

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE  
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER 2009**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Sherreard (Chairman)  
Councillors FitzGerald, Nelson-Gracie, Paine, Ross,  
Thick, Moriarty and Vizzard

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies for absence was received from Councillors

**59. The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast**

**Resolved:** That all items on the agenda be web-cast.

**60. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Beerling.

**61. Notification of Substitute Members**

It was noted that Councillor Moriarty was substituting for Councillor Beerling.

**62. Notification of Visiting Members**

There were no visiting Members.

**63. Disclosures by Members and Officers**

Councillor Paine declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9, Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions by virtue of his friendship with an employee of Nu-Venture Coaches Limited.

**64. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.**

**Resolved:** That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

**65. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 29 September 2009.**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2009 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman.

**66. Disabled Facilities Grants - The Role of Occupational Therapy**

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Services for the Maidstone and Malling Locality, Ms Sue Stower, and the Senior Practitioner, Mr Peter

Buckley, from Kent County Council's Adult Social Services to the meeting and asked them to provide an introduction to the role of Occupational Therapy with regard to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

Kent Adult Social Services had been restructured from 1 October 2009 to encompass the Self Directed Support, part of the Government's Personalisation Agenda, which gave people more choice and control over their lives and the support they received. The Kent Contact and Assessment Service now received all Kent Adult Social Service's referrals, giving advice and guidance and undertaking as much fast track work as possible that did not require assessments. This included arranging delivery of minor equipment and adaptations to people who were clear about what their needs were. In addition a six week period of enablement could be arranged to help someone regain their skills and confidence in activities of daily living. This helped them to live as independently as possible in their home without the intervention of long term care packages or major equipment. The enablers were able to put in minor equipment if necessary.

The Assessment and Enablement Teams consisted of Care Managers, Occupational Therapists, the Hospital Teams and Kent Home Care Teams. Occupational Therapists within this team were known as 'Case Managers (OT)'. This team was responsible for assessing clients needs, including for equipment and adaptations. Once the needs had been established and an indicative budget set, the case was passed to the Coordination Team who helped the service user create their own support plans. OT cases did however remain in the Assessment and Enablement Team because it was not considered good practice to hand over a case to a new person halfway through the DFG process given its complexities.

Occupational Therapists (OTs) completed three year Occupational Therapy degrees (or equivalent) and were required to be state registered to practice. OTs carried out home visits and used both their medical knowledge and clinical reasoning to assess the customer's physical capabilities to carry out certain actions in the home, such as a person's ability to get in and out of a chair, on and off the lavatory and up and down stairs. In response to a question, Ms Stower advised that the client's needs would not be exceeded as the assessments were formalised and OTs were trained to supply only what was absolutely necessary. She noted that some adaptations could be counter productive if not required, such as a stair lift, as the stairs were good exercise. The OT made recommendations in consultation with the client, and elected for the most modest solution, such as the utilisation of a shower stool to aid showering or a stair lift rather than an extension. The OT also considers the prognosis of the client and major adaptations may be suggested if appropriate. An OT's recommendation for a major adaptation was discussed in supervision to ensure the recommendation was justifiable. Adaptations enabled by DFGs needed to be reasonable, practical, necessary and appropriate. Members noted that the OT Service provided: assessments for DFGs to help with the cost of major adaptations; assessments for equipment and minor adaptations funded by KCC; provision of short periods of rehabilitation; and information and advice

about sources of help for disabled people and their carers. Seventy per cent of the OTs work was made up of DFG assessments.

