

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE REGENERATION & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 25 OCTOBER 2011**

PRESENT: Councillor Burton (Chairman)
Councillors Cuming, Beerling, Black, English, Mrs Joy,
Ross, Springett and Newton

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

The Chairman highlighted that Agenda Item 14, Exempt report of the Chief Executive was Part II and Members agreed that all items apart from this should be web-cast.

Resolved:

That all Part I items on the agenda be web-cast.

68. Apologies.

There were no apologies.

69. Notification of Substitute Members.

There were no substitute Members.

70. Notification of Visiting Members.

There were no visiting Members.

71. Disclosures by Members and Officers:

Councillor Cuming declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8, Traffic Congestion, by virtue of having contracted work with Spot Hire Travel company.

Councillors Beerling and English declared personal interests in Agenda Item 10, Local Strategic Partnership Thematic Quarterly Performance, by virtue of having been a Director of Golding Homes and being a Member of the Kent Association for Local Councils (KALC) respectively.

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

Resolved: That Agenda Item 14, Exempt Report of the Chief Executive, be taken in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information having applied the public interest test.

73. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2011

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2011 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman.

74. Amendment to Order of Business

Resolved: That Agenda Item 10, Local Strategic Partnership Thematic Quarterly Performance, be taken before Agenda Item 8, Traffic Congestion Review.

75. Local Strategic Partnership: Written update

The Chairman welcomed Zena Cooke, Director of Regeneration and Communities to the meeting who thanked the Committee for amending its order of business to accommodate her. Ms Cooke informed the Committee that proposals for the make up of Maidstone's Locality Board were being considered. The Kent Forum model would result in nine County Members and nine District Members. Maidstone Borough Council favoured a politically representative composition of six County and six District Members and representation from other key partners. The final proposals for the Locality Board will be considered by Cabinet. In answer to a question on parish involvement, Ms Cooke explained that a Parish Representative would be requested through KALC.

Ms Cooke stated that the Chairman of the Economic Development and Regeneration delivery group had contacted the relevant organisations in housing with regard to the Housing Strategy. The delivery group, in consultation with Keith Grimley, the Economic Development Officer and Lead Officer for the group, planned to present its proposals on the format of the Housing Forum to the December LSP Regeneration & Economic Development Delivery Group. It was envisioned that Housing Services and Economic Development would be invited to a future meeting and Ms Cooke offered to involve the Committee to identify other partners who should be involved in the Forum. The Committee agreed to consider this and requested to be kept informed of all developments to the Housing Forum.

In response to a question, Ms Cooke confirmed that the delivery group had prioritised worklessness with a focus on 16-24 year old NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). She clarified that the launch the report referred to the new comprehensive web site that the Youth Forum had developed to provide comprehensive information for the borough's young people including training, leisure, live events and support agencies. Ms Cooke agreed to expand the information in the future update to clarify that this covered 'youth and young people' rather than just NEETs. The Chairman considered that the work of Think 3E to tackle worklessness

could be better publicised, and the Committee expressed a desire for this to happen.

The Committee thanked Ms Cooke for an informative update.

Resolved: That:

- a) The Committee be consulted and kept informed with regards to partners involved in the Housing Forum;
- b) Information regarding youth and young people be provided in future updates; and
- c) Think 3E be further publicised within the Borough.

76. Traffic Congestion Review

The Chairman welcomed Steve Goulette, Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services, Flo Churchill, Interim Head of the Core Strategy and Jonathan Morris, Principal Transport Planning Officer to the meeting. Mrs Churchill informed the Committee that the public consultation on the Core Strategy closed on 14 October 2011, and had received between 3500 and 4000 comments. She explained that the restructures in Kent County Council (KCC) had reduced their provision of transport officer support, reducing them to cover a minimum of two districts. This had meant that Peter Rosevear, Principal Transport Officer was no longer assigned to Maidstone, and that Paul Lulham was the new KCC Transport Officer. Members expressed their concern regarding the decrease in resources at such a critical point in the Core Strategy process as Mr Lulham anticipated being able to work for Maidstone only one day a week. In response to Members concerns regarding continuity, Mrs Churchill noted that Mr Rosevear had agreed to provide any required as much background information as his work enabled him to.

A Member noted the close working relationship between Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council with regards to Highways and considered that the relationship between Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council was disappointing in contrast. Mr Goulette agreed that there was a requirement for closer working between the two. He also highlighted that a permanent position had been agreed for a Strategic Planning Officer in Maidstone's Spatial Planning Team and that this was due to be filled by December 2011 as Mr Morris had undertaken work for Maidstone on a temporary basis only. However, Members noted that this would not be funded by KCC.

Members considered the potential opportunities afforded by Community Infrastructure Levies (CILs) as a possible source of funding for transport solutions. Mrs Churchill stated that it could be used to cover funding gaps, but could not be used to fund existing road schemes.

In response to a question Mr Morris informed the Committee that the Integrated Parking Strategy (IPS) was a holistic document, covering town centre parking, Park & Ride, parking standards and on street parking. He confirmed that it reviewed the supply of parking and its impact on

congestion, and that additional parking areas allowing access to the town centre had been considered. The Committee noted that a cost benefit analysis of the IPS would be implemented. It was agreed that the draft IPS would be presented to the Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel prior to its consideration by Cabinet. Mr Goulette emphasised that the parking strategy was just one element of the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) in reducing the impact of growth on congestion. Members noted that documentation including strategies related to promoting cycling, walking and public transport supported the ITS.

