

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 30 JANUARY 2024

Attendees:

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

116. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mortimer and Rose.

117. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

- Councillor English for Councillor Mortimer
- Councillor Wilkinson for Councillor Rose

118. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman stated that Item 8 – Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 January 2024 would be taken as an urgent item because the Minutes had been published after the agenda publication and circulated to the Committee.

119. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Cleator was present as Visiting Member for Item 11 – 1,000 Homes Programme – Individual Scheme Updates.

120. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

121. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

122. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public, unless any Member of the Committee wished to discuss the exempt appendix to Item 11 – 1,000 Homes Programme – Individual Scheme Updates, in which case the Committee would enter into closed session due to the possible disclosure of exempt information, for the reason specified having applied the public interest test.

123. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2024

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed.

124. 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.

125. BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services introduced the report which detailed the progress by the Council to reduce its carbon footprint as part of the Council's Biodiversity and Climate Change Action plan. The relevant actions that related to the Committee's terms of reference were outlined, including those on housing, solar panels, and recycling in the town centre.

The report was welcomed by the Committee and it was recognised improvements had been made to reduce the carbon footprint of the Committee's services.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services stated that sustainable transport would be addressed in the Council's Local Plan and emphasised that only appropriate locations would be chosen for solar farms in the Local Plan.

In response to further questions, the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager that the boundaries for the Rural Prosperity Fund were set by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and that a Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer had been in contact with Parish Councils to assist with applications to the fund. It was further stated that zoning for solar farms was ongoing to find the best locations to connect solar farms to the national grid.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to CABINET:

1. That the strategic considerations for tackling net zero borough wide and action plan updates show at Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.

Note: Councillor Hastie arrived during consideration of this item.

126. 1,000 HOMES PROGRAMME – INDIVIDUAL SCHEME UPDATES

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Health introduced the report and stated that changes were proposed to increase the amount of properties in Council housing projects that would be available for social rent, and that approval was required to enter the construction contracts on three (of the five sites) at a higher cost than previously agreed. The Council had received an indicative grant offer from Homes England to deliver more homes at social rent which would allow the Council to

borrow less, and largely offset the proposed additional construction costs. It was emphasised that social rent would be more beneficial for residents in temporary accommodation than affordable rent.

The report was welcomed by the Committee particularly that an increase in the amount of properties for social rent.

In response to questions, the Director of Regeneration and Place stated that the affordable and social rent charges would increase with a formula each year. It was highlighted that the grant offered from Homes England (for social rent) was nearly double the grant offered if the properties were delivered as affordable rent.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to CABINET: That

1. The increased works costs for Bathstore, Land at Granville Road and Britannia House, taking note of scheme performance summaries in Appendix 1, be approved.
2. The switch in tenure from Affordable Rent to Social Rent for all 4 sites and in addition the 7 Market rented units to social rented units at the RBL site, be approved.
3. The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement, be given delegated authority, to appoint the preferred contractor to carry out the necessary building works as per the tenders for Britannia House, Corbens place, Land and Granville Road, and the Bathstore noting that the Corbens place works tender was returned under the works budget previously approved.

127. DURATION OF MEETING

6:30 p.m. to 7:10 p.m.