Mr Buckley outlined the process undertaken by OTs in assessing a client for a DFG:

- The OT team received a referral from the customer, a family member, a carer, a health professional or a specialist;
- The Senior Practitioner reviewed and prioritised each case. Cases where people were most at risk, such as having problems with mobility on stairs or transfers from toilets or beds were prioritised due to the risk of falls, which could lead to fractures. The remaining cases were ranked in date order;
- The OT assessed a case to determine the client's needs and whether a DFG was required. Trained assessors worked closely with OTs to assess clients needing minor adaptations. A number of these trained assessors were previously employed by Maidstone Housing Trust when they carried out their own adaptations;
- If the assessment showed that the most modest solution available was a requirement suitable for DFG funding, a request for a preliminary test of resources was made to Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) Grant Officer to determine whether a grant would be payable and/or how much the resident needed to contribute;
- Once the client's contribution had been assessed, the OT worked with the client to identify a key worker to draw up the specifications for the adaptations. OTs continued to provide advice to the client, including considering the most appropriate plans to meet their needs, even if they did not qualify for a grant;
- The OT prepared the recommendations to ensure that the needs of the client were incorporated into the adaptation;
- The client was able to elect to use the local home improvement agency, In-Touch, to undertake project management of the adaptation process, including drawing the plan, at a percentage fee;
- The OT, once satisfied that the plans met the customer's needs, sent a letter of support for the adaptation to the Grants Officer and confirmed that it had met the client's needs;
- The case was then closed and responsibility transferred to the key worker or Home Improvement Agency to progress. The case could be re-opened if the suitability of the adaptation was questioned, or if the customer's needs developed and required further adaptations.

Ms Stower advised Members that there were currently four OTs working in Maidstone and two Rehabilitation Coordinators. The average time to install an adaptation varied depending on what was needed, for instance extensions took longer than readily available equipment. The oldest case requiring assessment dated from August 2009 and officers were exploring methods to address increased work volumes as they arose. Agency OTs were employed on an ad-hoc basis as required. A Member queried why there had been an increase in the number of DFGs paid and was informed that there had been a 71 percent increase in the number of referrals for DFG assessments since 2001, with 1500 referrals in the last year. Ms Stower felt that the increase may be attributable to increased life

expectancy, resulting in people living longer with serious disabilities, and because more seriously disabled children were living beyond 2 years with complex needs.

The majority of DFGs funded stair lifts and/or level floor showers. Ms Stower noted that it was MBC's role to say yes or no to their recommendations for a DFG. In response to a question, Members were advised that short life expectancy was a factor in determining the suitability of a client for an adaptation, as the assessment was based on both the diagnosis and prognosis. This was understandably a difficult decision, but consideration of the upheaval caused by an adaptation was considered in relation to the client's life expectancy, in addition to cost effectiveness. KCC had a capital budget which could fund emergency major equipment and they also used recycled equipment from their stores. They did not advise clients to apply for a DFG if their life expectancy was under a year, as the DFG process took time.

34% of KCC's equipment was recycled in 2008, however Ms Stower was unaware of any DFG funded adaptations that had become surplus to a client's requirements. The client's prognosis was considered as part of the OT assessment and therefore it was unlikely that equipment would become redundant unless the client had undergone an operation such as a hip replacement and improved or the customer had passed away. The feasibility of removing an adaptation, such as a through floor lift, would be considered and discussed with MBC's Grants Officer. Members noted that DFG funded adaptations were owned by the customer and they or their family were ultimately responsible for disposal of that adaptation. Members were advised that KCC equipment remained under the ownership of KCC and was therefore maintained by KCC, whereas adaptations enabled by DFGs were owned and maintained by the customer.

Ms Stower informed Members that it was important to note that DFGs were paid for from the public purse and the most attractive aids were therefore not necessarily installed. She noted that owner-occupiers may sometimes be willing to make an additional contribution to ensure the equipment of their choice was installed. Customers were also able to request that the money for the minimum requirement, such as a lift, be used towards a more elaborate adaptation, such as an extension. The approval for this was determined by MBC.

In response to a question Ms Stower noted that care was usually more expensive than aids and adaptations as a carer required a year-on-year wage, whereas aids and adaptations required one off funding. She also highlighted that the majority of customers wanted to be as independent as possible. However, the OT did not insist a customer exerted all their energy to be independent and assessed customers on a case by case basis.

