

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12 FEBRUARY
2019**

Present: Councillors M Burton, Garten, Joy, D Mortimer
(Chairman), Powell, Purle, Mrs Robertson, Springett
and Webb

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Wilson

150. AMENDMENT TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED: That Item 19. MBC Safeguarding Policy was to be discussed before Item 15. Strategic Plan 2019-45 Action Plan.

151. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rose.

152. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Springett was present as a Substitute for Councillor Rose.

153. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

154. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Wilson was present as a Visiting Member, and indicated that she wished to speak on Item 14. Member Agenda Item Request - Review of "Access to the Council's Service for Disabled People 2005-2006".

155. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

156. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

157. 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.

158. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed.

159. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

161. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the addition of the Low Level and Nuisance Crime item. The Chairman stated that any questions from Councillors were to be submitted to Democratic Services in advance of the Committee meeting. This would ensure that information was prepared by relevant Officers to inform responses.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

162. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED: That the Reports of Outside Bodies be noted.

163. PRESENTATIONS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

Ms Liz Abi-Aad, Clerk & Chief Officer of Cutbush & Corrall, addressed the Committee regarding the work of the charity. Ms Abi-Aad outlined that the organisation supported Maidstone residents through the provision of 148 alms houses. A working maintenance charge was paid by occupants, which cost between 42-66% of equivalent fair rent rates. Ms Abi-Aad stated that there was a vacancy for a Maidstone Borough Council Representative on the charity.

The Committee commented that Councillors could promote awareness of the support provided by Cutbush & Corrall through engagement with residents.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms Abi-Aad stated that:

- The operating costs of the organisation were fully covered by income received through working maintenance charges and dividends from investments.
- There was the potential to expand the available provision in order to meet the future needs of residents.

- Provision was predominantly in urban areas, however, rural areas such as Harrietsham could be considered for future development.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

164. MEMBER AGENDA ITEM REQUEST - REVIEW OF "ACCESS TO THE COUNCIL'S SERVICE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE 2005-2006"

Councillor Wilson introduced her report.

The Committee stated that:

- A review of the "Access to the Council's Service for Disabled People 2005-2006", and the recommendations in the report, was helpful to understand the work undertaken to promote accessibility to Maidstone Borough Council services.
- Accessibility issues impacted on a broad range of residents, such as elderly residents and those who did not have ready access to online information.
- Should a Working Group be established, this was to comprise of representative groups in the Borough.
- Mental and physical disabilities were to be a consideration when undertaking the work.
- The promotion of equalities training for staff was beneficial.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mrs Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance, stated that there was the potential to incorporate the work in the Equalities Action Plan, which was considered by the Policy and Resources Committee. Furthermore, Councillor input would be advantageous in the scoping and delivery of the work.

RESOLVED: That a report be brought to the next appropriate Communities, Housing and Environment Committee meeting setting out the scope of a review of accessibility to services for residents.

Voting: Unanimous

165. MBC SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Mr Matt Roberts, Community Partnerships & Resilience Manager, informed the Committee that the Maidstone Borough Council Safeguarding Policy had been updated to incorporate the Kent Support Levels process and integrated Front Door Service for Children's Social Care. A section had been included regarding missing children, as those that went missing were at an increased risk of being groomed. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, commonly referred to as Clare's Law, was referenced in the

policy to raise awareness of the scheme. Furthermore, the introduction of Safeguarding Champions had led to an improved awareness of mental health issues and better understanding of guidance relating to suicide prevention. It was stated that the post of Member Safeguarding Champion was currently vacant.

The Committee commented that safeguarding was a responsibility for everyone, however, it was beneficial to have a Champion role in order to ensure that Councillors with safeguarding concerns had a point of contact to seek advice and guidance. Furthermore, there was an opportunity for this Committee to enhance awareness of safeguarding by releasing a statement.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Roberts stated that:

- Safeguarding Champions had been established within staff teams, in accordance with best practice.
- The Member Safeguarding Champion would attend the Maidstone Borough Council Safeguarding Champions Group to share best practice.

