

Cabinet

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Wednesday, 26 May 2021
Present	Councillors John Collier, Ray Field, David Godfrey, Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee (Vice-Chair), David Monk (Chairman), Stuart Peall, Tim Prater, Lesley Whybrow and David Wimble
Apologies for Absence	None.
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Alastair Clifford (Operations Lead Specialist), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Jonathan Hicks (Performance Specialist (Business Insight Manager)), John Holman (Assistant Director of Housing), Amandeep Khroud (Assistant Director), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services) and Jemma West (Committee Service Specialist)
Others Present:	Councillor McConville.

NOTE: All decisions (except for the decision at Minute No 7, which is exempt under paragraph 7 (call in and urgency) of part 7 (Overview and Scrutiny Rules and Procedures) of the constitution) are subject to call-in arrangements. The deadline for call-in is 7 June 2021 at 5pm. Decisions not called in may be implemented on 8 June 2021.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2021 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. **Corporate Complaints Policy**

The report outlined proposed changes to the Customer Feedback & Complaints Policy; primarily detailing suggested amendments to the investigation process in

relation to Stage 2 complaints. These changes were proposed in order to ensure greater resource efficiency is built into in the complaints process, thereby improving customer service, whilst ensuring that investigations are consistently dealt with in a most robust and transparent way.

The report proposed the inclusion of minor additions to the content of the policy, including the appropriate references to complaints regarding the housing service and the early resolution process, which are not currently referenced in the policy.

Alongside this, the report also proposed, in line with Ombudsman best practice, the adoption of a Corporate Reasonable Adjustment Policy and requests for some minor alterations to be made to the Persistent & Unreasonable Complainants Policy. The report also outlined an annual audit process which will be put in place to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the proposed new policy.

Proposed by Councillor Field,
Seconded by Councillor Peall; and

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the report C/21/02 be received and noted.**

(Voting figures: 9 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

- 2. That the following policies be approved:**
 - Customer Feedback & Complaints Policy**

(Voting figures: 7 for, 2 against, 0 abstentions).

- Persistent & Unreasonable Complainants Policy**

(Voting figures: 9 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

- Reasonable Adjustment Policy**

(Voting figures: 9 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

- 3. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Digital Transformation, to approve minor amendments to the above policies in the future, and to bring substantive changes back to Cabinet for approval as necessary.**

(Voting figures: 9 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Cabinet was asked to consider and approve the proposed amendments which will lead to the changes in the Corporate Complaints Policy being implemented.

- 4. Housing Compliance policies**

The report sought approval for six policies in relation to Housing Landlord Health and Safety Compliance, updated to reflect Folkestone and Hythe District Council's operational structures.

A Cabinet Member requested that the compliance audit report be brought before Cabinet along with the next quarterly performance report.

Proposed by Councillor Godfrey,
Seconded by Councillor Peall; and

RESOLVED:

1. **That report C/21/03 be received and noted.**
2. **That the Housing Compliance policies be approved in relation to: Asbestos; Electrical Safety; Fire Safety; Gas and heating Safety; Lift Safety; Water Safety (see Appendices 1 to 6 of the report).**
3. **That delegated authority be given to the Director of Housing and Operations, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects, to approve minor amendments to Housing Compliance policies in the future.**

(Voting figures: 9 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As the Housing Service has returned to the Council, it is of vital importance that these policies reflect the operational structure of the new service and that responsibilities for ensuring compliance are clearly identified within each policy.

5. **Progress report for the installation of new public conveniences and kiosk at the Lower Leas Coastal Park**

The report set out the proposal for the agreed capital funding for a new kiosk and toilet block to be provided at the Lower Leas Coastal Park.

A Member requested an additional recommendation be considered relating to the installation of solar PV on the new toilet block.

Proposed by Councillor Collier,
Seconded by Councillor Wimble; and

RESOLVED:

1. **That report C/21/05 be received and noted.**
2. **That the proposed project plan for delivery of new public conveniences and kiosk be agreed.**
3. **To explore the potential of alternative energy sources for the toilet block.**

(Voting figures: 9 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions)

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Cabinet was asked to agree the proposal and project plan in order to deliver new enhanced facilities for the park to cater for high demand.

6. Progress report for the refurbishment of public conveniences

The report provided an update on the proposed Capital Programme project for the refurbishment of Public Conveniences across Folkestone and Hythe. The Engineering and Buildings team have undertaken condition surveys for all toilet blocks and identified areas of improvement for each. Four priority PC's have been identified for refurbishment, Pleydell Gardens Folkestone, Somerset Road Cheriton, Dymchurch High Street and Station Road Lyminge.

An addendum to the report, setting out several amendments, had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Collier,
Seconded by Councillor Wimble; and

RESOLVED:

- 1. That report C/21/04 be received and noted.**
- 2. That the agreed programme of works be noted.**

(Voting figures: 9 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Cabinet were asked to note the survey work completed across the toilet block assets and the programme of work that has been designed for improvements to the identified blocks in 21/22.

7. Urgent Decision: Connect 38 - Addition of CAT A works to General Fund Capital Programme

In May 2019, Folkestone and Hythe District Council purchased the investment property known as Connect 38 in Ashford, Kent. At that time, the first floor and part of the second floor were vacant and required finishing to a Category A (CatA) specification before leasing out. Unfortunately this space remained vacant as a result of low interest in office space through the Covid pandemic.

Recently however there has been a resurgence of interest in office space and the council has agreed draft heads of terms with a potential new tenant who requires occupation by 30 July 2021. Therefore the CatA works to the second floor need to be undertaken immediately to enable this deadline to be met. Urgent approval is now required to modify the Council's capital programme to allow the CatA works to be undertaken in order to let the vacant space.

Proposed by Councillor Collier,
Seconded by Councillor Monk; and

RESOLVED:

- 1. That report C/21/07 be received and noted.**

2. That £400,000 be added to the General Fund capital programme to allow the necessary Cat A works to the Connect 38 building to be met from monies received under the legal agreement for the original property acquisition (held in the Capital Grants and Contributions Unapplied Reserve).
3. That this matter will be reported to Full Council at the next available opportunity.

(Voting figures: 9 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

Please note, the decision noted above is exempt from call-in under paragraph 7 (call in and urgency) of part 7 (Overview and Scrutiny Rules and Procedures) of the constitution.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

1. There is currently no budget approved in the Council's General Fund capital programme for the CatA works. However, the £400,000 monies identified for the original works is held in an earmarked reserve and available to spend for this purpose.
2. This is an urgent requirement to secure a deal to lease part of the vacant space at Connect 38 by 30 July 2021. Cabinet is requested to approve the budget for the CatA works to be added to the General Fund capital programme.