

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16 JANUARY 2024

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Knatchbull (Chairman), English, Hastie, Jeffery, Joy, Knatchbull, Mortimer, Springett and J Wilkinson
Cabinet Members:	Councillors Garten (Cabinet Member for Environmental Services) and Parfitt-Reid (Cabinet Member for Housing and Health)

103. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Khadka and Rose.

104. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

- Councillor English for Councillor Khadka
- Councillor J Wilkinson for Councillor Rose.

105. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

106. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

107. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

108. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

109. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

110. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2023

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

111. FORWARD PLAN RELATING TO THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan relating to the Committee's terms of Reference be noted.

112. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024 TO 2029 - CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Health introduced the report, and stated that:

- The capital programme totalled £434 million, with the programme for the Committee's remit representing the largest portion at £303.4 million;
- The main items concerned affordable and private rented housing and temporary accommodation. There were no private sector housing schemes shown within years 7 to 10 of the programme, but this was as schemes had been identified for that stage of the programme at this time; and
- Agreeing the capital programme was not an approval to spend the funds, with each of the schemes to be subject to detailed review before taking place.

Several Members expressed support for the increased capital funding shown for the Waste Crime Team, as the service was of high importance to residents, and queried if further funding could be provided in future. The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services stated that it was anticipated that the additional capital funds should support the service in becoming self-sustaining, for example with any income generated through fines being reinvested into the service.

In response to queries, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Health reassured the Committee that schemes for flood management and biodiversity were still being pursued with successes in Marden and a proposed scheme in Staplehurst but relied on submission and allocation of appropriate land.

The Head of Finance would provide further information on the refurbishment of toilet blocks outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET: That

1. The capital programme 2024/25 onwards as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be agreed;
2. It be noted that the agreement to recommendation 1 above will be subject to the prudential borrowing limit which will be recommended to Council as part of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25.

Note: Councillor Hastie joined the meeting at 6.42 p.m. during consideration of this item. She stated that she had no disclosures of interest or of lobbying.

113. PROVISION OF WHEELED BINS

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services introduced the item and stated that the proposed policy at appendix 2 to the report reflected the lessons learnt over the past few months. The policy stated that household bins unsuitable for

use would be replaced without charge, including those without lids, once marked off by the crew, and reference made to the existing arrangements for communal bins.

Residents would continue to be encouraged to use stickers on their bins, identifying which house it belonged to, which made it easier for the collection crew to identify any bins requiring replacement. This was as bins were often moved to alternative locations making it difficult to find; this was an operational matter and could be improved once the new waste collection contract with SUEZ begun due to the company's improved technological capabilities.

In response to questions, the Head of Environment and Public Realm confirmed that local residents had been encouraged to use stickers on their bins as an identifier in previous years, with another communication being included in the next Borough Insight Magazine. In relation to missed bin collections, the new waste collection contract included technology allowing for improved service monitoring, with Member encouraged to report when a collection was missed, and if not collected, as the Council could issue rectification notices to ensure the current service provider collected the bins.

The Committee expressed support for the proposed policy, which was felt to be an improvement on the previous policy.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to CABINET: That

1. The lessons learnt from the policy change, be noted.
2. The new revised policy for the provision of replacement bins, be approved.

Note: Councillor English left after the item's consideration at 6.58 p.m.

114. 1,000 HOMES UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Health introduced the report and stated that:

- The Council had 277 residential units in management of which 29 were affordable;
- A new Business and Housing Development team had been established to support the strategy and was performing well. A strong pipeline of schemes totalling 605 homes had been developed, with further schemes expected to come forward for approval in 2024;
- The report set out the current operating environment, including risks, opportunities and the status of the Council's bid to Homes England for a social housing grant. Approval was sought to enter into the funding agreement with them; and
- The strategy would be flexible in the short-term by focusing on land banking to secure more opportunities whilst the market was depressed, and partnership working where possible to reduce the risk associated with some of the larger upcoming sites. The amount of internal subsidy per affordable homes built and the housing investment fund should remain unchanged.

In response to questions, the Director of Regeneration and Place stated that the Council was exploring the delivery of social rent properties and that upcoming schemes would be in line with the new building regulations and future home standards, such as the Maidstone East and Springfield Library sites, to include enhanced insulation and communal air source heat pumps.

The Committee expressed support for the update provided and the strategy generally.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET: That

1. The contents of the report, be noted; and
2. The Director of Finance and Business Improvement, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to enter into "Local Authority Grant Agreement for the Affordable Homes Programme 2021 to 2026", with Homes England as detailed in Appendix 1, on the most advantageous grant rates achievable for the Council through the grant bidding process.

115. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.07 p.m.