

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 14 JUNE 2016

Present: Councillor D Burton (Chairman), and Councillors English, Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer, Munford, Prendergast, Springett, de Wiggondene and Wilby

Also Present: Councillors Adkinson, Burton, Clark, Garten and Harper

7. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

8. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no substitute members.

9. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Chairman stated that, in his opinion, an Urgent Update on the Committee's Work Programme should be taken as an urgent item as it contained information relating to the Committee's commitments for the coming months.

He also stated that it had been requested by Councillor Springett that the Committee receive a report on Planning Enforcement and another report on Retrospective Planning Applications. Scoping work with Officers will take place and dates for receiving these reports will be arranged and notified to the Committee.

There is also an update report on the Brunswick Street Car Park to come to the Committee at a date in the future to be arranged.

This was noted by the Committee.

10. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

It was noted the following Visiting Members were in attendance:

Councillor Adkinson to speak on Item 12
Councillor M Burton – observing
Councillor Clark to speak on Item 12
Councillor Garten to speak on Item 15
Councillor Harper to speak on Item 12.

11. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Garten declared he used to be a Parish Councillor of Broomfield and Kingswood and that he was also a resident in this parish.

Councillor Prendergast declared she had in the past been a member of the Maidstone Campaign for the Protection of Rural England but had not taken part in its discussions on the Integrated Transport Strategy.

Councillor English declared he was the Secretary of Hayle Place Nature Reserve and had made comments on the Integrated Transport Strategy but had not take part in any discussions.

Councillor Harper declared he was Chairman of the Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum.

Councillor Clark declared he lived in Boughton Lane.

All Councillors declaring an interest considered their interests were not Other Significant Interests and would remain in the meeting and take part in the discussions or address the Committee, whichever was relevant.

12. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that all Councillors declared they had been lobbied on the Land South of Cripple Street, Maidstone as an issue in the Integrated Transport Strategy.

Councillor English declared he had been lobbied on issues regarding the Walking and Cycling Strategy and the responses to Kent County Council's Active Travel Strategy.

Councillor Prendergast declared she had been lobbied on the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan.

13. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED:

That items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

14. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 18 APRIL 2016

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MAY 2016

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

17. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Mr Sean Carter Chairman of the North Loose Residents Association, Planning Committee addressed the Committee to ask his question:

"Following the article in the Kent Messenger of 10 June showing traffic in Boughton Lane has increased by 53% in the last five years and 11% in the last year, which confirms Kent Highways view that the junction with the Loose Road is over capacity. Does Maidstone Borough Council now accept that allocating housing on the New Line Learning school site and playing fields in Boughton Lane is a mistake and should be withdrawn?"

The Chairman responded as follows:

"I can't comment specifically upon the statistics that you quote, I've not seen those. But what I would say to you is that any individual planning application that may come forward for that site would be considered on its own merits and it would also be considered upon what transport congestion mitigation measures are offered against that individual application, and if a suitable scheme of mitigation was brought forward it may well be considered favourably or it may well not and that will be a matter for the Planning Committee or future inspector to decide."

Mr Carter asked the following supplementary question:

"It should be noted that this junction was never included in the original Integrated Transport Strategy. At the request of Maidstone Borough Council, Mott MacDonald have now produced a report to try to find a solution for this junction. Maidstone Borough Council instructed Mott MacDonald to allow for new developments, mainly in the Sutton Road area, but made no mention of two allocated sites in Boughton Lane or development in Coxheath, Marden, Staplehurst or Boughton Monchelsea, all of which impact on this junction. This report was based on traffic figures provided by developers for the New Line Learning site. Can we be assured, that in the future, all instructions from Maidstone Borough Council planners to contractors, will take account of all factors concerning new developments, including neighbourhood planning groups, in the process?"

The Chairman responded as follows:

"I think there's two aspects to this. There's the inclusion of neighbourhood plan groups and I believe it would be our policy to furnish any consultants with a full suite of information, which would include neighbourhood planning documents as they are emerging. All of those documents and similar are published on our website and available, and I believe that consultants would have access to all of our information."

18. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT -
CONSIDERATION OF RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT
INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Principal Planning Officer presented the report. The Committee was informed, that as a result of consultation carried out on the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS), in conjunction with the Local Plan Regulation 19 Consultation, between 5 February and 18 March 2016, a total of 84 representations were made from various interested parties. A schedule of representations was included in the report.

The main recommended change, agreed with Kent County Council (KCC), was that the Walking and Cycling Strategy be published and adopted as a standalone strategy separate from the ITS. It was reported that, if agreed, the amendments would be made to both documents and the revised documents presented to the Maidstone Joint Transport Board (JTB) at their next meeting in July. If agreed by JTB, the documents would then come back to this committee for final approval for adoption and published later in 2016.

