

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 JULY 2022

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Brice (Chairman), Brindle, Cannon, Cooke, Cox, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Hinder and Khadka
Lead Members:	Councillor Perry (Lead Member for Corporate Services)

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

17. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

18. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

19. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

20. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

21. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillor Brice had been lobbied on Item 13 – Medium Term Financial Strategy.

All Members had been lobbied on Item 14 – Public Sector Led Garden Community Update.

22. EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED: That Item 17 – Property Acquisition for 1,000 Homes Scheme be taken in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information.

23. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2022 be agreed as a correct record and signed.

24. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

25. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

26. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

27. FORWARD PLAN RELATING TO THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.

CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

Exempt Item 17 – Property Acquisition for 1,000 Homes Programme would be taken after Item 12 – Forward Plan relating to the Committee’s Terms of Reference, in order for the Lead Member for Housing and Health to be available to present the report.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified, having applied the public interest test:

Item 17 – Property Acquisition for 1,000 Homes Scheme

Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description

Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular individual (including the authority holding that information).

The meeting reopened into public session at 7.21pm.

28. PROPERTY ACQUISITION FOR 1,000 HOMES PROGRAMME

The Lead Member for Housing and Health introduced the report and explained that the proposed development would comprise of 28 apartments with parking and cycle storage. All apartments would be delivered as affordable housing and built to the Council’s standard specification for Affordable Rent. It was proposed that the Council would apply to Homes England for a grant as part of the Continuous Market Engagement bid process for the Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26. The acquisition was financially viable and would exceed the Council’s minimum rate of return.

The Committee felt that the parking allocation for the development was not suitable, and expressed concern that this would exacerbate the parking difficulties already experienced by local residents.

The Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed that the parking allocation was in line with policy requirements, and that under-croft parking would not be a feasible solution for this site. Information about the apartment and facilities would be provided to prospective tenants to enable them to choose whether the accommodation would suit their needs.

The Lead Member for Housing and Health emphasised that the scheme had been designed to maximise accommodation, to contribute towards the stock of affordable housing in the borough.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommend to the Executive that:

1. The financial returns for the scheme shown at Appendix 1 to the report, which support the Housing Development and Regeneration Investment Plan and the overall Development Strategy, be approved;
2. The site acquisition be approved in line with point 2.7 of the Exempt report;
3. The Director of Finance and Business Improvement be granted delegated authority to:
 - 3.1 negotiate terms for the purchase of the site for the agreed sum, subject to the site securing planning consent;
 - 3.2 procure and enter into all such deeds, agreements, contracts and documents which may be required to facilitate the purchase of the site and the subsequent redevelopment works required to deliver the scheme referred to in this report, including (but not limited to) any related appointments such as a suitably qualified Employers Agent and Contractor;
 - 3.3 subject to satisfactory conclusion of all due diligence to negotiate and finalise and complete all legal formalities, deeds and agreements which may be required to facilitate the purchase;
4. The Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be authorised to appoint the solicitors required to negotiate and complete the necessary contract documentation, deeds and agreements associated with the purchase of the site and the procurement and appointment of contractors and consultants on the terms as agreed by the Director of Finance and Business Improvement;
5. Post completion of the procurement process to appoint a contractor to bring forward for approval to this Committee a detailed project delivery and investment plan (prior to the development itself commencing);
6. The Lead Member investigates and requests controls to limit car ownership among residents of the site.

29. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Lead Member for Corporate Services introduced the report and emphasised the importance of a strong Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The key outcome of the MTFS was to set a balanced budget and agree a level of council

tax for 2023/24 which would be recommended to full Council on 22 February 2022. The report set out the background considerations including the issues and risks involved, and the key assumptions made in preparing the MTFS.

A request had been received to perform additional scenario modelling based on a zero percent Council Tax increase, which had been prepared by the Director of Finance and Business Improvement. The Committee felt that it was important to analyse and evaluate all options, and that a zero percent increase should be included for consideration.

RESOLVED: That

1. The issues and risks associated with updating the Medium Term Financial Strategy be noted;
2. The assumptions described in the report for planning purposes and to establish the remit for detailed budget development, and together with the additional information provided to the Committee, which shows the effect of 0% council tax increase on the four scenarios presented, be recommended to the Executive for approval;
3. The Committee advise Lead Members on the Executive, together with Officers and Members of the PAC, to carry out a detailed review of the initial budget proposals. The purpose of this review would be to identify possible savings required to eliminate budget gaps, especially those identified in the additional information referred to in recommendation 2;
4. The proposed approach outlined to development of an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023/24 – 2027/28 and a budget for 2023/24 be recommended to the Executive for approval.

30. PUBLIC SECTOR LED GARDEN COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Lead Member for Corporate Services introduced the item for noting and explained that three further public engagement events had occurred since the previous update. The appointed Local Plan Inspector had provided his initial observations on the project, and the Council continued to work in partnership with Homes England.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

31. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Lead Member for Corporate Services introduced the report and drew the Committee's attention to the key principles set out in the appendix. Compliance was evidenced across all seven areas, however further work was recommended for two of the principles and an action plan had been proposed to address these.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Annual Governance Statement be recommended for approval and signed by the Leader; and

2. The local Code of Corporate Governance be noted.

32. CORPORATE PLANNING TIMETABLE

The Lead Member for Corporate Services introduced the report and explained that the timetable had been refreshed for the period 2023/2028 to incorporate changes which had occurred since the adoption of the strategic plan in 2018.

Reassurance was given that although the strategic plan itself would retain its priorities and therefore would not have significant changes, informal meetings could take place throughout the summer period for all Members to input into the refreshed plan.

RESOLVED: That the Strategic Plan 2019-45 milestones for 2023-28 be refreshed and the corporate planning timetable at point 3.5 of the report be recommended to the Executive for approval.

33. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 8.18pm.