

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Policy and Resources Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26 APRIL 2017

Present: Councillors Adkinson, Barned, Mrs Blackmore, Boughton, Cox, Fermor, Garland, Mrs Gooch, Harvey, Harwood, McLoughlin, Pickett, Round, Mrs Ring and Mrs Wilson (Chairman)

210. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was noted that apologies were received from Councillors Brice, Harper and Powell.

211. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

The following substitute members were noted:

- Councillor Adkinson for Councillor Harper
- Councillor Barned for Councillor Powell
- Councillor Ring for Councillor Brice

212. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

213. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

There were no visiting members.

214. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

Councillor Harwood stated that although he did not have a disclosable interest, he would leave the room during consideration of Item 12. Flood Risk Alleviation in the Medway Confluence in order to avoid the perception of a conflict of interest with his professional role.

Councillor Boughton informed the committee that in his professional role he had been discussing the issues relating to Item 12. Flood Risk Alleviation in the Medway Confluence with departments within central government. However he did not consider this a disclosable interest and intended to speak and vote on this item.

215. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

Councillors Round, McLoughlin, Blackmore, Fermor, Cox and Wilson had been lobbied on Item 12. Report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement – Flood Risk Alleviation in the Medway Confluence.

Councillors Harwood, Fermor and Wilson had been lobbied on item 14. Report of the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development – Phase 3 Public Realm.

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

RESOLVED: That the items contained in Part II of the agenda be taken in private as proposed.

217. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 MARCH 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record and signed.

218. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

Mr Paul Billanie asked the following question of the Chairman:

When considering the decrease in council tax support, was the combined effect of the decrease with the increase in this year's council tax considered and can she explain why more popular ideas for council tax support were outright rejected in favour of the least popular ideas?

The Chairman responded to the question, stating that the legislation surrounding the Council Tax Support Scheme required that the Council made a decision on its scheme by the 31st January each year. This meant that a decision was required before the council tax charge was set for the following year, and before the Council was made aware of the level of precept to be made by Kent County Council, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue and Parish Councils.

In making a decision the Council did take great care in considering the impact on residents, captured within the supporting impact assessment. That assessment modelled the impact based on the most up to date information held by the Council, consisting of the actual awards and entitlements during that financial year, with an understanding that future increases in council tax would affect all households, including those in receipt of council tax support.

The final scheme adopted by Council included 5 of the 13 options considered as part of the public consultation. Of those 5, 3 options

(options 5, 11 and 12) received the highest level of support through the public consultation so it would be incorrect to say that the Council rejected the post popular ideas in terms of the consultation findings. In considering the wider range of options detailed within the consultation the council took a decision aimed at balancing the need to make the scheme affordable for the council given reductions in funding, the impact on residents affected and desire to align the scheme with the wider welfare system where possible.

Mr Billanie then asked the following supplementary question:

At a previous meeting of this Committee, Councillor Blackmore mentioned that Medway Council had set the contribution level of full council support at 35%. This meant that, together with the increase in Council Tax, some of their most vulnerable residents' Council Tax bills had increased by up to 65%. Could the Chairman of this committee assure me that a contribution of 35% was not being considered by this council?

The Chairman responded that the Council takes this decision every year, as set out in legislation. There were no plans to increase the contribution level to 35%, however there could not be any guarantees that our contribution level would not increase in the following year. The Chairman emphasised that every single councillor took this issue very seriously and always sought to do the best they could for the people their decisions affected.

Mrs Yolande Kenward asked the following question of the Chairman:

Given the volume of new houses that have been built in Maidstone recently and therefore the additional council tax revenue that this generated, why was there any need for a council tax increase in Maidstone?

The Chairman responded, explaining that as the number of homes in the borough increased, so did the cost of providing services to residents. Many services, such as street cleaning and household refuse collection, were directly related to the number of homes in the borough. Demands on other services were related to the increase in population. For example, a greater number of residents resulted in more pressure on our parks and open spaces which led to increased maintenance costs. Therefore any increase in Council Tax income was linked to increased expenditure.

In addition to the pressures from additional homes, there were specific reasons the Council decided to increase Council Tax. The Council no longer received Revenue Support Grant from government and had increased spending pressures. For example providing temporary accommodation for homeless families, the numbers of households approaching as homeless had increased dramatically over the last few years. Council agreed at its meeting on 1st March 2017 to increase Council Tax. However, the increase for 2017/18 was only £4.95 for a Band D property, which was less than 10p a week.

