

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE REGENERATION & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 26 MARCH 2013**

PRESENT: Councillor Burton (Chairman)
Councillors Beerling, Black, Butler, Cox, Cuming,
Mrs Gooch and Springett

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

It was resolved: that all items be webcast.

89. Apologies.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Newton, Paterson and Ross.

90. Notification of Substitute Members.

Cllr Derek Mortimer substituted for Cllr Paterson and Cllr Gooch substituted for Cllr Newton.

91. Notification of Visiting Members.

Cllr Ash was in attendance as a visiting member with an interest in item 8 Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development Work Programme 2013/14. Cllr English and Cllr Mrs Wilson attended as visiting members with an interest in item 9 Update Brunswick Street Car Park Call-in. Cllr Mrs Parvin attended as a visiting member with an interest in item 11 Visitor Information Centre Review.

92. Disclosures by Members and Officers.

There were no disclosures.

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

It was agreed that all items be taken in public as proposed.

94. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January, 25 February and 12 March 2013

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January and 25 February 2013 be approved as a correct record of the meetings. That subject to the clarification of the figure of 61% on page two, paragraph

one the minute of the meeting held on 12 March 2013 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

95. Amendment to order of business

It was agreed: That item 9 Update on Brunswick Street Car Park call-in would be considered first.

96. Update Brunswick Street Car Park Call-in

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Paine, Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development, Steve Goulette, Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services and Jeff Kitson, Parking Manager to the meeting.

Cllr Paine informed the Committee that the suspension of the original decision still stood and the car park remained operational. The Committee learnt that the original intention had been to declare the site surplus and release it for regeneration but since the decision was suspended the tenant in the adjacent building had vacated and subsequently the Council had lost the income from this site. The Committee agreed that the council should seek to find another tenant, if only short term, due to the loss of income.

Mr Kitson provided the Committee with a handout (Appendix A) showing the occupancy rates for Brunswick Street Car Park. Members expressed their dissatisfaction that the data was a year old. It was clarified that the data presented included availability of on street parking in the area as well as the car park. Member felt that an up to date and more detailed review of the on-street parking provision in the area was necessary.

It was explained that the Parking Strategy was being considered in conjunction with the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS). The Committee were informed that a decision on the Parking Strategy was expected in summer 2013. Cllr Paine advised the Committee that scrutiny would be consulted on the ITS and that this was expected to occur in July 2013.

Members were concerned about how any decision would impact on the local residents in the area. It was highlighted that some resident permits allow people to use council car parks overnight, it was considered that this was not widely known and that more could be done to highlight this facility to residents.

Although the Committee was positive about the possibility of regeneration on the site they agreed that the process to date was flawed and further research was required. At the suggestion of a visiting member the Committee agreed that the original decision should be revoked and the process restarted.

It was resolved:

- a) That the original decision to declare Brunswick Street Car Park surplus be revoked and the process restarted;
- b) That work be undertaken to inform residents about the resident parking conditions that allow them to use their on-street parking permit in certain council car parks overnight;
- c) That a detailed review of the on-street parking provision be undertaken in the vicinity of Brunswick Street Car Park; and
- d) That a short-term tenant is sought for the site next to the car park.

97. Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development Work Programme for 2013/14

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Greer, Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development to the meeting. Cllr Greer gave the committee an overview of his work programme for 2013/14 the main points of which were:

- The High Street Regeneration project phase one was delivered on time and on budget and phase 2 was due to begin on 29 April.
- The Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery development was progressing well and lots was being done to engage with the local community including schools and promote the use of local labour.
- Work was being undertaken with Kent County Council (KCC) on improving the area around Gala bingo and looking for investors for the Wrens Cross site.
- To date 1500 items of street clutter, such as unnecessary signs, have been removed.
- Officers had been asked to look at the master plan for Mote Park with the possibility of extra activities available in the park for residents and revitalising the café.

The Committee asked what consultation was being done with traders in the lower end of the high street, in particular in relation to traffic restrictions. It was confirmed by the Cabinet Member that the parking restrictions had been investigated the result of which includes extra loading room and that he is in conversation with the traders.

The Committee asked about the plans for Jubilee Square and was informed that he was working with Cllr John Wilson at putting together a programme of events and was looking at getting someone to drive the event forward in order to maximise the use of the space.

A member commented that the Gala bingo building was really attractive and that they would like to see work done on preserving it. Cllr Greer

responded that contact had been made with owners and there was a project looking at renewing the mural but with something that was sustainable (i.e. washable). The Committee considered the area and felt that as Water Lane was no longer used as access that this area could be an opportunity to introduce some greenery at the bottom of Gabriel's Hill.

A visiting member expressed concern that there was nothing planning the rural parts of the borough and the need to consider rural areas. The cabinet Member said he would take this onboard.

The Committee thanked Cllr Greer for his update and noted the work programme.

Resolved that: The update and future work programme be noted.

98. Employment Jobs Fair Feedback

The Committee considered the written update from Alisa Whitmarsh, Area Manager, Jobs Centre Plus. Cllr Black informed the Committee that the Mayor was attending the Jobs fair from 9:30am on 4th April and encouraged the Committee Members to attend in order to show support. The Committee agree that the work being done on worklessness and employability played an important role in boroughs economic prosperity.

The Committee requested that the appropriate Scrutiny Committee in 2013/14 receive an update on the event on the 4 April from Sarah Robson, Community Development Manager, Alisa Whitmarsh, Area manager Jobs Centre Plus and Juliet Shand from Golding Homes.

It was resolved: That the update be noted.

99. Visitor Information Centre Review

The Committee considered the draft report for the Visitor Information Centre Review. A number of small amendments were made to improve the clarity of the report.

It was resolved: That subject to the amendments and the addition of the Chairman's summary that the report be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

100. Future Work Programme 2013/14

The Performance & Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that this was their last meeting of the municipal year. The Officer informed the Committee that a response had been received in relation recommendation on the Core Strategy Update for the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development to write to his counterpart at Kent County Council to gain clarity on the figures reported in the Kent Messenger for a Leeds/Langley bypass; which would be circulated to the Committee.

The Committee noted that they had made a total of 17 recommendations in the year, of the ten for which responses had been received seven were accepted.

It was resolved: That the Committee outcomes and Officer update be noted.

Meeting Close: 20.43