

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 MARCH 2024**

**Attendees:**

<b>Committee Members:</b>	<b>Councillors Blackmore (Chairman), Cleator, Conyard, Jones, Kimmance, McKenna, Riordan and Trzebinski</b>
<b>Cabinet Members:</b>	<b>Councillors Burton (Leader of the Council) and Cooper (Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development)</b>
<b>Visiting Members:</b>	<b>Councillor Garten</b>

124. APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Grigg and Spooner.

125. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Riordan was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Spooner.

126. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

127. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Garten was present as Visiting Member for Item 13 – Over-arching Conservation Management Plan.

128. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

129. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

130. EXEMPT ITEMS

**RESOLVED:** That Item 14 – Bearsted Road Improvements MBC Contributions be taken in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information, for the reason specified having applied the public interest test.

131. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2024

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Forward Plan relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference, be noted.

133. 3RD QUARTER FINANCIAL UPDATE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development introduced the report and stated that:

- There was a moderate underspend for the year with some revenue streams performing better than expected. Significant variances in the Development Control Service Area were attributed to the stage of the local plan review pre-adoption resulting in fewer Major planning applications being submitted and less pre-application advice being sought from the service;
- The higher than expected service charge costs and empty units at the Business Terrace at Maidstone House led to a shortfall of income. There was also an overspend on the Innovation Centre from increased running costs and a shortfall of income; and
- There was an underspend on Sandling Road car park, where the running costs were lower than expected.

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member advised that new tenants for Maidstone House were being sought, with the Council's rental fees being competitive to support growing businesses. Grant funding had been provided by the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership to expand and renovate the business terrace across the first floor of Maidstone House.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 3 for 2023/24, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted;
2. The Capital position at the end of Quarter 3 for 2023/24 be noted;
3. The Performance position as at Quarter 3 for 2023/24, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted; and
4. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund update, attached at Appendix 3 be noted.

134. DRAFT KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development introduced the report and stated that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) proposed would allow for the data collected to be compared with other Local Authorities performance, through the use of the new online tool launched by The Office of Local Government (OFLOG).

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET:** That

1. The changes to reporting arrangements be noted; and
2. The draft Performance Indicators at Appendix A to the report be agreed.

135. **CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED LIGHTING AND GREENING STRATEGIES AND PROJECT PLANS FOR MAIDSTONE TOWN CENTRE**

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and stated that the proposed lighting and greening strategies were part of the overall Town Centre Strategy (TCS) and would be supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding and Section 106 monies. The Leader highlighted the importance of lighting in promoting security and appearance of heritage assets in the town at night and drew attention to the illustrations of proposed greening in the report which would improve public interaction in key areas. The report provided an outline of the projects proposed, but further work was needed to determine the exact delivery and costs associated.

The Committee expressed support for the proposals and questioned the strategies implementation and future maintenance arrangements, including mitigating actions for anti-social behaviour. In response to queries:

The Leader stated that:

- There would be a growth item in next year's revenue budget to support overall maintenance. Careful consideration was given to ensuring appropriate choices and placement of plants, particularly in the town centre, to protect existing utilities and ease of maintenance;
- Research would be conducted into the technology available to support the use of solar and mains electric alternatives where possible, in areas where mains power supply was difficult to obtain; and

The Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm stated that:

- Extensive work went into maintaining existing planters, which included regular watering and the condensing and swapping of plants for hardier plants in the Winter months;
- Anti-social behaviour had been an issue previously, but that the team worked closely with the Community Protection Team (CPT) and Town Centre Task Force in considering future locations for infrastructure provision. Town Centre Street Scene (TCSS) meetings included the relevant Cabinet Member, High Street Ward Members and Green Spaces Manager. The relevant Cabinet Member would be asked to review the TCSS attendees to include the Ward Members for the area covered by the Lighting and Greening Strategies.

Several Members raised concerns on how the programme of works would be reviewed as it developed, with amending recommendation four of the report considered to allow for further Committee input. Following the Leader's assurance

that if the relevant Officer and Leader were not in agreement with the proposal, the matter would be presented to the Committee for consideration, the Committee were content with the recommendation as proposed for expediency in project delivery.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET:** That

1. A programme of works for 2024/5 to bring MBC's existing lighting infrastructure in the town centre to modern standards and to improve lighting in the town centre as set out section 3 of the report, be approved;
2. A programme of works for 2024/5 to improve greening and the public realm in the town centre as set out in section 4 of the report, be approved;
3. A budget totalling £600,000 for the programme of lighting and greening works as set out in section 5 of the report be approved;
4. Responsibility for delivering the programme of works and projects be delegated to the Director of Strategy, Governance and Insight in consultation with the Leader of the Council; and
5. Officers will continue to develop a further programme of work for lighting, greening and open spaces in the town centre consistent with the relevant strategy and identify further funding opportunities, be noted.

136. **OVER-ARCHING CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development introduced the report and explained that the over-arching conservation management plan (the plan) would ensure proper enforcement across the borough whilst the full Conservation Area Management Appraisal was being developed. The former would be publicly consulted on, if agreed.

The Committee supported the plan overall, with some Members raising the importance of a common sense, practical approach in applying the management plan. In response to queries the Principal Conservation Officer advised that the plan did not introduce any new polices but brought together existing policies, to make them more easily accessible and protect the character of the local area. Any enforcement action had to be proportionate to the breach reported. The Principal Conservation Officer confirmed that a Local Neighbourhood Plan would have priority over the Plan.

In response to comments, it was stated that the wording in Appendix 1 to the report concerning the electric vehicle charging points could be amended.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET MEMBER:** That

1. The Overarching Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be approved for public consultation; and
2. Delegated powers be given to the Head of Development Management to allow for public consultation, as required under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990.

137. BEARSTED ROAD IMPROVEMENTS MBC CONTRIBUTION

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development introduced the report.

The Committee asked questions on the proposal's risks and finances, with it recommended that the report recommendations be agreed by the Cabinet Member to progress the matter.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET MEMBER:** That recommendations 1 and 2 of the report be agreed.

138. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.15 p.m.