Mrs Kenward asked a supplementary question, however the question was not directly related to the original question and was not about a matter in which the borough council had any responsibility.

220. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement updated the Committee on the work programme. It was noted that items on the Fourth Quarter Budget Monitoring, Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017-18 and an Update on Maidstone East Regeneration would all be ready for the Committee's June meeting.

221. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - FLOOD RISK ALLEVIATION IN THE MEDWAY CONFLUENCE

Councillor Harwood left the chamber for this item.

Edward Raikes, of the Medway, Beult and Teise Flood Group spoke in support of the report. However he also stated that he felt that further measures to improve the flow downstream would prevent flooding around the Rivers Medway, Beult and Teise.

Councillor Geraldine Brown, Chairman of Yalding Parish Council, addressed the committee in support of the report. However she requested that specific reference was made to Yalding in the recommendations, as Yalding was not part of the Joint Parishes Flood Group and Yalding had been amongst the worst areas affected by the floods of 2013.

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement presented the report on Flood Risk Alleviation in the Medway Confluence, and emphasised the following points:

- Following floods in 2013, the Environment Agency conducted research on flooding in the Medway confluence. The research found that there were no simple solutions to flooding in this area, and that the best approach was Property Level Protection against flooding.
- The local community were not convinced by the conclusions of the research and composed a list of possible other solutions that might alleviate future flooding. Maidstone Borough Council commissioned its own report, carried out by Arcadis, to investigate the viability of these options.
- The Arcadis report concluded that there was no single technically feasible or economically viable solution to the problem of flooding in the Medway confluence. This meant that Property Level Protection, or protection for small groups of properties, was the only viable solution.

- In addition to flooding in the Medway Confluence, the report sought to highlight the flood protection work that had been carried out in the Town Centre as part of the Bridges Gyratory scheme.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement explained that works downstream had been explored by Arcadis. But it was concluded that these would not have provided as any works downstream of Watlington would have a minimal impact owing to the restricted flow there.

It was noted that the report discussed flooding around Yalding, and the measures taken in the Town Centre but that there was no mention of the areas in between Yalding and the Town Centre.

The Committee discussed the impact of the Kent County Council and General Elections in 2017, and was minded to request further funding from central government and Kent County Council after the elections.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the contents and conclusions of the Arcadis report on Medway, Beult and Teise Flood Alleviation Options be noted.
- 2) The Council continues to work proactively with the Environment Agency, other organisations, Yalding Parish Council and the local community as part of the Medway Flood Partnership to develop and implement a range of flood alleviation measures in the Medway confluence area.
- 3) The progress of schemes relating to flood alleviation in Maidstone Town Centre be noted.
- 4) That consideration be given to flood alleviation measures in the area between Yalding and Maidstone Town Centre.
- 5) That the Chief Executive writes to Kent County Council, DEFRA and the Treasury following the 2017 elections to seek further funding for flood alleviation in the borough and report back to this committee.

Voting: For - 14 Against - 0 Abstentions - 0

At the conclusion of this item, Councillor Harwood re-joined the Committee.

222. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2017-18

The Head of Policy and Resources presented the report outlining the proposed Key Performance Indicators for the Policy and Resources Committee for 2017-18.

The report set out the indicators that had been suggested at a member workshop held in March. However following the publication of the report the following amendments were required:

- The target for Net additional homes should increase to 880, in line with the housing target set in the local plan.
- Therefore the target for number of affordable homes delivered would also need to be increased, and this target would be confirmed at a later date.
- There were five priorities (organised crime groups including modern slavery, gangs and child sexual exploitation, substance misuse, domestic abuse and other violent crime, mental health) for the Safer Maidstone Partnership, and contextual information would be provided on each of these priorities.

In response to a question from a member of the Committee, the Head of Policy and Communications explained that the number of affordable homes delivered would be part of the figure for the net additional homes provided, not in addition to net additional homes provided.

