

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2018

Present: Councillor D Burton (Chairman) and Councillors M Burton, Cox, English, Munford, Prendergast, Springett, Wilby and Willis

Also Present: Councillors Boughton, Hastie and Spooner

146. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence were received from Councillor de Wiggondene-Sheppard.

147. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor M Burton was substituting for Councillor de Wiggondene-Sheppard.

148. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had agreed to accept a further recommendation as an urgent update for Agenda Item 17 – Planning Services Improvement Project (PSIP) as recommendations in the report would require changes to the Constitution.

149. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillors Boughton and Hastie were present as Visiting Members and indicated their wish to speak on Agenda Item 17 – Planning Services Improvement Project (PSIP).

Councillor Spooner was present as a Visiting Member and wished to observe.

150. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

151. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that Councillors M Burton, Cox, English, Prendergast, Springett and Willis were lobbied on Agenda Item 17 – Planning Services Improvement Project (PSIP).

152. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public due to the possible disclosure of exempt information.

153. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

154. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

155. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

156. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme for 2017/18.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme 2017/18 be noted.

157. OUTSIDE BODIES - VERBAL UPDATES FROM MEMBERS

Councillor English informed the Committee that he had attended a meeting of the Community Rail Partnership.

158. REFERENCE FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE - GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES - NEED AND SUPPLY

The Committee considered the reference from Planning Committee relating to Gypsy and Traveller Sites – Need and Supply. It was noted that the reference referred specifically to the need for affordable Gypsy and Traveller sites and that this was not apparent in the recommendation.

The Committee considered that the reference should be shared with the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee due to that Committee's responsibilities. It was suggested that the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee consider the operational housing aspects of the reference.

The Committee raised concerns about a recent European ruling which stated that Councils should be ensuring that there was a spread of Gypsy and Traveller sites across the Borough.

The Committee agreed to incorporate the issues raised by the reference into the work for the review of the Local Plan.

The Chairman advised that a note of this item be included on the Planning Committee agenda.

RESOLVED:

1. That the reference from Planning Committee be shared with the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee.
2. That the issues raised by the reference be incorporated into the review of the Local Plan.

Voting: Unanimous

159. THIRD QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Miss Ellie Dunnet, the Head of Finance, updated the Committee on capital and revenue budgets and outturn within the Committee's remit for the first three quarters of 2017/18.

It was noted that Planning Services and Parking and Transportation had been separated into two separate sections at the request of this Committee to enable the performance of each area to be differentiated.

It was highlighted to the Committee that:

- The total forecast variance relating to Parking and Transportation was an underspend of £265,070;
- There was a projected underspend of £122,000 for Planning Services; and
- Planning inquiries that were scheduled to take place this financial year had been delayed and so the anticipated expenditure would now be incurred during 2018/19.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr Mark Egerton, the Strategic Planning Manager, responded that a permanent member of staff had been recruited within the Strategic Planning team but there was a long lead time and therefore a temporary member of staff had been employed until then.

In response to a question from the Committee, Miss Dunnet explained that at a corporate level the risk of future costs relating to development control appeals would be recognised but that this risk was not presented in the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the revenue position at the end of the third quarter and the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position where significant variances have been identified be noted.

2. That the position with the capital programme be noted.

160. REVIEW OF AIR QUALITY MONITORING IN MAIDSTONE

Dr Stuart Maxwell, the Senior Scientific Officer, presented the Review of Air Quality Monitoring in Maidstone to the Committee.

It was highlighted to the Committee that:

- There had been no continuous monitoring in the Town Centre since the Fairmeadow monitoring station was closed in June 2016.
- A suitable location at Jubilee Church in Upper Stone Street had now been identified. The site belonged to Kent County Council who had confirmed that they were happy for their site to be used.
- The establishment of the Jubilee Church site would not be immediate and therefore it was proposed that a contractor be employed in the short term to monitor air quality in Maidstone.
- In addition to PM₁₀ and NO₂, the contractor would be able to monitor PM_{2.5} for which the Council did not have a suitable instrument to do so.
- The contractor would install the monitoring station and undertake all the necessary maintenance, repairs, calibrations, and servicing.
- Officers had asked several contractors to quote for monitoring air quality in Maidstone for the year. The lowest quote was estimated at £16,000 and was received from the current contractor who supplied service and maintenance for the air quality stations and so would not have to make special visits to the area.

The Committee requested that a further report come back to this Committee before establishing the permanent site for air quality monitoring as the data from the temporary contractor would inform decisions going forward.

