

Cabinet

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Wednesday, 13 November 2024
Present	Councillors Mike Blakemore, Polly Blakemore, Gary Fuller, Jim Martin (Chairman), Tim Prater (Vice-Chair), Stephen Scoffham, Rebecca Shoob and Jeremy Speakman
Apologies for Absence	Councillors Rich Holgate
Officers Present:	Michael Bailey (Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist), Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Ewan Green (Director of Strategy and Resources), Adrian Hammond (Housing Lead Specialist), Daniella Loxton (Capital & Treasury Senior Specialist), Andrew Rush (Chief Officer Regulatory and Community Services), Jonathan Smith (Chief Accountant) and Jemma West (Democratic Services Team Leader)
Others Present:	Councillor James Butcher

NOTE: All decisions are subject to call-in arrangements. The deadline for call-in is Friday 22 November 2024 at 5pm. Decisions not called in may be implemented on Monday 25 November 2024.

36. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

37. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2024, were submitted, approved, and signed by the Leader.

38. **Bathing Water Beach Signage**

The report considered the motion agreed by Full Council (Item 46) on 26/9/23, that looked at how the public were informed of the latest bathing water classifications and storm overflow releases. The motion also asked that the practicalities of installing digital signage were reviewed along with the availability of external funding.

Proposed by Councillor Scoffham,
Seconded by Councillor Prater; and

RESOLVED:

1. **That report C/24/42 be received and noted.**
2. **To note the current systems that the council currently has in place to notify users of bathing water quality across the district.**
3. **To not proceed with the installation of digital signage for the reasons explained in the report.**
4. **To review in advance of the bathing water season 2025 how communication to the public about bathing water quality classifications could be enhanced, using social media, the website and early installation of signage.**

(Voting figure: 8 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The installation of digital signage is not recommended as the information available is generally time delayed, historic or requiring verification. The cost of digital signage is prohibitive in the absence of external funding. The Council conforms to its statutory obligations regarding bathing water by displaying the most up to date bathing water classifications on all designated beach signage which also include QR codes taking the user directly to that location on Southern Water's Beachbuoy application.

39. Guest rooms in Housing Independent Living schemes

In 2022, the council appointed an external consultant to carry out a review of its Independent Living stock. This review identified that many of the guest rooms in the Independent Living schemes are not well used, and the consultant therefore recommended that the council conducted a review of guest rooms to decide whether some should be retained, or whether to find an alternative use. This review has been completed and a tenant consultation has taken place on the initial preferred future use for each guest room. This report sets out the proposed future use for each guest room following the tenant consultation.

Proposed by Councillor Shoob,
Seconded by Councillor J Martin; and

RESOLVED:

1. **That report C/24/44 be received and noted.**

2. That the results of the tenant consultation be noted.
3. That the future use of each of the guest rooms be approved as set out in section 3 of this report.
4. To note the proposed revised nightly guest room charge for 2025/26 to ensure full cost recovery as far as practicable, subject to Full Council approving the 2025/26 fees and charges in February 2025
5. That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Housing & Operations to change the use of any of the guest rooms at a future date if the identified future use for any room proves unsuccessful.

(Voting figures: 8 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Many of the Independent Living guest rooms are not well used and it costs the council far more to operate the guest rooms than we receive in income from them. Tenant feedback has been taken into account when deciding the future use of each guest room. Converting three of the guest rooms to lettable flats will provide permanent homes for residents on the housing waiting list and generate additional income to the Housing Revenue Account.

Using the guest room at Prescott House as temporary accommodation will provide a temporary home for people who are homeless. Increasing the nightly charge for the four guest rooms which are being retained will ensure, as far as practicable, full cost recovery for these rooms.

40. **Oportunitas - 23/24 Full statement of accounts and quarter 2 progress report 24/25 up to 30 September 2024**

The report outlined the company's audited Statement of Accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2024 and provides an update from the Board of Oportunitas Ltd ("the company") on activities undertaken during the first two quarters for the 2024/25 financial year, including a projected outturn for the profit and loss account for the period to 31 March 2025 compared to the original forecast, based on activity to 30 September 2024. This report is in-line with the requirement contained in the Shareholder's Agreement between the company and the Council. The Chair of Oportunitas was available at the meeting of Cabinet to present the report and to address any questions.