The Committee was content that KPIs on the processing on minor and other planning applications would only be reported to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee, as these indicators were not seen as strategic enough to be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Key Performance Indicators for the Policy and Resources Committee for 2017-18 will be:

Clean and Safe Environment

Performance Indicator	Target
The percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of litter at an acceptable level – see note	94%
The percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having acceptable levels of detritus – see note	84%
Number of fly tips assessed within 2 working days	TBC
Percentage of fly tips with evidential value which result in enforcement action	20%

Number of reports of litter attended to	TBC - baseline
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (NI 192)	52.5%
Safer Maidstone Partnership information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised Crime Groups (including modern slavery) • Gangs & Child Sexual Exploitation • Substance Misuse • Domestic Abuse and other Violent Crime • Mental Health 	Contextual

Regenerating the Town Centre

Performance Indicator	Target
Percentage of vacant retail units in town centre	TBC
Footfall in the High St.	TBC
Business Rates Income from Town Centre businesses	TBC

A Home for Everyone

Performance Indicator	Target
Processing of Major planning applications in 13 weeks	85%
Net additional homes provided (NI 154)	880
Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	TBC
Number of households prevented from becoming	300

homeless through the intervention of housing advice	
Number of households housed through housing register	600

Voting: For - 15 Against - 0 Abstentions - 0

223. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - PHASE 3 PUBLIC REALM

The Local Economy Project Officer presented the report on the regeneration of the Public Realm in Maidstone Town Centre.

The Officer updated the Committee on changes to plans for the project since the report had been taken to the Communities, Housing and Environment and the Heritage Culture and Leisure committees, and since it was last considered by this Committee:

- The designs included the south side of Week Street, although funding had not yet been found for this part of the scheme.
- Therefore external funding contributions were being sought for the £900,000, including from the Local Enterprise Partnership and Kent County Council.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund had rejected the bid for funding for the project. One of the main reasons for rejection was the lack of Private Sector involvement in the scheme.

The Committee suggested that ward member involvement was required before the approval of final designs, to ensure that their local knowledge could contribute to the scheme.

RESOLVED:

1. That the change in scope from the original proposed project, to now include the southern end of Week Street is approved.
2. That the outline designs are approved for all of Week Street and Gabriel's Hill/Lower Stone Street with the exception of the suggested palette of tree species which do not comply with document HAP12; Urban Green Space. In addition the *Ginkgo Biloba* at the bottom of Gabriel's Hill which should be removed and replaced with trees native to South East England as per HAP 12: Urban Green Space.
3. That the proposed materials for Week Street and Gabriel's Hill/Lower Stone Street are approved.

4. That funding of £900k is being sought from external sources, to cover the increased costs is noted.
5. The proposed consultation materials and methodology is approved.
6. That delegated authority is granted to the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development to go out to tender for the construction of this project, with appropriate phasing of the works to ensure flexibility in the delivery phase.
7. That delegated authority is granted to the s151 officer to award the contract to the successful bidder.
8. That delegated authority is granted to the Interim Head of the Legal Partnership to enter into a contract with the successful bidder.
9. That delegated authority is granted to the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development, in prior consultation with the ward councillors of North, East and High Street wards, and subsequently in consultation with the chairs and vice-chairs of Heritage Culture and Leisure Committee, Communities Housing and Environment Committee, and Policy and Resources Committee to approve the final detailed designs.

Voting: For - 11 Against - 3 Abstentions - 1

Councillors Boughton and Blackmore asked for their dissent to be noted on the vote for the recommendations being taken together, instead of each recommendation separately.

224. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF THE AUDIT PARTNERSHIP - RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Deputy Head of the Audit Partnership introduced his report on the Risk Management Update.

It was noted that the risks presented to the Committee were the council's corporate level risks, rather than the operational risks for each service. Both of these risk profiles combined constituted the council's comprehensive risk register.

The council's corporate level risks had been identified by members and senior officers of the council, and mitigation had been put into place to reduce the impact and likelihood of these risks.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Voting: For - 11 Against - 1 Abstentions - 2

225. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the items set out in Part II of the agenda because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified, having applied the Public Interest Test.

226. MINUTES (PART II) OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 MARCH 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes (Part II) of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record and signed.

227. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - MOTE PARK LAKE

The Committee considered an exempt report about Mote Park Lake.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the recommended actions set out in the exempt report be taken.

228. DURATION OF MEETING

6.33 p.m. to 9.12 p.m.