

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE REGENERATION & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 31 JULY 2012**

PRESENT: Councillors Beerling, Black, Burton, Cox, Cuming,
Newton, Paterson and Springett

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

Resolved: That all items apart from those in part II of the agenda be webcast.

23. Apologies.

There were no apologies.

24. Notification of Substitute Members.

There were no substitute members.

25. Notification of Visiting Members.

Councillors Nelson-Gracie and McKay attended as Visiting Members with interest in item 10 OSC Visitor Information Centre Review Scope.

26. Disclosures by Members and Officers:

There were no disclosures.

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

Resolved: That the item on Part II of the agenda be taken in private as proposed.

28. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2012

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2012 and 23 July be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed by the Chairman.

29. Phase 2 High Street Improvement Project

The Director of Regeneration & Cultural Services, Zena Cooke and Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development, Cllr Malcolm Greer, provided an overview of the report.

Members discussed phase one of the project and the need to provide certainty to traders located in the lower end of the High Street as there had been confusion about parking and access. The Committee requested further clarification on the Traffic Regulation Order that was in place at the lower end of the High Street and recommended that all ward members be included in the consultation and decision making processes.

Members noted that the project was funded from the Capital Programme and did not impact on the medium term financial strategy.

There was a query around the durability of the proposed grass area, it was clarified that this was part of reducing the costs for the lower end of the High Street which as planned would use about a third less granite than had been used for Phase one. The Cabinet clarified that this was one of the options being considered, Members asked that the options for a grassed area was thoroughly investigated prior to any decision being made. They were pleased that the intention was to retain the trees.

There was some discussion around the underpass and crossings at the lower end of the High Street next to Barclays Bank. Members thought that the original intention of the High Street regeneration project was to create better links between the High Street and the River, they felt that this should be investigated to ensure that this objective was achieved.

Resolved that:

- a) All the High Street Ward Members are included in all meetings, consultation and decisions around phase two of the High Street regeneration project;
- b) The use of grass to create green space in the lower end of the High Street is investigated to ensure that the final result was durable and sustainable both in terms of costs and appearance;
- c) Further investigation on suitable crossing at the lower end of High Street linking the river with the rest of the Town Centre is undertaken; and
- d) It is clarified to Members the details and issues around the Traffic Regulation Order currently in place at the lower end of the High Street.

30. Infrastructure Delivery Plan Update

Following an overview of the report from the Head of Planning and in response to questions on funding it was explained to Members that there was going to be a gap in funding the Infrastructure Delivery Plan which was why it was important to prioritise what infrastructure was absolutely necessary informed by a viability study. Members queried if Integrated Transport block funding was still available and were informed that KCC Highways control the block funding for the whole of Kent, potentially funding was available however; the primary funding was identified

through section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy or perhaps a highways agreement.

Resolved: That the update on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan be noted.

31. OSC Visitor Information Centre Review Scope

The Committee discussed the scoping document for the review of the Visitor Information Centre. Members looked at the primary objective of the review and considered that a small amendment to widen the focus of the review rather than solely looking at the economics would allow more options to be considered and agreed to add the wording 'and/or beneficial' to the primary review objective.

The Committee reviewed the scoping document and requested that the witness list be amended to include the team responsible for Maidstone's websites to explain the rationale behind Maidstone's three websites to promote events and tourism in Maidstone. A Member also suggested that Carl Madjity from Medway Council be invited as a witness as an expert in Tourism and events promotion in Medway.

It was suggested that survey of visitors to the Town Centre to find out if they know where the visitor information centre was as part of the evidence gathering for the review.

A Member highlighted that there had been a position paper from the Chief Executive which it would be useful for the Committee to have site of. The Committee agree that this should form part of the 'information needed' section of the scope.

Resolved that:

- a) The primary objective be amended to read 'To establish is there is an economically viable *and/or beneficial* scenario to return the visitor information centre or part of the visitor information centre to the town hall;
- b) The witness list be amended to include the Web Master and Medway Council;
- c) A survey is undertaken with members of the public asking if they know where the VIC; and
- d) The position paper from the Chief Executive, Alison Broom be circulated to the review panel as part of the information needed part of the scoping document.

32. Future Work Programme

The Committee discussed the future work programme.

Members considered the forward plan of Key Decisions and agreed to add the reports on Empty Homes and Gypsy & Traveller Sites to the meeting scheduled for 25 September.

The Committee noted that there was an Employment and Skills Fair taking place in the town hall on 14 September 2012.

Resolved: That the future work programme be amended to include Empty Homes and Gypsy and Traveller Sites in September.

33. Duration of the meeting

18:30 to 19:58