Proposed by Councillor J Martin,
Seconded by Councillor M Blakemore; and

RESOLVED:

1. That report C/24/47 be received and noted.
2. That the Full Statement of Accounts and Directors' Report for the financial year ending 31 March 2024 be noted.

- 3. That the latest projected outturn for the Profit and Loss Account of Oportunitas Limited for the financial year ending 31 March 2025 be noted.**

(Voting figures: 8 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

REASON FOR DECISION:

Oportunitas Ltd (“the company”) is required to provide regular updates to Cabinet as set out in the Shareholder’s Agreement between the company and the Council.

41. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 5-year Strategic Approach to Acquisitions and New Build Pipeline

The HRA 30-year Business Plan (BP) was agreed by Cabinet in December 2023 (Report C/23/57) and aligns with the council’s Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), and the HRA capital programme, acquisitions and new build ambitions for HRA-led affordable housing. A commitment was made to increase the supply of council-owned and managed affordable homes by at least 20 units per year to 2041/42 using a capital budget of £5M per year from the HRA. The report sets out the strategy to deliver that commitment.

Proposed by Councillor Shoob,
Seconded by Councillor J Martin; and

RESOLVED:

- 1. That report C/24/45 be received and noted.**
- 2. That the HRA acquisition and new-build strategy be approved.**
- 3. That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Housing & Operations, in consultation with Section 151 Officer, to make decisions based on viability, commercial and development matters relating to acquisitions, developments on HRA owned land and S106 opportunities, in accordance with the HRA Business Plan and approved budgets.**
- 4. That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Housing & Operations, in consultation with Section 151 Officer, to apply for and accept appropriate government grants to supplement HRA resources in order to secure affordable housing, reporting to Members through normal committee processes.**
- 5. That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Housing and Operations to agree the design, technical standards, mix and typologies delivered in the schemes coming forward in consultation with the Chief Officer – Housing, reporting to Members through normal committee processes.**
- 6. That any relevant decisions that fall outside of the in-year budget allocation within the HRA Business Plan will be subject to separate reports to the relevant committee based on cost, viability considerations and financial capacity within the HRA.**

(Voting figures: 8 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Cabinet was asked to agree the recommendations in order for the council to negotiate with developers regarding Section 106 (S106) acquisitions and to accept appropriate government grants to supplement the financial resources of the HRA to secure more affordable housing in the district.

We are seeking Members' approval of the strategy which will provide the framework for HRA new-builds and acquisitions to be made, enabling officers to respond swiftly to opportunities that arise.

42. Romney Marsh Coastal Destination Centre including Beach Chalet Project update

In December 2023 Cabinet (Report C/23/70) approved a proposal to deliver a visitor destination centre and 93 beach huts on the Council-owned Coast Drive car park in Greatstone, Romney Marsh. The report also approved a total budget of £1,593,000 to deliver the scheme. The budget included Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA)/Magnox grant of £300k, CIL contributions of £300k and UKSPF funding of a further £100k. The remaining £893k was capital budget approved by cabinet in June 2021 (Report C/21/13). This budget was deemed sufficient to carry out the works for the project until UKPN advised that the electricity supply to the site was insufficient and would require a new substation. This has resulted in the project cost plan showing a shortfall in budget of circa £102k due to the unexpected costs to supply and install the substation.

Proposed by Councillor Speakman,
Seconded by Councillor J Martin; and

RESOLVED:

1. That report C/24/46 be received and noted.
2. That a virement of £140,000 from the identified sources within the approved capital programme to the Coast Drive project budget be approved.
3. That the urgency of the decision be noted as the works contract to safeguard the NDA/Magnox grant of £300k needs to be awarded before the end of 2024.
4. That delegated authority be given to the Director for Housing and Operations to deliver the scheme within the amended budget.

(Voting figures: 8 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Investment into this project will create a coastal destination centre that will boost tourism and economic activity on the Marsh whilst providing an ongoing revenue stream for the council. The previously agreed budget needs additional

funds to be identified to cover the shortfall caused by the requirement to provide the substation so that the project can be delivered.