The Committee thanked the witnesses for an informative presentation.

Resolved: That the Integrated Parking Strategy be presented to the Task and Finish Panel and to make recommendation to Cabinet as appropriate.

77. Traffic Congestion: Summary To-Date

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer outlined the brief outcome for each of the objectives of the review and asked Members to highlight any areas that they felt had been overlooked or required further investigation. Members noted that the Kent Permit Scheme information was a short guide and were informed that the full version of how the scheme works was available on KCC's website. A number of Members noted incidences of advertised emergency road works, which had seemingly been left without any works being undertaken for a number of days. Members requested information on what was classified as an emergency and how this was monitored. Furthermore, Members agreed to provide details of case examples to inform its review.

The Committee felt that its review was timely to enable its informed consideration and scrutiny of the Integrated Parking Strategy (IPS) and Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) prior to a decision being made on them. However, Members felt that there was still some outstanding work to be conducted to complete the review and noted that the final report could use the data collated to inform the ITS. The Chairman suggested that an interim report was required to ensure its findings thus far fed into the IPS and ITS. The Committee agreed that its final report could be concluded following the completion of the ITS and IPS and further investigative work undertaken by the Committee as required. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer agreed to email the Committee with the review recommendations made to date and additional suggested recommendations for Members' comment prior to its next meeting to ensure that all the Committee's findings were sufficiently stated within the interim report.

Members noted that the summaries of the Committee's field trips would serve as supporting evidence to its findings and the Chairman requested that Councillors Ross and Beerling provide the Overview and Scrutiny Officer a summary of the visit to Maidstone Traffic Control Centre for the purpose of the interim report.

Due to the importance and ongoing nature of traffic congestion the Committee suggested appointing a Member to monitor the implementation and outcomes of the review's findings once published.

The Committee requested that the recommendation in minute number 32 '2 Cameras, 2 TV screens and a tree surgeon be funded by the Council for the use at the Traffic Control Centre to assist traffic management onto the gyratory' be amended to recommend 'that one camera point towards St Peters Street, and one camera towards Tonbridge Road during peak traffic flows at the Traffic Control Centre to assist traffic management onto the gyratory'

Resolved: That

- a) Further information regarding emergency road works be circulated;
- b) Members provide case examples of lengthy emergency road works with seemingly no emergency works undertaken to inform its review;
- c) The Overview and Scrutiny Officer produce an interim report to inform its scrutiny of the Integrated Transport Strategy;
- d) The Overview and Scrutiny Officer compile a list of suggested recommendations for the interim report and circulate this to the Committee for its comment;
- e) Councillors Beerling and Ross provide a summary on the field trip to Maidstone Traffic Control Centre to the Overview and Scrutiny Officer; and
- f) A Member be appointed to monitor the implementation and outcomes of the review's report.

78. Petition regarding open countryside: Written Update

The Committee emphasised the importance of the countryside protection policies within the Character Landscape Assessment Document, noting that the policy implications of the petition applied beyond Wierton, Chart Sutton, Boughton Monchelsea and the Greensand Ridge to the whole borough. Members agreed to refer the petition to the Local Development Document Task & Finish Scrutiny Panel to consider the policy implications arising from it.

Resolved: That the consideration of the policy implications of the Petition regarding open countryside be referred to the Local Development Document Task & Finish Scrutiny Panel Group.

79. Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Action and Implementation Plans (SCRAIP) Mid Year Update

The Committee agreed that it was important to monitor the responses and actions taken arising from the recommendations made at previous meetings. The Committee requested an additional column to reflect whether the actions on the recommendations had been completed and

that it would be useful to consolidate the Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Action and Implementation Plans (SCRAIPs) on one spreadsheet.

Resolved: That the SCRAIPs from previous meetings be noted, and that future updates be provided on a consolidated spreadsheet.

80. Future Work Programme

The Committee considered its future work programme and was advised that the Community Development Manager had been invited to attend its meeting to discuss the work being undertaken on employment and skills in the Borough. The Committee agreed that following this presentation, Members would decide whether an in-depth review of employment and skills was required.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer highlighted the Committee’s scheduled meeting on 20 December and Members agreed to cancel this meeting given its close proximity to Christmas and the possible problems in obtaining any witnesses to inform its review. The Committee agreed an extraordinary meeting could be convened if required. Members noted that a review of tourism was scheduled at this meeting, and agreed to amend the work programme to reflect this. A Councillor suggested that Members independently attend the museum and the visitor information centre to inform this item.

Resolved: That

- a) Members decide whether an in-depth review of employment skills was required following the presentation of the Community Development Manager;
- b) The meeting of the Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 December 2011 be cancelled; and
- c) Members of the Committee independently arrange to visit the visitor information centre and museum to inform its scrutiny of tourism.

81. Exclusion of the Public from the Meeting

Resolved: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business due to the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified under schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

	Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description
Exempt report of the Chief Executive and associated appendices-	3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding this

Museum: Written Update	information).
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Public Minute of Museum: Written Update

The Committee considered the written update on the Museum, and the impact that the refurbished Museum would have on the town and commended the result of the work following a recent tour that the Committee attended.

Resolved: That

- a) A watching brief be maintained on the museum; and
- b) A further update be provided once the concerns containing legal implications had been resolved.

82. Duration of the Meeting

6.30pm to 8.45pm.