

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 21 JUNE 2016

Present: Councillor Mrs Ring (Chairman), and Councillors M Burton, Joy, D Mortimer, Perry, Mrs Robertson, Webb and Webster

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

8. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

9. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman stated, in her opinion, the Urgent Update received for the Part II item - Item 17 regarding the acquisition of property, should be taken as an Urgent Update as it contained information that would inform the Committee's decision on this item.

10. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting members.

11. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

12. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

13. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED:

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

14. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 APRIL 2016

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

15. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MAY 2016

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

16. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

17. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY)

There were no questions from members of the public.

18. COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2016-17

The Committee noted the Committee Work Programme and noted that it would be updated for the meeting on 19 July 2016.

19. ORAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC REALM - ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE UPDATES

The Chairman explained the performance updates on the agenda had been requested so the Committee could be informed of the performance relating to this Committee's terms of reference prior to performance reports being presented to the Policy and Resources Committee.

John Edwards, Street Scene Operations Manager and Liz Hazell, Environmental Improvement Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the performance of their departments.

Mr Edwards explained that Keep Britain Tidy was commissioned to undertake three street cleansing surveys across the borough in line with the Defra Ni195 guidelines. Performance had fallen slightly showing that 5% of the streets in the borough had below the accepted standard for litter. However, when compared against national and South East benchmarks the borough had performed better, with the exception of fly-posting.

When looking at land types, litter in industry and warehousing areas showed the worst performance. This was being addressed through changes to the cleansing schedule, provision of bins and enforcement. Detritus on rural roads and other highways showed lowest performance. This was expected due to the nature of the environment and country paths that would not be swept. Graffiti on 'other highways' showed the lowest performance. When looked at in detail were found to be on rail land and footpaths between roads and estate, usually in private ownership.

Fly tipping incidences went up by 31 incidents last year compared to the previous year. Most of which was black sacks in urbanised areas. Teams were to trying to identify reason for this. Close monitoring of the tips and waste stations will be carried out to establish if there were any changes in performance in the first quarter of 2016.

Elizabeth Hazell, Environment Improvement Manager briefed the Committee on the waste and recycling performance. She confirmed performance finished last year at a recycling rate of 47.97% which was lower than the previous year of 49.11%. However, the tonnage of recycling collected for 2015 was much higher than 2014 with the exception of a three month period when it was slightly lower. Figures for April 2016 were available showing the general trend was upwards.

Overall composting rates were lower and recycling rates were higher showing an overall increase through collecting more tonnage of recycling material and an increase in food and garden waste.

Waste arisings for 2014 and 2015 showed similar patterns in performance and was the lowest for the last three years.

A contamination rate target of 8% and below, which was introduced this year and work was underway to meet this.

New Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act powers have enabled enforcement officers to tackle waste and noise issues resulting in a higher compliance rate. Fly tipping figures from April 2016 show five fixed penalty notices have been issued and three prosecutions have been achieved. It was noted that cases of fly tipping had to be proven beyond all reasonable doubt in order to prosecute.

The Committee noted the updates on Environment performance and agreed written reports would be provided for future performance updates.

20. ORAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PERFORMANCE UPDATES

The Head of Housing and Community Services confirmed that the Low Emissions Strategy Workshop had been scheduled for 18 July 2016. Members were asked to contact Tracy Beatie to book their place.

The Head of Housing and Community Services explained written performance reports would be provided the Committee at future meetings.

He went on to provide an update on the performance of the Environmental Health Team. He reported that the team sends an annual report to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) each year showing the number of inspections carried out. The Team are given a target by the FSA each year and they had completed 99% of that target for 2015. Further performance reported was as follows:

- 933 inspections were carried out;
- There were a number of prosecutions for failure to comply with the correct standards;
- Health and Safety – 159 accidents were reported to through the Health and Safety Executive with 18 deemed to be serious – one was going through the prosecution process;
- 24 complaints had been received from members of the public regarding health and safety issues;
- 662 planning applications were given advice on air pollution etc.

The Committee heard that the new Contaminated Land Strategy was introduced and quarterly reports would come to the Committee once work gets underway.

21. ORAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - HOUSING REGISTER AND ALLOCATIONS PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Head of Housing and Community Services provided the Committee with an update.

He informed the Committee that just over 600 housing applicants were on the housing register, a significant reduction for the same time in 2015, when there were 1400. There had been a small decrease over the last few months due to the annual review of applicants who wanted to remain on the registers.

Lettings figures for the first few months of the new financial year showed 103 households had been housed from the housing register.

Regarding the Banding system for housing applicants, the two highest bands; those who made a community contribution; and, those with a general housing need, had, overall, remained static for the past four years.

There had been an increase in people showing an interest in Shared Ownership products. These were managed through a home buy agent and the increase was probably due to Government schemes promoting starter homes.

The Committee had been concerned about the back log of applications on the housing register. The Head of Housing and Communities reported the following changes in these areas since March 2015:

Outstanding Housing application reviews	- reduced from 73 to 51
Outstanding Medicals	- reduced from 55 to 18
Outstanding Hardship cases	- reduced from 58 to 29

The Committee noted the oral update and thanked the team for their work in reducing the figures.

22. ORAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

The head of Communities and Housing introduced the item and provided a brief background to what lead to the homelessness pressure group being invited to attend the meeting and address the Committee.

Jane Darling, Maureen Cleator and Dan Wilkinson addressed the Committee and explained they were working on organising a conference to bring together mixed groups of professional disciplines to come up with solutions to homelessness with homeless people at the centre.

They gave an overview of their visit to Manchester where a similar event was held and a Homelessness Charter developed.

In order to organise and hold the conference, the Committee heard, pledges would be needed but not just monetary pledges. Other pledges could be facilities to hold the event, expertise etc.

The Committee also heard about the work of the Make a Difference in Maidstone group.

The Committee agreed that the Head of Housing and Communities and his team would assist where they could with the organisation and delivery of the conference and would continue to meet with the group. It was agreed that an update report would be provided to the Committee at their meeting in September.

23. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified having applied the Public Interest Test:

Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description

Report of the Director of Planning and Development – Property Acquisition	Para 3 – Info re financial/business affairs
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24. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES - PROPERTY ACQUISITION

The Committee considered the Part II report seeking approval for the freehold acquisition of property in Maidstone.

Concerns were raised regarding the indefinite wording of the report, in particular to paragraphs 2.2 and 2.8. A request was made for the words “where possible” in paragraph 2.2 to be removed, and the word “some”

removed from paragraph 2.8 and the words "could be" in paragraph 2.8 replaced with "will be". It was requested that the concerns be clearly minuted so that the follow up report from the Head of Housing and Communities could make clear the schemes provision for parking and open space.

RESOLVED

1. That upon the conclusion of the negotiations with the owners, seeking approval for the purchase of the sites on terms agreed by the Head of Finance and Resources, a follow up report be presented to the Committee.

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions - 0

2. That delegated authority to conclude negotiations with the owners of the property in question be granted to the Head of Finance and Resources.

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

25. DURATION OF MEETING

6:30pm to 8:15pm