

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Policy and Resources Committee**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15 OCTOBER 2018**

**Present:** Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Boughton, M Burton, Clark, Cox (Chairman), Field, Garland, Harvey, McKay, McLoughlin, D Mortimer, Munford, Newton, Perry and Springett

**Also Present:** Councillors D Burton, English, Garten and Mrs Gooch

60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

Apologies for lateness were received by Councillor Springett.

61. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that the following members were present as substitute members:

- Councillor D Burton for Councillor Springett until she arrived and took her place on the Committee; and
- Councillor Munford for Councillor Gooch.

62. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

63. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillors Wilson, D Burton, Garten, Gooch and English were present as visiting members for item 10. Review of Decision of Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee: Town Centre Article 4 Direction – Options.

64. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

Note: Councillor Springett arrived during consideration of this item at 6.34 pm and took her place on the Committee. Councillor D Burton became a Visiting Member.

65. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors Mortimer, Clark and Field disclosed that they had been lobbied on item 10. Review of Decision of Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee: Town Centre Article 4 Direction – Options.

66. 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.

67. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

69. REVIEW OF DECISION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE: TOWN CENTRE ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION - OPTIONS

Councillors Wilson, Clark and Mortimer outlined their reasons for referring the decision not to issue Article 4 Directions to office blocks in the town centre to the Committee. The reasons given were that the decision seemed to be taken solely on planning grounds, without considering other issues related to office to residential conversions under Permitted Development Rights, such as a lack of developer contributions and the creation of poor quality accommodation which was outside of the control of the Council in its role as the Planning Authority. The outcome the Councillors were seeking was a briefing session with members prior to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee re-taking the decision on issuing Article 4 Directions on town centre office blocks. The Councillors who had referred the decision were concerned that the decision had been taken too quickly without enough time for member engagement. This had led to inadequate consideration of the risks and potential costs of not issuing Article 4 Directions. This was why they had requested a member briefing before taking the decision again.

Councillors D Burton, Garten and Gooch addressed the Committee as Visiting Members.

The Committee considered the request to review the decision and made the following comments:

- Even if the Permitted Development Rights were removed, the Council's Officers and Planning Committee would still have little control as Maidstone Borough Council had not adopted minimum space standards and other Planning Policies that controlled

developments through the submission of a Planning Application.

- Office to residential conversions were only liable for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions if they ended up with net additional floorspace. If an office block had been vacant for more than 3 years it would be CIL liable even if the conversion took place under the Prior Notification procedure rather than a full Planning Application.
- It was more appropriate to review the issuing of Article 4 Directions through the Local Plan Review. This way, policies covering Parking and Housing standards could also be reviewed to give the Council further control over these conversions.

**RESOLVED:** That the decision of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee is endorsed.

Voting: For - 8 Against - 7 Abstentions - 0

Note: Councillor Gooch arrived during consideration of this item at 6.43 pm, but did not take her place on the Committee and instead spoke as a Visiting Member.

70. DURATION OF MEETING

6.32 pm to 8.17 pm