It was confirmed that the ITS and the Walking and Cycling Strategy were in support of the allocations in the Maidstone Local Plan.

Councillors Harper, Adkinson and Clark addressed the Committee as Visiting Members.

The Committee was informed that the separation of the two documents related to reaching an agreement with Kent County Council (KCC) and to produce a joint ITS, which was an important document providing evidence for the Local Plan. The Committee was advised that it was common practice throughout the country for the two documents to be separate.

The Committee heard that references to the Walking and Cycling Strategy would remain in the ITS, with more detail included in the Walking and Cycling Strategy. The Committee was assured that the two documents would remain synergised.

The Committee was informed KCC undertook strategic VISUM modelling. In order to assess the likely impact of development and suggest mitigation it was necessary to carry out micro simulation modelling. KCC did not do this, leaving a gap in the data that Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) filled as it was faced with planning applications to consider which needed detailed highways mitigation. These studies were available to all Councillors on the MBC website.

It was confirmed that there was ongoing dialogue with the Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum with officers from both KCC and MBC attending meetings of the forum.

In response to questions the Committee heard that:

- In the Local Plan, set out on pages 245-246, there was a detailed list of junction improvements. The gap in transport improvements at a detailed local level, as opposed to the VISUM modelling, which was a strategic level model, was dealt with through detailed junction capacity assessment work carried out for the Council by Mott MacDonald and Transport Assessments submitted by developers with planning applications. These addressed the cumulative impact of development on the local highway network. Where appropriate mitigation was justified and required, this was secured through Section 106 agreements with developers. MBC's strategy was focussed on junction improvements, which also helped public transport operators.
- The VISUM modelling carried out picked up transport movements between the RSCs and Maidstone town centre but did not pick up on journeys to other destinations outside the borough. At planning application stage developers were asked for s106 contributions for transport improvements such as increasing the frequency and ease of use of bus services serving the RSCs and improvements to train stations, for example, where this was proven necessary as mitigation.
- KCC's objections to the Local Plan and planning applications on transport reasons have been based on their VISUM modelling. MBC's research had involved more detailed research on the impact of developments on junctions. In response to KCC MBC had assembled micro modelling and established potential mitigation to congestion.
- MBC and KCC have secured £8.9m of Local Growth Fund 1 money for the improvement of 5 priority junctions which was approved by JTB in November 2015.
- Each transport assessment carried out by developers should take into account all development in the area when suggesting transport mitigation.

The Committee were reminded that the Inspector would decide if the Local Plan provided sufficient transport mitigation.

The Committee agreed to note the schedule of issues and responses to the ITS consultation and agreed the revised ITS and Walking and Cycling Strategy should come back to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee before going to JTB.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee note the schedule of issues and responses to the consultation on the Integrated Transport Strategy as set out in Appendix One.
2. That the Committee agree that revised versions of the Integrated Transport Strategy and separate Walking and Cycling Strategy be prepared and reported to a future meeting of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee, and then, if approved by this Committee, presented to the Maidstone Joint Transport Board recommending that the relevant Kent County Council Cabinet Member approve the Integrated Transport Strategy and separate Walking and Cycling Strategy.
3. That following the meeting of the Maidstone Joint Transport Board the 'final' versions of the documents will then be reported to this Committee for approval for publication.

Voting: For – 8 Against – 0 Abstentions – 1

19. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - RESPONSE TO KCC'S ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY CONSULTATION DRAFT

The Principal Planning Officer presented the report.

Members raised concerns regarding the translation of the aspirations into actions and delivery.

Concern was also raised regarding the promotion of active travel to the benefit of all sections of the community equally. The Committee agreed that solutions for accessibility to active travel should be provided.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agree to the proposed response to the consultation set out in paragraphs 4.2.1 to 4.2.6 of the report and that it be forwarded to Kent County Council prior to the close of the consultation period on 13 July 2016, provided the following comments are included:

"Maidstone Borough Council consider Kent County Council's Active Travel Strategy to generally be a good document in terms of its aspirations. However, the Council would like to see more commitment to the actual delivery of Active Travel.

Furthermore, Maidstone Borough Council are pleased Kent County Council have, through its Equality Impact Assessment, identified shortfalls in its Active Travel Strategy. The Council strongly recommends that implementation measures in this strategy should actively seek to address the issues of inequality that have been identified."

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

20. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION BY KENT COUNTY COUNCIL ON FINAL REVIEW OF FUNDED BUS SERVICES

The Principal Planning Officer presented the report and pointed out the report was for the Committee to note as the consultation period had closed. MBC's response was attached to the report.

