

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 14 JANUARY
2020**

Present: Councillors M Burton, Joy, Khadka, Mortimer
(Chairman), Powell, Purle, D Rose, M Rose and Young

63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

64. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

65. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had agreed to take an update to the Committee Work Programme as an urgent item. He had also agreed to take a question from Councillor Purle relating to the introduction of a Water Refill Scheme (which would be taken at Agenda Item 10).

66. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman indicated his wish to move Agenda Item 14 – Local Health Care Provision in Maidstone before the consideration of Agenda Item 12. This was due to NHS representatives being present at the meeting to answer any questions from Members of the Committee in regard to that item.

67. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

68. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers

69. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

70. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

71. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed.

72. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

73. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY)

Councillor Purle asked the following question of the Chairman:

Due to webcast being unavailable for the majority of the Committee meeting, the question and subsequent answer is set out below.

"Refill schemes appear to have a role to play in the reduction of single-use plastic and indeed in improving amenity for local residents. You may already be aware of these and details are available at: www.refill.org.uk As well as local businesses providing free tap water, these may be combined with council provision of fountains. Maidstone traditionally had drinking fountains via the Queen Victoria Monument outside the Town Hall but these have long fallen in abeyance.

"Is the Council able to provide (1) an update on whether it has undertaken any work in contemplation of launching a refill scheme in Maidstone and (2) estimates of the comparative cost of providing (a) new drinking fountains in Maidstone, and (b) reinstating the old fountain?"

The Chairman responded to the question, stating:

"The Environmental Services team recognised the opportunity a refill scheme in Maidstone would have in supporting its Waster Strategy and reducing unnecessary plastic waste. Work started in late 2019 on developing a refill scheme for Maidstone, including researching the national Refill.org.uk scheme recently introduced in Ashford. Initial discussions have also been held with One Maidstone to identify businesses who would be willing to take part. Three locations for new water fountains specifically designed to re-fill reusable bottles have been identified; two in the Town Centre and one at Mote Park.

"You will also note that capital funding for the three fountains is sought under agenda item 13 in this evening's meeting. The 15k requested includes the purchase and installation of 3 units designed only to re-fill bottles. This reduces the risk of the units being subject to anti-social behaviour and public health concerns. This cost also includes a servicing agreement and signage to support both aspects of the scheme. Reinstatement of the fountain in the Queen's Monument was considered, however is not viable due to the level of disruptive work required to

recommission the fountain and the public health risk of using a direct-drinking unit”

74. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

The Chairman reminded Members of the recent updates to the Committee Work Programme 2019/20.

Members also noted that a workshop on biodiversity would be held on 17th February 2020.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

75. LOCAL HEALTH CARE PROVISION IN MAIDSTONE

The Chief Executive presented her report on Local Health Care Provision in Maidstone.

The Chief Executive also introduced NHS Representatives, Dr Tony Jones and Ruth Wells, both of whom were in attendance to provide further details and answer questions from Members in response to this report.

The Chief Executive also highlighted the two concerns raised by Members, the general healthcare workforce and infrastructure available in providing healthcare services within Maidstone.

The Committee noted the ratio of patients to healthcare professionals:

- Across West-Kent, there is an average of 2057 patients per GP; Across Maidstone the average is 2372 patients per GP.
- Across West-Kent, there is an average of 1122 patients per healthcare professional; Across Maidstone the average is 1026 patients per staff member

The Chief Executive emphasised that the interactions between patient(s) and healthcare professionals was changing and it should be recognised when facilitating discussions on the provision of appropriate healthcare within the area.

The Committee were made aware of the following points:

- The CCG was currently reviewing the contents of the Local Plan, to assess where future housing developments would be located in order that GP and Local Healthcare demands could be assessed
- The need for a new GP Practice in Maidstone had been identified
- The proposal to create a Local Care Hub – which would not include GP services, to enable different healthcare professionals to work alongside one another, facilitating improved healthcare provision. Services could include diagnostic services, x-rays and minor injuries treatment.
- That the CCG concluded that there should be three hubs and potentially two mini hubs

- Phase 2 of this review had been completed, with conclusions to be released in March 2020
- Locations for these hubs have been shortlisted, although not made public knowledge at this current time

In response to questions from members the Chief Executive responded as follows:

- In regard to a further surgery at Allington it was envisaged that the Stage 2 process would go through Central Government in February 2020
- In regard to the issues in Marden, the details will be circulated by email to Members
- Population growth is a significant issue for GP surgeries, key to improving the situation is significant infrastructure to adapt to the increasing demands of population growth

The link between housing and healthcare was discussed, as increasing population growth and the number of housing developments affect demand on local healthcare services. It was noted that a pilot scheme with the public health observatory was being conducted to analyse the relationship between where a person lives and what healthcare needs they have, to enable targeted case management to areas of concern in the future. The Chief Executive also advised of a pro-active approach to healthcare provision within the borough, to reduce the complexities of issues and costs to the individual and the authority.

In response to questions from Members, the Chief Executive confirmed that there was ongoing work on the recruitment and retention of healthcare staff, with the new Kent Medical School accepting students from September 2020.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for her report and the NHS Representatives for their contribution.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

76. FEES & CHARGES 2019/20

The Committee considered the Interim Head of Finance's report, which drew attention to discretionary and statutory charges, in particular:

- 97% of charges within the remit of the Committee were discretionary, 3% statutory, with total charges valuing £3million
- A 2.59% increase in adult cremation charges
- No increase in fees for recycling and refuse collection

RESOLVED: That the proposed discretionary fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 to this report be approved.

77. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Director of Finance & Business Improvement introduced his report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals and outlined the following points:

- There had been an increase in the cost of CCTV provision, which had resulted in the release of £30k from a contingency fund to fill the gap. There would still be an overall saving from bringing CCTV in-house.
- Within the revenue budget proposals £60k had been allocated for the ongoing provision of a Climate Change Officer and ancillary costs.

The Head of Housing and Community Services advised that the increased CCTV budget and unforeseen costs could be attributed to technical reasons. It was also confirmed that whilst savings are still envisioned, the full cost of operating the system would be confirmed after 12 months in operation.

Concerns were raised by some Members as they felt that cost of the provision of water fountains had not been fully explained. The Head of Environment & Public Realm responded that the provision of the water fountains was included within the Waste Strategy related to an investment in infrastructure initiative to reduce waste. It was felt they needed further information before this could be approved.

In view of this, Councillor M Burton requested that a report on the water fountains be made available for Members at the next Committee meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the revenue budget proposals for services within the remit of this Committee, as set out in Appendix A, be agreed for submission to Policy and Resources Committee; and
2. That the capital budget proposals for services within the remit of this Committee, as set out in Appendix B, be agreed for submission to Policy and Resources Committee; and
3. That a report providing further details on the provision of water fountains be presented to the next meeting of this Committee.

78. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.45 p.m.