

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2022

Present: Councillors Bartlett, Joy, McKenna, Mortimer, Newton, Perry, M Rose, S Webb (Chairman) and Young

129. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Purle.

130. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Perry was present as a Substitute for Councillor Purle.

131. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

132. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Garten was present as a Visiting Member for Item 14 – Reference from Council – Motion – Garden Waste Bin Service, and Item 15 – Garden Waste Service.

Councillor English was present as a Visiting Member for Item 19 – Review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the community safety unit.

133. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

134. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillor Mortimer had been lobbied on Item 17 – Heather House & Pavilion Building Update.

135. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

136. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2021

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

137. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

138. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

139. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

140. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

141. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

142. REFERENCE FROM COUNCIL - MOTION - GARDEN WASTE BIN SERVICE

RESOLVED: That Item 14 – Reference from Council – Motion – Garden Waste Bin Service, be taken alongside Item 15 – Garden Waste Service, due to the related subject matter.

143. GARDEN WASTE SERVICE

The Head of Environment and Public Realm introduced the report and outlined the disruptions experienced to the service, and the actions which had been taken as a result.

It was acknowledged that both Covid-19 and the shortage of drivers had impacted the service, but the waste team was thanked for their work throughout the difficult period.

In response to questions, the Head of Environment and Public Realm explained that food waste and garden waste collections had not been combined due to the requirement for food waste to be collected weekly, however it could be further considered under the new waste services contract.

RESOLVED: That the current performance of the garden waste service and actions taken to mitigate the HGV driver shortages be noted.

144. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced the report and explained that although there had been a favourable financial settlement from the government, this was set against a higher inflation rate than had been anticipated. Financial challenges for the budget included the extra costs associated with the new waste contract, the

commitment to affordable housing which would require subsidy from the Council, and the public toilet contract. Additional resource had been allocated to community protection to give the team more flexibility to respond to issues such as anti-social behaviour in the Borough.

Continual savings were made through the Council's own provision of temporary accommodation and the in-house management of CCTV. The main expenditure on the capital programme was the affordable housing programme, which had been allocated £113 million for the five-year period to 26/27.

In response to questions, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement explained that the budget allocated for public toilets included all those managed by waste services, and the growth was due to the new waste contract and the addition of public toilets, for example in Mote Park.

RESOLVED: That

1. The revenue budget proposals for services within the remit of this Committee, as set out in Appendix A, be agreed for submission to Policy and Resources Committee; and
2. The capital budget proposals for services within the remit of this Committee, as set out in Appendix B, be agreed for submission to Policy and Resources Committee.

145. HEATHER HOUSE & PAVILION BUILDING UPDATE

The Housing Delivery Manager introduced the report and outlined the previous decisions made by the Committee. A detailed planning application for the Heather House site was submitted on 13 January 2022 for the scheme shown at appendix 1 to the report. Housing with private parking was proposed on the pavilion site, having been designed to Nationally Described Space Standards, with the five properties for market rent being added to Maidstone Property Holdings Portfolio. The new centre would be available for community hire and a management provider would be procured.

The Committee expressed concern that the design was centred around sports provision rather than the community, and that it did not incorporate the facilities commonly required for community use, including a larger storage area and extra rooms for smaller meetings. A bar was not part of the initial design plans and more information was expected regarding the future management of the centre. Further rationale regarding the proposed design was requested, including information on the results of the residents' survey.

In response to questions, the Housing Delivery Manager explained that multiple changing rooms had been incorporated into the design to allow both sports pitches to be used concurrently. The stakeholder consultation and residents survey had informed the design, and a bar was a common

feature of community centres used for events such as weddings and parties. Costs at this stage were estimates as they would not be finalised until the procurement process had been completed, and further information on management providers would also not be available until after the procurement exercise.

RESOLVED: That

1. Additional information be provided to the Committee including further detail on the residents' survey results, the economic impact and the rationale of the proposed design; and
2. Further designs be put forward which incorporate a variety of sports and community uses.

146. REVIEW OF THE USE OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR MEASURES.

The Head of Housing and Community Services introduced the report and outlined the range of activity carried out by the Community Protection Team. The team initially addressed unacceptable behaviour by issuing community protection warnings, and if the behaviour persisted they could issue a community protection notice. Greater compliance with the warnings had resulted in fewer notices being issued, and joined-up working with other teams such as planning enforcement enabled some instances of antisocial behaviour to be resolved more quickly.

The Community Protection Team were involved in a wide range of other services including domestic abuse prevention and animal welfare issues.

In response to questions, the Head of Housing and Community Services agreed that the team's remit was broad, and explained that COMF funding had allowed additional officers to be recruited to the team. In relation to the team's impact in disrupting organised crime groups, multi-agency working meant that a wide range of tools could be used to interfere with criminal activity.

RESOLVED: That the range of activities undertaken by the Community Protection Team, and information on the use of interventions used to tackle antisocial behaviour, be noted.

147. REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

The Head of Housing and Community Services introduced the report and explained a blended approach was required to tackle antisocial behaviour, rather than one single approach. The Community Protection Team had started patrols to increase visibility in areas of concern, however this was not a sustainable solution as it would divert the team's resources away from their statutory duties.

The Maidstone Task Force was ongoing in the Shepway area and preliminary results had shown their methods to be very effective. It had

therefore been proposed that the Task Force approach could be replicated in other areas of Maidstone, with joined up working with partners such as the Police, Social Services and One Maidstone.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Community Protection Team work with key partner agencies to adopt a 'Task Force Approach' to reducing ASB and other criminality in the Town Centre, including an increased presence and joint problem solving; and
2. An assessment of the effectiveness of this approach be presented to the Committee in April 2022.

148. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 8.08pm.

Note: The Committee adjourned between 6.40pm and 6.44pm, and between 6.46pm and 6.50pm, due to technical difficulties.