The Committee heard that a report had been printed in the Kent Messenger giving the wrong impression that all the proposals in the KCC document came from MBC. The Kent Messenger had been contacted and would be printing a correction in their next edition.

RESOLVED:

That the Maidstone Borough Council response to Kent County Council's Review of Funded Bus Services be noted.

21. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - BROOMFIELD AND KINGSWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Project Manager, Local Plan presented the report explaining the reason for the delay.

The Committee heard the examiner stated the plan did not meet the basic requirements and was contrary to adopted local plan policies ENV28 and H27, and there was a lack of evidence for the development proposals.

Councillor Garten addressed the Committee as a Visiting Member.

The Committee heard that the Broomfield and Kingswood neighbourhood plan did not accord with the adopted local plan. The Broomfield and Kingswood parish council were advised to make representations during the draft Local Plan consultation process for a change to the parish boundary. The parish council did not do this. The Committee were informed that the Inspector for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan may allow the parish council to make representations during the inspection hearings, but this was not definite.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee note the report of the Examiner of the Broomfield and Kingswood Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions - 0

2. That the Committee agree not to move the Broomfield and Kingswood Neighbourhood Development Plan to referendum.

Voting: For – 8 Against – 0 Abstentions – 1

22. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - EXAMINATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS FOR STAPLEHURST AND HEADCORN

The Project Manager, Local Plan, presented the report and explained the issues experienced with the Staplehurst and Headcorn neighbourhood plans.

Subsequent to the publication of the report Staplehurst parish council had appointed an alternative examiner for their neighbourhood plan, Mr D Stebbing. Mr Stebbing would commence the examination of the Staplehurst neighbourhood plan on 15 June 2016.

The Committee heard that Headcorn parish council were still to confirm their preferred examiner. Indications were that the parish council would prefer Mr Lockhart-Mummery, who had been advising KCC on transport issues in respect of the Local Plan. The parish council had been informed that MBC would object to Mr Lockhart-Mummery's appointment as examiner as it was considered by officers to be a conflict of interest on Mr Lockhart-Mummery's part. Planning Practice Guidance was clear that the appointment of an examiner should be made by the local authority, but with the parish council's agreement.

The Committee requested a further update on the situation regarding the Headcorn neighbourhood plan at their next meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update on the Staplehurst and Headcorn neighbourhood plan be noted.
2. That a further update on the Headcorn neighbourhood plan be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

23. ORAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - UPDATE ON THE MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN

The Head of Planning and Development provided the Committee with an oral update of the position of the local plan.

The Maidstone Borough Local Plan and accompanying documents were submitted on 20 May 2016. All documents were available to view on the MBC website under Planning.

An inspector had been appointed, Mr Robert Mellor. Mr Mellor was currently reading through all the documents and officers were awaiting his views on the topics to be examined. Mr Mellor may hold a pre-examination meeting to discuss the start and finish dates of the examination. Officers hoped to hear from him on this in the near future.

The two main outstanding documents were the Integrated Transport Strategy and the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, both of which were due to be reported to this Committee at their meeting in July 2016.

The Committee were informed that the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan was due to be adopted in July 2016. The repercussions of this on the local plan would be the requirement for mineral assessments to be carried out for development sites lying in identified mineral safeguarding areas and the mineral safeguarding areas detailed in the local plan.

The inspector had been informed and a joint position statement with KCC would be produced for the examination in public.

It was noted that once the local plan had been adopted policy documents on evolving landscape issues around the borough would be developed and presented to this Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the update on the local plan.

24. OUTSIDE BODIES UPDATES - VERBAL REPORTS

Councillor Burton provided an update on the Quality Bus Partnership and informed the Committee there were concerns raised by bus operators regarding the work on the Maidstone bridges gyratory system. However, since the work began they felt the issues were not as severe as they had envisaged.

Councillor Burton also reported that regular meetings had been arranged with Highways England however the meetings had focussed on operational and strategic issues and the purpose of these meetings needed to be clarified. He went on to report that the Bridges Gyratory and Tow Path Schemes had nothing to report.

Councillor English provided the Committee with an update on the Community Rail Partnership and the Medway Valley Line Liaison Group. He informed the Committee the two groups had focussed on the representations on the South Eastern Rail Franchise consultation. Councillor English confirmed that their representations were fully in accordance with the views of MBC.

Councillor English went on to inform the Committee that the Medway Valley Line Liaison Group had been working to secure the adoption of stations along the line. It was confirmed that Councillor Pickett, with the community in the Bridge Ward, had been investigating the adoption of the Maidstone Barracks station.

25. DURATION OF MEETING

6:30pm to 8:43pm