RESOLVED: That

1. The draft version of MBC's Safeguarding Policy be approved for consultation.
2. Delegated authority be granted to the Head of Housing & Community Services to formally adopt the Policy, subject to any minor amendments in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee.
3. A safeguarding training session be arranged by the Head of Housing & Community Services for all Councillors in the 2019/20 municipal year.

Voting: Unanimous

4. Council be recommended that the Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee is automatically appointed to the role of Member Safeguarding Champion.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 1 Abstentions – 1

5. Council is recommended to amend the delegations to the Head of Housing and Community Services to include specific reference to responsibility for Safeguarding.
6. Delegated authority is granted to the Head of Legal Partnership and Monitoring Officer to make the appropriate amendments to the Constitution to give effect to the decisions.

Voting: Unanimous

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:

- On page 90, the word "investing" was to be removed from bullet point two under "Between 2019-24 we will place particular importance on:".
- On page 90, an additional cross-cutting objective was to be added to bullet points three under "Between 2019-24 we will place particular importance on:" to reflect that affordable housing included environmentally sustainable housing.
- On page 90, all four cross-cutting objectives were to be added to bullet points four and five under "Between 2019-24 we will place particular importance on:".
- On page 92, the "Environment and Biodiversity" cross-cutting objective was to be added to bullet point three under "Between 2019-24 we will place particular importance on:".
- On page 93, additional cross-cutting objectives were to be added to bullet points three, four and five to reflect considerations regarding environmental sustainability, health and deprivation.

RESOLVED: That the feedback be noted.

Note: Councillor Burton left the meeting during consideration of this item.

167. WASTE CONTRACT REVIEW

Mrs Jennifer Shepherd, Head of Environment and Public Realm, informed the Committee of the achievements by the department over the period of the waste contract. Mrs Shepherd stated that 8 million waste collections had been made in Maidstone, and 99% of collections had been successful since the contract began in 2013. The target of 0.0% of waste going to landfill had been achieved. £1 million had been saved per year, however, Mrs Shepherd cautioned that the saving would be difficult to maintain

after the contract expired without reviewing how the service operated. It was stated that waste figures were connected to the status of the economy, and therefore Brexit introduced uncertainty about future waste trends.

The Committee commented that increasing awareness of recyclable material, by putting stickers on bins, was key to ensuring that appropriate items were placed in recycling bins.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mrs Shepherd stated that while some materials such as scrap metal were recyclable, these were categorised as "objectionable" as they had not been included in the contract specification.

RESOLVED: That the performance of the Waste Contract be noted.

168. WASTE CRIME UPDATE

Mrs Shepherd stated that a Waste Crime Team had been established approximately six months ago. The team could issue penalty notices, seize vehicles or prosecute individuals who committed crimes such as fly tipping. £3,000 had been invested in covert cameras, which had proven to be successful, and a further £10,000 was to be invested.

Mr James Duffy, Waste Crime Manager, outlined that nine Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) had been issued for fly tipping and a further 467 FPNs had been issued for littering. The value of FPNs was £60,000 since July 2018.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Duffy replied that:

- The cost of crushing cars was recovered through the income generated by the sale of scrap parts. If cars were roadworthy, they could also be sold outright.
- Action against fly tippers could only be taken if there was a witness, so it was important for residents to submit statements to the team. This could be supplemented with videos and pictures taken from mobile phones or car dashboard cameras.

The Committee reasserted the zero-tolerance policy towards fly tippers and commended the team for the successes to date.

RESOLVED: That the Waste Crime Update be noted.

169. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS

Mr William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place, explained to the Committee that the report proposed to roll over unspent capital funding to purchase additional temporary accommodation.

The Committee commented that it was important to progress with the purchase of temporary accommodation, as it recognised that Maidstone

Borough Council did not currently have enough temporary accommodation to meet need.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The underspent sum of £180,000 within the previously approved capital budget for Housing Investments be released for investing in further property for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households.
2. Any further additional underspend within the previously approved capital budget for Housing Investments be released for investing in further property for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 0 Abstentions – 1

170. DURATION OF MEETING

7.41 p.m. to 9.46 p.m.