

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19 JULY 2022

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Blackmore, Brindle, Cannon, Cleator, Conyard, English (Chairman), Hastie, Hinder, Jeffery, Knatchbull, McKenna, Springett and T Wilkinson
Visiting Members:	Councillors Burton, Perry, Russell and S Webb

18. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Brice and Garten.

19. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Councillor Brindle was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Brice.

Councillor Springett was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Garten.

20. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

21. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillors Burton, Perry, Russell and Webb were present as Visiting Members for Item 14 – Scoping Report – 2022/23 Work Programme.

The Chairman stated that the Members of the Executive in attendance may be called upon to answer questions from the Committee if required.

22. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members and Officers.

23. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

24. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

25. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JUNE 2022**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 June 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the removal of the additional ‘topic’

contained within Minute 16 – Receipt of Suggested Review Topics (if any) and 2022/23 Work Programming, to read:

'Safety & Enforcement (as a combined suggestion from the agenda papers and Councillor suggested topics topic)'.
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26. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

27. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from Local Residents.

28. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

29. NOTIFICATION OF 'CALL-IN' OF AN EXECUTIVE DECISION

There were no Executive Decisions to be reviewed.

30. RECEIPT OF COUNCILLOR 'CALL FOR ACTION'

There were no 'Councillor Call for Actions'.

31. SCOPING REPORT - 2022/23 WORK PROGRAMMING

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report. Since its publication feedback had been received to include Southern Water as a consultee within the scope attached at Appendix 1A to the report. Additionally, drought management could be a further line of enquiry to those contained within Appendix 1B to the report.

The contents of the scopes attached within Appendices 1A-1D of the report were briefly outlined. The Committee were requested to select which topics to include within its work programme and either amend and/or agree the scopes as drafted.

The recommended option was to select two large topics for review, to maintain the flexibility required for the Committee to conduct small reviews and respond to unexpected issues. If a higher number was chosen, then the reviews should be prioritised with an understanding that it may not be possible to conduct all of the reviews across the next year.

Provisional dates for extra meetings had been explored should they be required.

In evaluating each scoping proposal, the Committee discussed each appendix separately.

The Council's Performance in relation to its Waste Strategy

In response to questions, the Democratic Services Officer stated that the Director of Regeneration and Place had advised for the review to take place in quarter four

as further information would be collated on, and decisions made relating to, the service across the third quarter.

The Leader of the Council was invited to address the Committee and answer questions on the Waste Services contract procurement, tender process and timeline for the decision.

The Committee felt that it would be beneficial to conduct a review into the topic due to the importance of the service to local residents. The decision relating to the contract would be taken within approximately 18 months and the procurement exercise had commenced. Therefore, a spotlight review was preferred as this would enable an in-depth review to take place in the near future over a short timescale. The review would ideally occur in September 2022.

The Water Management Cycle

The topic was felt to be of significant importance to the borough, however there were concerns expressed on the effectiveness of conducting the review as the Council was not the leading authority on the matter. Further concerns were expressed on the likely attendance of external bodies, such as Southern water, as part of the review. The potential to positively impact the Council's future Design and Sustainability Development Plan Document from reviewing the topic was highlighted.

In response to questions, the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance stated that for the topic to be reviewed via a Councillor 'Call for Action' all other possible options would have to have been exhausted, with the topic to be narrower in scope.

Several Members of the Committee and Visiting Members highlighted the need for a narrower scope to effectively review the topic.

In response to some of the comments made during the debate, the Committee felt that the review should focus on the supply and disposal of water and the disposal of sewage in the water courses, as the most problematic aspects of the Water Management Cycle.

The review could be conducted by a working group, to allow the Committee to progress the Safety and Enforcement review and avoid untimely delay. It was requested that the relevant water companies be contacted to ascertain whether they would be willing to attend the review before its commencement.

In response to some of the comments made during the debate, the Committee felt that the review should focus on the supply and disposal of water and the disposal of sewage in the water courses, as the most problematic aspects of the Water Management Cycle.

It was noted that the working group's membership did not have to be drawn solely from the Committee, with the group to determine their meeting arrangements.

Health Inequality

During the debate, the Committee discussed several contributing factors to health inequality including access to housing, access to leisure facilities, mental health and wellbeing and the provision of services between the county and district level with particular reference made to Kent County Council's 'Making a Difference Everyday' social care proposals.

The Lead Member for Housing and Health addressed the Committee in support of a review to include access to housing.

The overlap between health inequality and other issues, such as enforcement, was highlighted. The Committee supported conducting a review into health inequality as it could lead to positive outcomes. The review would take place towards the end of the municipal year.

Safety & Enforcement

In response to questions, the Democratic Services Officer stated that the topic had been split into two reviews due to the issue's wide remit, allowing for greater detail to be included within the scope attached at Appendix 1A to the report. The enforcement review had been scheduled first due to the support expressed by the Committee on reviewing enforcement at its previous meeting; the order could be amended as required.

The Committee expressed support for reviewing the topic across two separate but linked reviews, beginning with Safety as it was felt that this would better inform the enforcement review.

RESOLVED: That the below topics be included within the Committee's 2022/23 Work Programme with the following priority:

1. The Council's Performance against the Waste Strategy, to be conducted via a spotlight review in September 2022;
2. Safety and Enforcement review, to commence in September 2022 beginning with the safety aspect of the review;
3. The Water Management Cycle, to commence in September 2022 and focus on the supply and disposal of water and the disposal of sewage in water courses, following invitations to the relevant water companies to participate, subject to either 3a or 3b as applicable;
 - a. If attendance is agreed, a working group be created to conduct the review and determine its meeting arrangements; or
 - b. If attendance is not agreed or given in good time, the review be removed from the Committee Work Programme.
4. Health Inequality, to be conducted towards the end of the 2022/23 municipal year.

32. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.48 p.m.