

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2019

Present: Councillors D Burton (Chairman), Clark, Cox, Field, Garten, Mrs Gooch, Mrs Grigg, Parfitt-Reid and Perry

Also Present: Councillors McKay and Newton

152. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Munford and de Wiggondene-Sheppard.

153. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Gooch was present as a substitute for Councillor Munford.

Councillor Perry was present as a substitute for Councillor de Wiggondene-Sheppard.

154. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had agreed to take urgent updates to the following items:

- Item 14. Key Performance Indicator Update Quarter 3 18/19. The reason for urgency was that the update amended key information in the original report, as errors had been identified after publication.
- Item 17. Maidstone Local Plan Review: Call for Sites Information Pack including a New Garden Communities Prospectus. The reason for urgency was that the update provided additional clarity regarding the design and presentation of the Call for Sites Information Pack.

155. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that the following Councillors were present as Visiting Members:

- Councillor McKay, who indicated that he wished to speak on Item 15. Strategic Plan 2019-45 Action Plan and Item 16. Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies Approval.

- Councillor Newton, who reserved his right to speak on all items.

156. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

157. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

The following Councillors stated that they had been lobbied on Item 17. Maidstone Local Plan Review: Call for Sites Information Pack including a New Garden Communities Prospectus:

- Councillor D Burton
- Councillor Grigg
- Councillor Clark
- Councillor Cox
- Councillor Field
- Councillor Gooch
- Councillor Garten

158. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

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

159. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 JANUARY 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed.

160. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

161. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Ms Lizzie Hare asked the following question of the Chairman of the Committee:

In light of a recent, frankly shocking, report to Maidstone's Joint Transport Board (JTB) in January 2019 and comments at the October 2018 JTB to the effect that Fountain Junction may not achieve its mitigation or its aims and is seemingly not fit for purpose, what can be done by MBC as planning policy maker and authority to protect residents from further permissions looming on housing sites along the Hermitage Lane corridor,

thus putting more unmitigated congestion and pollution into this area where my family lives.

Mr James Willis asked the following question of the Chairman of the Committee:

We regularly hear, and in fact see, that one of, if not the biggest Maidstone issue is traffic, as demonstrated by a letter that appeared in national press recently.

Building on the work of this committee, looking at "park and ride" and the stated aim of Maidstone's approved current local plan to provide congestion and pollution busting sustainable transport measures, what plans does this committee have for the approximate £300k per annum budget that had been set aside for park and ride?

The Chairman responded to both questions and supplementary questions. The full response was recorded on the webcast and was made available on the Maidstone Borough Council website.

162. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Mr Mark Egerton, Strategic Planning Manager, advised the Committee that the Local Plan Resourcing item was scheduled for April 2019 rather than March 2019.

The Committee noted that the MITP Update had been delayed to March 2019. This allowed for an update on the business case submission to be shared.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

163. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED: That the Reports of Outside Bodies be noted.

164. 3RD QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING 2018/19

Ms Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance, informed the Committee that the report highlighted areas of concern and the actions taken in response to budget variances. Ms Dunnet stated that, with regards to revenue, there was an adverse variance of £234,000. This was projected to worsen by the end of the financial year. Key areas of consideration included Planning Services and Parking Services. Capital spending had predominantly consisted of grounds maintenance charges for landscaping works to the Bridges Gyratory. There was a remaining budget for flood prevention measures to the Bridges Gyratory, which was to be carried forward into the 2019/20 financial year.

RESOLVED: That:

1. 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. The capital position at the end of the third quarter is noted.

165. 2018/19 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS UPDATE QUARTER 3

Ms Anna Collier, Policy and Information Manager, informed the Committee that three of four indicators had exceeded targets for Quarter 3. These had also improved when compared to the same quarter in 2017/18. Affordable Homes Delivered was below the target for Quarter 3, however, this KPI had exceeded targets in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2. It had therefore exceeded the year to date target. Ms Collier stated that data regarding new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), following approval of the Local Enforcement Plan by this Committee on 6 November 2018, had been included in the covering report. These KPIs were being tested, and feedback on the presentation of these indicators was welcomed. Furthermore, following agreement of the vision, priorities and outcomes of the Strategic Plan, KPIs were to be reviewed and developed for 2019/20. Members were invited to provide feedback on KPIs with Officers in March 2019.

The Committee commented that the presentation of the KPI regarding Affordable Houses Delivered required consideration as part of the upcoming KPI review. It was stated that although the indicator was highlighted as off track for Quarter 3, it was ahead of target for the year and was therefore not a concern. The "red" rating for the indicator was therefore misleading. With regards to the new KPIs for Enforcement, the Committee suggested that consideration be given to Outstanding Cases. The target figure for Outstanding Cases needed to be defined, to ensure that the KPI clearly conveyed positive or negative trends.

RESOLVED: That the summary of performance for Quarter 3 of 2018/19 for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) be noted.

166. STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-45 ACTION PLAN

Mrs Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance, informed the Committee that the vision, priorities, cross-cutting objectives, outcomes and "how we do things" elements of the Strategic Plan 2019-45 were agreed at Council in December 2018. The report outlined key actions that were to be completed over the next five years. It was emphasised that not all of the outcomes in the Strategic Plan were to be acted on immediately, and that the key actions covered significant projects rather than business as usual work. The Policy and Resources Committee was to review suggestions from this committee on 13 February 2019, and the final plan was to be considered at Council on 27 February 2019.

The Committee commented that the engagement undertaken throughout the development of the Strategic Plan had captured the views of a broad

range of stakeholders. The Committee stated, however, that the “Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure” snapshot did not reflect the issues with broadband that were experienced in rural areas.

RESOLVED: That the Draft Strategic Plan 2019-2045 be approved, for the further consideration of the Policy and Resources Committee, subject to the following amendment to the “Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure” snapshot, bullet point 5:

“In 2018 the average home broadband speed was around 46.2Mbps, up from 36.2Mbps in 2017. We do recognise that in the rural areas there are substantial problems with domestic broadband.”

Voting: Unanimous

167. SPORTS FACILITIES AND PLAYING PITCH STRATEGIES APPROVAL

Mr Egerton informed the Committee that the Sports Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy formed part of the evidence base for the review of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan. These strategies also informed development management decisions and provided the Council with an evidence base for future budgetary needs or grant funding applications. The strategies were developed in consultation with key stakeholders, in accordance with Sports England requirements. The data demonstrated the level of provision in the Borough based on the quantity, quality, accessibility and availability of the Borough’s indoor and outdoor sports facilities and playing pitches. Consultation on these strategies had taken place and amendments had been made accordingly. The responses to the consultation were publicly available.

The Committee commented that there were facilities and pitches in South Ward that had not been captured in the strategies.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr Egerton stated that the evidence was collated in 2016, and this was to be reconsidered once the review of the Local Plan had progressed further. This would present an opportunity to include additional information.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The Sports Facilities Strategy be approved as part of the Council’s evidence base for the review of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, subject to the addition of Pegasus Gym and Heavenly Fitness.
2. The Playing Pitch Strategy be approved as part of the Council’s evidence base for the review of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, subject to the addition of the Mangravet Recreation Field.

Voting: Unanimous

168. MAIDSTONE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW: CALL FOR SITES INFORMATION PACK INCLUDING A NEW GARDEN COMMUNITIES PROSPECTUS

Mr Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development, stated that the Call for Sites was a standard operational component of the Local Plan. One of the four tests of soundness for the Local Plan at public examination was that it needed to be justified. This meant that it needed to be an appropriate strategy that took into account all reasonable alternatives. The Call for Sites therefore tested the availability and deliverability of sites.

Mrs Sarah Lee, Principal Planning Officer, explained that the information pack was designed to guide and frame submissions for the Call for Sites. The document was technical in nature as it was aimed at developers and land owners. The Garden Communities Prospectus had been included as it was anticipated that these would be more complex to deliver and therefore required more detailed submissions. While the role of a Garden Communities approach in areas of high housing need was included in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the principles were promoted by Central Government, it was crucial that all options were considered equally.

Councillors McKay and Newton spoke on this item as Visiting Members.

The Committee commented that:

- A review of the hierarchy of settlements was required, although it was acknowledged that this needed to be timed appropriately.
- The wording on page 336 was to be amended to:

“As part of the Local Plan Review, we will review the hierarchy of settlements by looking at available services and facilities. In the adopted Local Plan, the current hierarchy is as follows;”
- Superfluous pictures, in sections where text was appropriate to convey information, should be removed.
- The second paragraph in “5 – Local Plan Review Spatial Strategy” on page 338 was to be edited to restrict the commentary about the dispersed approach.
- The press release accompanying the Call for Sites needed to be carefully worded to ensure that stakeholders clearly understood that the Call for Sites was the beginning of a process and that all options were open at this stage.
- If significant changes to the Call for Sites Information Pack were required, then an extraordinary Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee meeting was to be convened.

In response to questions from the Committee, Officers stated that:

- A submission form was to be completed by landowners. Appendix 2 demonstrated the criteria that would be used by Officers to assess the submissions.
- The urgent update was a visual representation of the components that the growth could take, such as densification of the town centre, urban extensions of large settlements, urban renewal, village extensions, new settlements and small countryside sites. It was possible to adjust or omit the diagrams and visuals, as appropriate.
- The environmental constraints section was included in the document to assist landowners and developers, as it provided information regarding material planning factors that needed to be addressed as part of a submission.
- The Council was able to take a proactive stance with the Call for Sites, as sites under Council ownership were eligible as part of the Call for Sites.

RESOLVED: That:

1. Whilst having due regard to Members comments, the Head of Planning and Development be granted delegated authority to refine the Call for Sites Information Pack and proceed with the Call for Sites as proposed.
2. The criteria in the Site Assessment Form, attached as Appendix 2, be agreed for the evaluation of potential sites in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment.

Voting: Unanimous

169. DURATION OF MEETING

6.33 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.