In response to questions from the Committee, Dr Maxwell replied that:

- PM_{2.5} are very small air particles that can penetrate the walls of lungs very easily;
- There was no statutory obligation for the Council to measure PM_{2.5} but it was a good thing to do; and
- Officers had already agreed with the contractor that there could be an option to buy the hardware at the end of the contract;

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr Duncan Haynes, the Mid-Kent Environmental Protection Team Leader, replied that the data handling contract for the County was re-let this year and the budget was

based on the previous contract price. Therefore, it was likely that the budget would be reduced next year and so there would be no further money available to employ a contractor to monitor air quality.

Therefore, the Committee requested that Officers note the importance that Members attached to the monitoring of air quality in the Borough and also that every endeavour be made in future budget planning to accommodate further work.

RESOLVED:

1. That a contractor be appointed to install a monitoring station and undertake monitoring at Upper Stone Street for a period of one year.
2. That a site for longer term monitoring be investigated, with the preferred site being at Jubilee Church.
3. That a further report be brought back to this Committee before establishing the site.
4. That this Committee asks that Officers note the importance that is attached to this and requests that every endeavour be made in future budget planning to accommodate further work.

Voting: Unanimous

161. DRAFT LONDON PLAN (2017)

Mrs Sarah Lee, the Principal Planning Officer (Strategic Planning), presented the Draft London Plan (2017) to the Committee.

It was noted that:

- The Greater London Authority (GLA) had published its Draft London Plan for consultation.
- The Plan covered the period 2019-2041, although certain detailed aspects of the Plan such as the housing targets only related to the first 10 years of the period (2019-2029).
- The Plan identified a requirement for around 66,000 dwellings to be provided in London each year over the 10 year period. This figure originated from the population projections prepared by the GLA. This was different from what occurred in the rest of the country whereby the Office for National Statistics prepared the figures used by Local Planning Authorities. This indicated a significant disconnect between London and the rest of the country.
- The Plan stated that the aim would be for London to meet its own needs within its own boundaries and this was welcomed by the Council. However, actual housing delivery in 2015/16 was only

34,800 and to achieve the new requirement within London's confines would require very substantive planning measures. If they were unable to meet their need then the Council could experience approaches under the duty to cooperate to meet some of their London boroughs' unmet needs.

- The Plan was more restrictive about the release of industrial/employment land for alternative uses than previous versions of the London Plan.
- The Plan highlighted strategic transport links into London that could be improved. None of those strategic links were specific to Maidstone and this was referred to in the consultation response.

The Committee requested that the following amendments be included in the response:

- Stronger emphasis should be placed on how restrictive the Council believes the 10 year time frame to be, in terms of planning and delivery.
- The Plan is too restrictive on the reuse of employment land and this should be emphasised further within the Council's response.

RESOLVED: That the response to the Draft London Plan (December 2017) set out in Appendix 1 be approved with the inclusion of the amendments suggested.

Voting: Unanimous

162. PLANNING SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (PSIP)

Mr William Cornall, the Director of Regeneration and Place, presented the Planning Services Improvement Project (PSIP) to the Committee.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that there was an urgent update which included a further recommendation.

Councillors Boughton and Hastie addressed the Committee on this item.

It was noted that:

- The Planning Review was concluded by this Committee at its meeting held on 13 November 2017. The next stage in the process was the implementation of the selected recommendations.
- The recommendations relating to Members and Committee were considered at a working group consisting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Planning and this Committee, Councillor Munford and Officers.

The Committee raised the following concerns:

- Afternoon meetings of Planning Committee would mean that both Members who worked full time and members of the public would be precluded from attending. On the other hand, it was suggested that members of the public with young families would be precluded from attending during the evening.
- Decision making was not always of the best quality late into the evening.
- Reducing the size of Planning Committee would mean that there would be less representation from the smaller political parties on the Committee.
- Allowing only one Visiting Member to speak at Planning Committee on each application would not enable the views of opposing political parties to be heard.
- On some planning applications it would be necessary for Officers to spend more time introducing the report and therefore a time restriction on this would not be practical.
- On some planning applications Members of Planning Committee would require more than three minutes to speak on an application, especially when trying to formulate grounds for refusal, and therefore a time restriction on this would not be practical.
- Some planning applications affected several Parish Councils (and sometimes in different ways) and so allowing only one Parish Council to speak would not be reasonable.
- Limiting reports to 10 pages was too restrictive.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Head of Planning and Development responded that:

- There were a relatively small number of applications being held up because of the decision making abilities of the Planning Committee. But, there was a backlog of applications waiting to go to Planning Committee.
- In the next financial year (2018/19) it was likely that there would be less outline applications coming to Planning Committee, but more reserved matters.