A Councillor asked whether the witnesses felt that enough was being done to ensure that the aging population was being planned for in respect of disabled housing. Ms Stower informed Members that properties met

Lifetime Homes Standard, but felt that more could be done. She was unsure how rigorously developments were checked to ensure that they met the standard. She also advised Members that her wish list would include: wheel chair accessible homes in terms of turning spaces, particularly in bathrooms; ramping; gradient steps; room for ground floor bedroom conversations (by having dining rooms); and wide, straight staircases suitable for stair lifts.

Ms Stower advised Members that 39% of their referrals were from MHT tenants, 47% were owner/occupier and 14% were from privately rented or other housing associations tenants, however not all referrals were necessarily regarding DFG adaptations. In response to a question Ms Stower informed Members that there was increasing tension across the country regarding the fact that Registered Social Landlords (RSL) were receiving increasingly large shares of DFGs, and that this was ultimately improving the RSL's housing stock. Questions were therefore being asked as to whether the RSL had a level of responsibility to fund these adaptations themselves. Mr Buckley advised Members that they were working closely with MHT to seek opportunities to reserve vacant adapted properties for customers with needs. MHT recorded which properties were adapted and identified customers with the OT who would benefit from a vacated adapted property. A Member queried whether information was available on the percentage of the population likely to need adaptations and considered whether housing should therefore be built to accommodate at least that percentage. Ms Stower agreed to investigate the percentage for Members.

A Member queried why Registered Social Landlords such as MHT were required to use their own technicians for the installation of minor adaptations whereas KCC provided the service free of charge to other customers. Members were informed that KCC did not have the capacity to take on MHTs minor adaptations, but that MHT residents were not charged for the MHT service. She also noted that the Housing Association had a responsibility to act on the recommendations for minor adaptations put forward by OTs.

A Member queried whether the witnesses felt there were any weaknesses with the DFG assessments and was advised that the financial assessments carried out by MBC did not incorporate outgoings, such as mortgage payments, but noted that the assessment was prescribed by Government. In cases of hardship, KCC was able to offer a 0% interest loan over a five year period to residents which assisted residents in funding their contribution to the adaptations. Ms Stower noted that legislation had changed to ensure that means tests were not applied to households where a child required the adaptation.

Mr Buckley advised Members that OTs ensured that their recommendations for DFGs were necessary and appropriate, whereas MBC's grant officer ensured they were reasonable and practicable. A Member queried whether it would be more efficient for DFGs to be orchestrated by KCC rather than MBC; Ms Stower felt that this was possible, as Medway processed its own claims, but noted they would also

require resources to do this and that it could potentially mean OTs had more sway over DFG allocations.

The Chairman thanked Ms Stower and Mr Buckley for assisting the Committee in its review and for an informative presentation.

**Resolved:** That

- a) Ms Stower inform Members of the projected percentage of population likely to require adaptations; and
- b) The information received be noted as part of the Committee's ongoing review of Disabled Facilities Grants.

## **67. Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had met with the Contaminated Land team to discuss the Committee's forthcoming review and the work of officers. Members were advised that officers were reviewing the Council's Contaminated Land Strategy, including the definition of contaminated land, to align it with other Local Authorities. A new Environmental Health Manager would be attending the Committee's meeting on 24 November to present the draft revised strategy. Members would then be able to establish whether they felt there was any outstanding work and whether a further contaminated land review was required by Members. The Chairman highlighted that the Committee had to receive the draft strategy at its meeting in November as the Cabinet Member's decision was scheduled to be taken before 29 January 2010.

The Committee considered the Park and Ride Update attached at [Appendix A](#). Members felt it was particularly important for the Committee to continue monitoring usage and requested that further information regarding usage, financial implications and town centre footfall figures be presented to the Committee at its meeting on 24 November. The Committee also requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Officer research other Local Authorities' Park and Ride usage figures. A Councillor queried the logic of why the number of customers finding it easy to identify which bus to catch from the town had increased from 201 to 266 for the London Road Park and Ride, when bus livery had been reduced. The Committee therefore requested a copy of Jacob's survey report.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee was holding a scrutiny structure workshop on 3 November and reiterated the importance of all Members' involvement in helping to shape the future of scrutiny.

