

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 4 JUNE 2013

PRESENT: Councillors Black, Butler, Mrs Gooch (Chairman),
Hotson, D Mortimer, Nelson-Gracie, Pickett,
Mrs Wilson and Yates

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

It was resolved that all items be web-cast.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs Grigg.

3. Notification of Substitute Members.

Councillor Mrs Wilson substituted for Councillor Mrs Grigg.

4. Notification of Visiting Members.

Councillor Garland and Councillor Moss attended as Visiting Members, present as witnesses for item 8 on the agenda, Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services - Priorities for the Municipal Year 2013-14.

5. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

It was resolved that:

- a) Councillor Fay Gooch be appointed as Chairman for the municipal year 2013-14; and
- b) Councillor Susan Grigg be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2013-14.

6. Disclosures by Members and Officers.

There were no disclosures.

7. 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.

8. Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services - Priorities for the Municipal Year 2013-14

Councillor Moss, Cabinet Member for Corporate Service informed the Committee on his priorities for the year which included the following areas:

- ICT – The Digital Inclusion Group, a project involving residents to promote the use of Council services online and using the telephone;
- The availability of fast Broadband;
- Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP) Governance arrangements; and
- Commissioning and Procurement as a shared service.

In response to Members questions on the Government target of 80 % for online applications for Universal Credit, Councillor Moss informed the Committee that Maidstone was not yet achieving this target.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Chris Garland informed the Committee that his 3 main priorities were:

- The Local Plan and communication of relating strategic issues;
- Finance – Revenue and Capital savings; and
- MKIP.

The importance of producing a Local Plan was emphasised to the Committee by the Leader. He told Members that if a Local Plan was not in place housing numbers would be determined by the National Planning Policy Framework, resulting in a development charter for Maidstone.

Members were informed that communication with residents was the key to the Local Plan.

With regards to Finance, the Committee was informed that the savings target was set at £1.8 million for 2014/15, £1 million of that sum had been identified so far.

The Leader told Members that a wider debate was needed on Capital funding. Councillor Garland highlighted the New Homes Bonus and Community Infrastructure Levy and informed the Committee that the Council had potentially £14 m to allocate to key projects. He explained that it was his view that a significant amount of this potential sum should be allocated to the delivery of the Integrated Transport Strategy.

The Committee volunteered its services to run an all Member workshop, involving all Councillors, to examine Revenue Savings and Capital Projects proposals.

The Leader described MKIP as being politically resilient and embedded in the culture of Maidstone Borough Council. He informed the Committee that the MKIP governance model would be a strategic decision taken by

Cabinet in the early autumn. Members were keen for scrutiny to be involved in the development of the MKIP governance model and felt that there would be a benefit in working with the Scrutiny Committees at the authorities that formed MKIP: Tunbridge Wells, Swale and Ashford.

It was recommended that:

- a) The following Cabinet Member priorities be noted as work programme suggestions to be discussed under Item 9, Work Programming, 2013-14:
 - MKIP Governance Model;
 - The communication of the Local Plan; and
 - An all Members Workshop on Revenue Savings and Capital Projects proposals.

- b) The Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee arrange an all Member workshop to examine Revenue Savings and Capital Projects proposals.

9. Work Programming 2013-14

Prior to the meeting the Committee had visited a Council department 'marketplace' and spoken to officers from Council departments relevant to its remit about important areas of work to be undertaken over the coming year.

The Committee considered all the suggestions put forward and selected the following topics for its 2013/14 Work Programme:

- Parish Services: a joint meeting later in the year with the Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and scrutiny Committee;
- The Communication and Engagement Strategy;
- The future use of Maidstone House;
- The Council's finances; saving and capital projects at the July meeting and should include a member workshop; and
- MKIP Governance Model – joining up with other relevant scrutiny Committees for a meeting in August.

It was agreed that scrutiny of the communication of the Local Plan should be undertaken by the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Digital Inclusion should be considered by the Co-ordinating Committee as the topic cut across more than one Committee's terms of reference.

Members also made the following request for information:

That a list of all individual departments, relevant to the Committee should be provided to Members of the Committee

It was recommended that:

- a) The following topics be included in the Committee's work Programme for 2013-14:
 - o Parish Services: a joint meeting later in the year with the Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and scrutiny Committee;
 - o The Communication and Engagement Strategy ;
 - o The future use of Maidstone House;
 - o The Council's finances; saving and capital projects at the July meeting and should include a member workshop; and
 - o MKIP Governance Model – joining up with other relevant scrutiny Committees for a meeting in August.

- b) The Communication of the Local Plan be forwarded to the Planning, Transport and Development Committee as a work programme topic;

- c) The Digital Inclusion be considered by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee to decide which Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be best placed to examine the topic; and

- d) The Scrutiny Officer fulfil the following information request for the Committee and circulate in due course:

A list of all individual departments, relevant to the Committee should be provided to Members of the Committee.

10. Duration of meeting.

7.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.