2. review the consultant's report and instruct officers to obtain estimates for all five options, including the sub-options in option 5, as deemed appropriate by Cabinet for future consideration.**

CAB51/23 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Boden presented the draft 6-month Cabinet Forward Plan for information.

CAB52/23 PREVIOUS MINUTES (CONFIDENTIAL)

The confidential minutes of the meeting held 18 December 2023 were approved and signed.

Councillor Hoy asked if Cabinet members could receive an update from officers at some point regarding the latest position of the issue that was discussed in confidential session. Councillor Boden said he was certain that could be undertaken outside of the meeting.

4.22 pm

Chairman