

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7 APRIL 2015**

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Gooch (Chairman), and  
Councillors Black, Butler, English, Mrs Gooch, Pickett  
and Mrs Stockell

132. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEBCAST

**RESOLVED:** That all items on the agenda be webcast.

133. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ash, Mrs Grigg and Long.

134. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

Councillor English for Councillor Mrs Grigg

135. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

There were no Visiting Members.

136. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

137. EXEMPT ITEMS

**RESOLVED:** That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

138. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2015

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Meeting held on 23 February 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed.

139. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 MARCH 2015

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Meeting held on 3 March 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed.

140. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Roger Adley, Communications Manager, and Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy and Communications, introduced the draft Communications and Engagement Strategy and explained that it supported the Strategic Plan and had been based upon best practice in consultation with the Audit Commission.

Members noted that the intranet would be refreshed and that Mrs Woodhouse would bring a report on new approaches to the relevant Committee after the elections. The Committee expressed its support and encouragement of this proposal.

Discussion included several suggested amendments to the document such as:

- More reference to be made to elected Members as channels of communication with the public.
- The Borough Update to be referred to consistently as such throughout.
- Greater emphasis given to the timeliness of communications.

With specific regard to the Objective to improve communication with Councillors the following suggestions were made:

- Councillor and Staff names to be visible around Council premises in a Who's Who format to aid two-way communication;
- Expand the use of Core Briefing emails to provide Ward Members with advance notice of issues and events;
- Regularly refreshed lists of Heads of Service and Managers contact details to be circulated to all Members on a quarterly basis; and
- It be noted that the proposed review and improvement of the intranet facility was strongly supported and encouraged by the Committee due to its importance as a method of communication for both Councillors and Staff.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Committee recommends that the Communication and Engagement Strategy for 2015-20 be approved by Cabinet subject to the following amendments:
  - a. More reference to be made to elected Members as channels of communication with the public.

- b. The Borough Update to be referred to consistently as such throughout.
  - c. Greater emphasis given to the timeliness of communications.
2. That the 2015-16 Action Plan Objective to improve communication with Councillors be noted and the following suggestions made:
- a. Councillor and Staff names to be visible around Council premises in a Who's Who format to aid two-way communication;
  - b. Ward Members to receive advance notice of issues or events through Core Briefing emails;
  - c. Regularly refreshed lists of Heads of Service and Managers contact details to be circulated to all Members on a quarterly basis; and
  - d. It be noted that the proposed review and improvement of the intranet facility was supported and encouraged by the Committee due to its being considered an important method of communication for both Councillors and Staff.

141. END OF YEAR SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (SCRAIP) UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered whether there were any issues that they wished to be carried forward by the relevant Committee under the new governance structure.

The following matters were recommended for continuation under Policy and Resources Committee:

- The Budget Working Group to facilitate debate and to include monitoring of the Capital Programme, Budget Strategy and Council Tax Support Scheme.
- Representation on the Joint MKIP Scrutiny arrangements with Swale and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils, including representation on the Joint MKIP Task and Finish Group taking forward the concerns raised by Members on the Planning Support Shared Service as resolved at the meeting of the Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services OSC held with Swale and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils on 23 February 2015.

It was confirmed that that policy and strategy documents that the Committee received throughout the year would automatically transfer to the relevant service Committee. It was also noted that the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee, when sitting as the Crime and Disorder Panel, would retain scrutiny functions and the Councillor call for action.

The Chairman thanked the members of their Committee and the Officers who had contributed to the meetings for their work over the year, and the Members thanked the Chairman.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the End of Year SCRAIP Update Report be noted, and that the following matters be recommended for continuation by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services or the relevant new Committee with responsibility for strategic leadership and corporate services in their terms of reference from the new 2015 municipal year:
  - a. The Budget Working Group to facilitate debate and include monitoring of the Capital Programme, Budget Strategy and Council Tax Support Scheme.
  - b. Representation on the Joint MKIP Task and Finish Group to take forward the concerns raised by Members as resolved at the meeting of the Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services OSC held with Swale Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on 23 February 2015.

142. DURATION OF MEETING

6.31 p.m. to 7.47 p.m.