**Resolved:** That

- a) The Committee monitor Park and Ride usage and receive further information on the financial implications of the drop in usage, along with town centre footfall figures to compare to Park and Ride usage;

- b) The Overview and Scrutiny Officer research other Local Authorities' Park and Ride usage figures; and
- c) Members be provided with a copy of the Jacobs Park and Ride survey report.

**68. Duration of the Meeting**

6.30 p.m. to 8.00 p.m

# Minute Item 67

## PARK AND RIDE FINANCIAL POSITION

### ON BUS TRANSACTIONS

Trend between October 2008 and September 2009

	2007	2008	Difference	
October	46776	45769	-1007	-2%
November	51347	46987	-4360	-8%
December	54453	54142	-311	-1%
	2008	2009	Difference	
January	43901	41504	-2397	-5%
February	41125	36718	-4407	-11%
March	40087	40276	+189	0%
April	43474	36350	-7124	-16%
May	40978	33875	-7103	-17%
June	40186	36080	-4106	-10%
July	43119	37237	-5882	-14%
August	40037	34017	-6020	-15%
September	43125	35706	-7419	-17%
Total	528608	478661	-49947	-9%

The figures for March and April are distorted due to Easter being in March in 2008 and April in 2009.

Sales of season tickets initially remained stable. However Kent County Council reduced the number they purchase for their staff from 215 to 199 in April 2009, and then 192 from October 2009 a reduction of 11%).

Reimbursement for acceptance of the national bus pass in 2009/10 is expected to be in the region of £200,000, which is just under £1.00 per return journey, slightly above the figure for 2008/09. This includes a standard flat rate payment per journey which is made to all operators towards additional operational costs.

The trend for the thirty week period from the last week of February to the third week of September has shown an average decrease in revenue of 12%.

The figures for each site during this period are shown on the next page;-



Comparison – 30 weeks from the end of February/early March to the third week of September.

	2008	2009	Difference	
<u>Willington Street</u>				
Peak	25072	18864	-6208	-25%
Off peak	77563	75939	-1624	- 2%
Total	102640	94807	-7833	- 8%
<u>London Road</u>				
Peak	23226	17927	- 5299	-23%
Off peak	82837	64547	-18290	-22%
Total	106063	82474	-23589	-22%
<u>Sittingbourne Road</u>				
Peak	38694	31683	-7011	-18%
Off peak	37902	41131	+3229	+ 9%
Total	76605	72815	-3790	- 5%
<u>Total – all three sites</u>				
Peak	86644	68479	-18518	-21%
Off peak	197177	181617	-16685	- 8%
Total	285308	250096	-35212	-12%

## **PARK AND RIDE INTERVIEW SURVEYS**

### LONDON ROAD - APRIL and JULY 2009

#### SUMMARY

Two surveys were undertaken by Jacobs on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council, between 0700 and 1500 hours on the 23 April and 7 July 2009. They were specifically organised at the London Road site to gauge and compare customer's opinions following the change from dedicated Park and Ride buses in the off peak to use of ordinary service buses. The questions were designed to provide information on the purpose and frequency of people's trips, and their opinion of the buses, service frequency and length of journey.

The number of people interviewed was 335 in April and 333 in July. Whilst 153 (46%) of those interviewed in April were regular customers this had dropped to 123 (37%) in the July.

The qualitative questions asked for responses graded from 1 (easy/positive) to 5 (hard/negative). Those who found it easy to identify the Park and Ride buses rose in categories 1 and 2 from 209 (62%) to 272 (82%) in the July. Similarly, the number of customers finding it easy to identify which bus to catch from town, increased from 201 (60%) to 266 (80%).

When asked how frequently they thought Park and Ride buses operate those indicating either every 10 or 12 minutes dropped slightly from 274 (82%) to 261 (79%). This was however offset by an increase in those who "just turn up".