The Committee suggested that consideration be given to recognising neighbourhood forums (where they are recognised as such under the Localism Act) in the same way as Parish Councils in relation to the rules for public speaking.

The Committee noted the assurance that paperless working for parishes would not be introduced as part of the PSIP.

The Committee queried whether it should state 'This already exists in the form of the Parish Charter' in Appendix 2, on page 58 of the agenda, rather than the 'Parish Service Scheme'.

The Committee considered the report and recommendations and requested that the following amendments be made to the recommendations in Appendix 1 before submission to Council:

- Recommendation 2: That greater use of e-learning modules be included in the Member induction programme and training for Planning Committee to ensure that key elements and responsibilities are covered and embedded. This would save time and be accessible for all Members.
- Recommendation 3: That the line of enquiry relating to the parish call-in process is not implemented.
- Recommendation 5A: That the speaking arrangements proposed are not implemented, but that the slot for the parish or residents association go to any other concerned resident if no parish or residents association registers to speak, with the Chairman's discretion.
- Recommendation 5B: The recommendation was supported by the Committee. However, the Committee did not support an absolute restriction of 5 minutes. In order to keep Officer Introductions concise, the Committee raised the possibility of including a caveat at the top of each agenda which stated that it was assumed that all Members had read the papers.
- Recommendation 5C: That the Committee Member Debate should not be restricted by time.
- Recommendation 5E: That the Planning Committee should not be reduced to 11 Members.
- Recommendation 5F: That the Planning Committee should not be held in the afternoon rather than the evening.
- Recommendation 7: That the idea of concise reports be supported but the Committee did not want arbitrary restriction on the number of pages.

RESOLVED:

1. That the 27 recommendations from IESE that do not relate to Members and Committee, specifically those that Officers are taking forward, be noted.

Voting: Unanimous

2. That the proposed amendments be made to Appendix 1.

3. To **RECOMMEND** to **Council**:

That the Monitoring Officer be instructed to amend the Constitution to reflect the changes agreed by this Committee, effective from the new municipal year (2018/19).

Voting: Unanimous

Note: Councillor English left the meeting at 8.52 p.m. during consideration of this item and the meeting was adjourned between 8.52 p.m. and 8.59 p.m.

163. PARKING INNOVATION

Mr Jeff Kitson, the Parking Services Manager, presented this item to the Committee. The report detailed an overview of current and developing technologies in the parking industry and outlined the planned innovation within Parking Services over the next two years.

It was highlighted to the Committee that:

- Over the next 5-10 years vehicle transport would change more than it has in the last 100 years.
- The surge in technology had extended to the parking industry which had resulted in convergence, development and innovation.
- Parking Services had reviewed the current market and was committed to transforming services by embracing new and emerging technologies within the parking industry, to meet the changing needs of customers, to maintain service efficiency and to maximise car park income levels. This would be achieved through an innovation phase over the next two years.
- The decision on whether to alter car parking charges in the Town Centre was deferred from the meeting of this Committee on 22 January 2018.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Kitson replied that:

- The average cost per day for a long stay car park season ticket was £4.24, which was comparable to the Park and Ride tariff.
- Only 252 season tickets had been issued. Therefore, these formed a very small proportion when compared to the thousands of transactions which took place for other parking services.

The Committee raised the following concerns:

- That car parking charges were being raised to fund the Park and Ride Service which required a large subsidy to run. However, the Committee suggested that the Council's car parking was undervalued and therefore agreed to implement the car parking charges at Appendix 1.
- Using price to encourage customers to visit a car park in a different zone could mean that more air pollution is produced as the customer travelled between car parks.

The Committee supported the proposals to develop parking services and embrace innovation. Further to this, the Committee requested that all measures to accelerate the implementation of the emerging technologies be considered by Officers. The Committee also requested that consideration be given to landscaping and greening and that the improvement of safety lighting be considered by Officers as infrastructure was installed.

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposals to develop parking services and embrace innovation be supported.
2. That all measures to accelerate implementation be considered.
3. That as infrastructure is installed opportunities for landscaping, greening, and improving of safety lighting be considered.

Voting: Unanimous

4. That the pay and display tariff proposals as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed.

Voting: For – 6 Against – 1 Abstentions – 0

Note: Councillor Springett left the meeting at 21:45 during consideration of this item.

164. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 9.57 p.m.