

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Policy and Resources Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2017

Present: Councillors Barned, Boughton, Brice, Butler, Cox, Fermor, Garland, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Harvey, Harwood, Hastie, McLoughlin, Perry and Mrs Wilson (Chairman)

110. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received by Councillor Harper.

111. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following members were present as substitute members:

- Councillor Adkinson for Councillor Harper; and
- Councillor Butler for Councillor Blackmore.

112. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that an urgent update had been accepted for the following items:

- Item 13. Strategic Plan 2015-20, 2018-19 Refresh. The update was an updated Appendix A, which showed the tracked changes demonstrating where changes would be made for the refreshed strategic plan. The reason for urgency was that there was a software error when the agenda pack was put together, meaning the tracked changes had been accepted. Circulating the urgent update to the Committee provided clarity around the proposed changes.
- Item 16. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals. The update was an updated Appendix C, and the reason for urgency was that it was not available at time of publication due to consultation with Political Groups. Committee provided clarity around the proposed changes.

113. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting members.

114. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

115. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

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

RESOLVED: That item 17. Minutes (Part II) of the Meeting held on 30 October 2017 and item 18. Minutes (Part II) of the Meeting held on 21 November 2017 be taken in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information.

117. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 OCTOBER 2017

The following amendments to the minutes were requested:

- That for minute item 73, Councillor Butler was present as a substitute for Councillor Perry
- That for minute item 83, the reference to M Burton be changed to D Burton

RESOLVED: That, with the amendments outlined above, the minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2017 be agreed as an accurate record and signed.

118. MINUTES (PART II) OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 OCTOBER 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes (Part II) of the meeting held on 30 October 2017 be agreed as an accurate record and signed.

119. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2017 be agreed as an accurate record and signed.

120. MINUTES (PART II) OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes (Part II) of the meeting held on 22 November 2017 be agreed as an accurate record and signed.

121. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

123. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement updated the Committee on the Committee Work Programme.

It was noted that there had been several changes to the Work Programme since it had been published. These changes had been made as there were a too many items in the Work Programme for January.

The Chairman requested that an amended work programme be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme is noted.

124. STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-20, 2018-19 REFRESH

The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance presented the Strategic Plan 2015-2020, 2018-19 Refresh to the Committee.

The Committee noted that the Strategic Plan was in the process of being refreshed for 2018-19. It was proposed that the three priority areas of 2017-18 of a home for everyone, a clean and safe environment and regenerating the town centre would be retained for 2018-19. Once the draft plan had been agreed by Policy and Resources Committee, the Service Committees would consider their individual areas. The final document would then be considered for adoption by Council in time for the new municipal year.

During the debate, the Committee highlighted that the Biodiversity Action Plan was missing from the policies map and that when considering transportation it was difficult for residents to travel around the borough using any mode of transport at peak times and not just by car as stated in the current draft of the Strategic Plan.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Biodiversity Action Plan be referred to under the Clean and Safe Environment priority and included in the Strategic Plan policies map.

Voting: For - 12 Against - 2 Abstentions - 1

2. That reference is made to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee to consider removing reference to 'by car' in the phrase 'We do however recognise that travelling in and around the borough by car during peak periods can be difficult'.

Voting: Unanimous

3. The refreshed Strategic Plan is approved for consideration by the Service Committees, prior to approval in February before submission to Full Council.

4. The three prioritised action areas and performance reporting arrangements from 2017-18 be approved for retention in 2018-19.

Voting: For - 14 Against - 1 Abstentions - 0

125. THAMES GATEWAY KENT PARTNERSHIP

The Chief Executive introduced a proposal to join the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership to the Committee. The Chief Executive explained that the benefits to joining the partnership were:

- Giving Maidstone a stronger voice and more regular access to Ministers and Senior Civil Servants, allowing for greater advocacy for the economic interests of the borough.
- There may be a possibility for MBC to nominate a business representative on the board, as there was a vacant seat.
- The partnership had early access to, and was better informed of, central government initiatives and policies.
- The partnership had an earlier insight into bidding opportunities, and could provide greater support and guidance in drafting and submitting funding bids.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Chief Executive explained that there were a lot of similarities economically with the other Districts in the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership. This included travel to work patterns, employment levels, average earnings, skill levels and training provision.

The Chief Executive explained to the Committee that the membership of the Partnership would initially be for two years, and after that a review would be carried out to determine the impact and effectiveness of the Council's membership.

RESOLVED:

1. That the invitation to join the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership is accepted.
2. That Maidstone Borough Council will be represented on the Thames Gateway Partnership Board by the Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee, with the Vice Chairman as the substitute.

Voting: For - 11 Against - 4 Abstentions - 0

126. COUNCIL TAX BASE & COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT 2018-19

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement presented the Council Tax Base and Collection Fund adjustment for 2018-19 to the Committee.

It was noted that agreeing the Council Tax Base and Collection Fund Adjustment was an important step in agreeing the Council's budget for 2018-19.

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement explained that properties in the Council Tax Base had increased by 1.6%, which was very close to the forecast made last year. The Council Tax Collection Fund was in surplus, and therefore the Council would retain a proportion of this surplus. The surplus had not yet been taken into account of for the purpose of budget setting as Business Rates also required the same exercise to be carried out and in previous year Business Rates had tended to be in deficit. This was due to the impact of appeals on the Business Rates Collection Fund.

RESOLVED:

1. Pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authority (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, that the amount calculated by this Authority as its Council Tax Base for the year 2018/19 will be 60,921.6, as outlined in Option 1 of this report.
2. In accordance with the Local Authority (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, that the amount calculated by this Authority as the Council Tax Base for each parish area for the year 2018/19, as outlined in Option 1 of this report, will be as identified in Appendix 2 to this report.
3. That the 2017/18 Council Tax projection and proposed distribution detailed in Appendix 3 of this report is agreed.

Voting: Unanimous

127. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement gave a presentation to the Committee which provided an update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals.

The Committee noted that on the basis of the budget proposals and financial projections contained in the report, the Council was scheduled to be able to set a balanced budget for the next two financial years. However the budget gap at the end of the five year period was projected to be £4.6 million and the additional savings identified in the adverse scenario would need to be reviewed in 2018-19.

RESOLVED:

1. Planning on the basis of the updated Strategic Revenue Projection, set out at Appendix A, is agreed.

2. The budget proposals for services in the remit of this Committee, as set out in Appendix C, are agreed.
3. The remaining budget proposals, set out in Appendix C, which will be considered by the relevant Service Committees during the course of January 2018, are noted.

Voting: Unanimous

128. DURATION OF MEETING

7.31 p.m. to 8.52 p.m.