The opinion of how comfortable the buses were dropped in categories 1 and 2 from a total of 245 (73%) to 235 (70%) with a noticeable shift from category 1 to category 2. However the number quoting category 5, (the poorest score), dropped from 45 (13%) to 16 (5%).

When asked if the journey to and from town was reasonable the number in categories 1 or 2 rose from 264 (79%) to 300 (90%). Here also the number recording category 5, (the poorest score), also dropped from 36 (11%) to 3 (1%).

Clive Cheeseman

Transport Policy Officer

21 October 2009

## **DETAIL**

The questions asked were;-

1. Male or Female
2. Purpose of travel today  
(1) Work      (2) Shopping      (3) Leisure      (4) Health      (5) Services      (6) Other
3. How often do you use Park and Ride  
(1) Regularly      (2) Once or twice a week      (3) Occasionally
4. Do you find it easy to identify the Park and Ride buses  
On a scale from 1 (easy) to 5 (hard)
5. Can you identify which bus to catch back from the town to the Park and Ride site  
On a scale from 1 (easy) to 5 (hard)
6. How frequently do you think the Park and Ride buses operate  
(1) Every 10 minutes      (2) every 12 minutes      (3) every 15 minutes      (4) less than every 15 minutes  
(5) I don't need to know /they are frequent      (6) I just turn up
7. Are the buses comfortable  
On a scale from 1 (yes) to 5 (no)
8. Is the journey time to & from town reasonable  
On a scale from 1 (yes) to 5 (no)

## **RESULTS**

	<b>April</b>		<b>July</b>	
Number of surveys	335	(100%)	333	(100%)
Male	81	(24%)	95	(29%)
Female	254	(76%)	238	(71%)

### **2. Purpose of travel;-**

Work	166	(50%)	136	(41%)
Shopping	101	(30%)	127	(38%)
Leisure	23	(7%)	20	(6%)
Health	5	(1%)	10	(3%)
Services	15	(4%)	20	(6%)
Other	25	(7%)	18	(5%)
No response	0	(0%)	2	(1%)

	<b>April</b>		<b>July</b>	
<b>3. How often do you use Park and Ride?</b>				
Regularly	153	(46%)	123	(37%)
Once or twice a week	105	(31%)	135	(41%)
Occasionally	75	(22%)	72	(22%)
No response	2	(0%)	3	(1%)

**4. Do you find it easy to identify the Park and Ride buses?**

(1) easy to (5) hard

1	137	(41%)	157	(47%)
2	72	(21%)	115	(35%)
3	39	(12%)	25	(8%)
4	37	(11%)	19	(6%)
5	47	(14%)	9	(3%)
No response	3	(1%)	8	(2%)

**5. Can you identify which bus to catch from town?**

(1) easy to (5) hard

1	128	(38%)	159	(48%)
2	73	(22%)	107	(32%)
3	40	(12%)	35	(11%)
4	42	(13%)	15	(5%)
5	46	(14%)	7	(3%)
No response	6	(2%)	1	(1%)

	April		July	
<b>6. How frequently do you think Park and Ride buses operate?</b>				
Every 10 minutes	154	(46%)	149	(45%)
Every 12 minutes	120	(36%)	112	(34%)
Every 15 minutes	39	(12%)	32	(10%)
Less than every 15 minutes	3	(1%)	4	(1%)
Don't need to know	5	(1%)	6	(2%)
I just turn up	14	(4%)	26	(8%)
No response	0	(0%)	4	(1%)

**7. Are the buses comfortable?**

(1) easy to (5) hard

1	190	(57%)	127	(38%)
2	55	(16%)	108	(32%)
3	28	(8%)	56	(17%)
4	17	(5%)	19	(6%)
5	45	(13%)	16	(5%)
No response	0	(0%)	7	(2%)

**8. Is the journey to and from town reasonable?**

(1) easy to (5) hard

1	196	(59%)	211	(63%)
2	68	(20%)	89	(27%)
3	31	(9%)	20	(6%)
4	4	(1%)	6	(2%)
5	36	(11%)	3	(1%)