

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2019

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

170. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Munford.

171. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Gooch was present as a substitute for Councillor Munford.

172. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had agreed to take an urgent update to Item 13. Publication of Personal Information on the Planning Web Pages. The reason for urgency was that the update provided additional information regarding anonymising comments on the Council's website for planning applications, the cost of this and whether personal information was published in relation to enforcement notices.

173. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

174. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

175. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

All Councillors stated that they had been lobbied on Item 13. Publication of Personal Information on the Planning Web Pages.

176. 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.

177. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 FEBRUARY 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed.

178. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

179. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

180. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

181. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED: That the Outside Body report be noted.

182. PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THE PLANNING WEB PAGES

Mrs Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance, stated that Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) was compliant with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) when publishing comments relating to planning applications. Comments required a name and address in order to be given weight during planning processes, however, it was possible to remove this information from the Council website at an estimated cost of £25,000 per year. It was explained that names and addresses would be shared if the file was inspected or if there was an appeal process. In exceptional circumstances, however, anonymity could be maintained to protect an individual.

The Committee commented that:

- The current practice was proportionate, as it was in the interest of the public to understand who had commented on planning applications.
- Introducing anonymity risked larger organisations exploiting the system to influence planning decisions.
- The additional cost required to anonymise comments was not justified when considering that names and addresses would be shared if the file was inspected or an appeal process was undertaken.
- The publication of personal information meant that some members of the public were reluctant to submit comments on planning applications.

- The practice of residents liaising with Members, as outlined in the Local Enforcement Plan, could be applied to planning applications. This provided residents with an opportunity to contribute to planning decisions without revealing their identity.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

183. UPDATE ON THE MAIDSTONE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT PACKAGE

Ms Abi Lewis, Economic Development Officer, confirmed that three business cases had been submitted by Kent County Council (KCC) to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) on 1 February 2019. These business cases, regarding the A229 Loose Corridor, A20 Wellington Street Junction and A20 Hall Road had received positive feedback from SELEP's technical evaluators. A decision regarding the funding was on track to be made by SELEP in April 2019. It was important to recognise, however, that there were risks associated with the delivery of the package of works due to deadlines associated with the work.

The Committee commented that:

- It was disappointing that the A20 Hall Road scheme remained an option in the package of works, as it did not feature in the Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP) and would result in funding being allocated to another authority.
- Considering that the A20 Hall Road scheme was not part of the MITP, it was concerning that resourcing had been allocated to the creation of a business case for this scheme. It would have been preferable for an alternative scheme within Maidstone to have been identified.
- Planning permission decisions had been made on the basis that the schemes would be delivered, so it was vital that these were completed.

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

- The costs associated with the schemes were higher than original estimates proposed by developers at the planning application stage, therefore combined funding of developer contributions and Local Growth Fund was required to deliver the work.
- Developer contributions (Section 106 money) allocated to the schemes would be returned to the appropriate developers if it was not spent within the agreed timescales.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

184. MAIDSTONE BUILDING FOR LIFE 12

Mr Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development, outlined that the Maidstone Building for Life 12 was important for two reasons. Firstly, it sent a clear message that MBC expected high quality designs for future residential developments. Secondly, it enhanced the structure and consistency of operational discussions. Mr Jarman suggested that the appointment of a Member Design Champion would enable Councillors and Officers to work collaboratively on matters relating to the design of residential developments.

The Committee stated that the Maidstone Building for Life 12 guide was an excellent tool to use in development planning conversations. It was requested that the guide be incorporated into Officer training to ensure it was widely used. The Committee commented that Councillors had been involved in similar work through site visits and workshops, which had proven to be effective. This ensured that all Members were able to contribute to the work, and the appointment of a Champion was therefore unnecessary.

RESOLVED: That the Maidstone Borough Council Building for Life 12, attached as Appendix 1, be approved for use and publication.

Voting: Unanimous

185. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.04 p.m.