

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY
24 MARCH 2009**

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Blackmore (Chairman)
Councillors Yates, Butler, Chittenden, Daley, Field,
Gooch, Hinder and Verrall

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence was received from Councillors

108. Web-Casting

Resolved: That all items on the agenda be web-cast

109. Notification of Substitute Members.

There were no substitute Members.

110. Notification of Visiting Members.

There were no visiting Members.

111. Disclosures by Members and Officers:

There were none.

112. Exempt Items

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

113. Minutes

A Councillor requested that Minute N^o 97 be amended as follows:

- The word 'to' be deleted from the first bullet point of the second paragraph; and
- The word '*Parkwood*' be amended to 'Park Wood'.

The Committee agreed to these amendments.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2009 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman subject to Minute N^o 97 being amended to read 'Park Wood' and the word 'to' being deleted from the second paragraph.

114. Litter Enforcement

The Chairman welcomed Mr Goulette, the Assistant Director of Environmental Services and Mr Jeynes, the Environmental Enforcement's Pollution Team's Operations Officer to the meeting. Following a brief

introduction from the witnesses regarding litter enforcement, the Committee discussed the following topics:

- The newly formed Environmental Crime Group which offered a strategic approach to all environmental crimes, including litter enforcement. GIS mapping was used to identify environmental crime cluster sites in order that resources were targeted and outcomes monitored. The Group were also producing an events diary to manage resources and this would include actions in rural areas. The Committee agreed to receive an update in 6 months including information with regard to the success of the joint co-ordination of environmental crime issues and the number of offences in rural areas and urban areas;
- Two Environmental Crime Wardens had been in post since January 2009. A relatively low number of 16 enforcement notices had been issued in 2008/09 as a result of the vacant posts and the labour intensive changes to guidance by DEFRA in issuing notices. The Environmental Crime Wardens were deployed to undertake a series of enforcement actions including targeted foot patrols, multi agency stop and searches and enforcement events;
- Smoke free legislation has seen Businesses assisting the Council in identifying drivers who had dropped cigarette butts from their company vehicles as they were also smoking in vehicles designated non-smoking. Councillors were encouraged to inform Environmental Enforcement Officers of vehicle registrations if they witnessed cigarette littering from commercial vehicles;
- ENCAMS national surveys had identified that the most common age group to litter was the 18-24 year old age group. The Council had therefore undertaken targeted campaigns during the evenings as well as the day. As a result of the recent fast-food litter campaign the before and after monitoring showed a 57% reduction;
- Secondary schools had indicated a willingness to allow a road show to educate students in their lunch breaks with regard to environmental crimes. Members voiced their support of this.
- Members highlighted the importance of monitoring the area surrounding the Youth Café for litter and encouraging peer pressure to prevent littering;
- Clean Kent had purchased a chewing gum removal machine that would be shared between four local authorities including Maidstone Borough Council. The new machine could be used on block paved areas unlike the Council's existing machines, which would continue to be used in the other areas;
- The relationship with businesses in Maidstone was improving with regard to litter and waste containers. Initiatives were being explored to promote best practice including business awards and business sponsorship of local areas for litter picking;
- The durability of plastic bins was questioned. Members highlighted that vandals had been able to destroy the plastic bins as both the bin and its contents were destroyed when ignited. Metal bins cost from £300 to £400 each, however it was agreed that it was not financially viable to keep replacing burnt out plastic bins. Members agreed that the purchase of plastic bins should cease and an alternative cost effective metal bin be explored;

- A review of the success of the recycling bins on the high street was planned. Members agreed that pending the outcome of the review, recycling bins be installed in other locations across the Borough, including Mote Park;
- Members noted that litter offenders were from a variety of age groups and agreed that Officers should attend and utilise a stall at local village events to educate and update residents with regard to litter.

The Chairman thanked the witnesses for an informative presentation.

The Web cast from this session is available at <http://clients.westminster-digital.co.uk/maidstone/archive.aspx> (00.03.22 to 01.23.10).

Resolved: That

- a) An update on litter enforcement be received in September 2009;
- b) Road shows with regard to environmental crime at secondary schools be undertaken;
- c) The area surrounding the Youth Café be monitored for litter and peer pressure be advocated and supported to prevent littering if necessary;
- d) The purchase of plastic bins cease and a cost effective metal bin be explored;
- e) Recycling bins be installed as appropriate across the Borough, including Mote Park, pending the outcome of the recycling bin review; and
- f) Officers attend local village events to educate and update residents with regard to litter.

The meeting was adjourned from 7.53pm to 7.57pm.

115. Air Quality Action Plan Update

The Committee welcomed Mr Goulette, the Assistant Director of Environmental Services, Mr Wilcock, the Pollution Team Leader and Mr Newington, the Senior Pollution Officer to their meeting. Following a brief introduction from the witnesses outlining the progress and outstanding actions with regard to air quality management, the Committee discussed the following:

- Funding bids to Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) had been successful and the Council had received £3,600 for Traffic Assessment, £6,145 for further assessment work and £7,700 for health impact assessments;
- The Air Quality Management Area had been declared to Defra in August 2008 and the further assessment work had to be undertaken within one year of this declaration;

- The Further Assessment work would be completed by August 2009 and the Action Plan would be completed by April 2010. An updated screening assessment that would identify any new areas of exceedances was also due to be completed by April 2010;
- Delays in producing the Air Quality Action Plan had arisen as a result of awaiting the recently announced Defra guidance. Other Local Authority's Action Plans had been similarly delayed. The guidance had placed more emphasis on measurable and quantifiable results in the Action Plan;
- Air Quality was continually monitored in the Borough and results were available on the air quality network online. Members requested that this web address be circulated to all Councillors. Sulphur dioxide was being monitored at a Detling site to determine whether this pollutant was coming from outside the Borough. They were not aware of places in the Borough that would emit high sulphur dioxide pollutants;
- The bus station had not shown to be an area of air quality exceedance however the Council was continuing to discuss air quality with the bus operators. Members noted the Park and Ride fleet bus emissions met a top European Standard and queried the emissions of the service buses intended to be used as part of the Park and Ride Service;
- The importance of partnership working in improving air quality. This highlighted that the Air Quality Transport Steering Group had been formulated to develop and monitor the Action Plan. The Group included the Cabinet Member for Environment, consultants, Kent County Council Transport Officers and internal departments such as Planning Policy and Sustainable Communities;
- The ambition to produce a Supplementary Planning Document to feed into the Local Development Framework on pollution issues. Members expressed their full support of this initiative;
- The benefits of the variable speed limit on the M20 junctions 5-7 achieved by controlling traffic movement included reduced congestion and subsequently improved air quality. It was anticipated that the limit would be enforceable in September 2009. The Committee agreed that Officers should continue to lobby the Highways Agency to ensure the order is put in place by this date;
- Improvements to congestion in the town centre had been achieved through the Urban Management Control System;
- The Committee reiterated their previous request for the draft Air Quality Action Plan to be presented to the Committee prior to the plan being approved by Cabinet.

The Chairman thanked the witnesses for an informative presentation.

The Web cast from this session is available at <http://clients.westminster-digital.co.uk/maidstone/archive.aspx> (01.27.25 to 02.21.05).

Resolved: That

- a) The draft Air Quality Action Plan be considered by the Committee prior to its approval by Cabinet;
- b) The Air Quality Network web address be circulated to all Councillors;
- c) The Highways Agency be lobbied to ensure the variable speed limit order is put in place by September 2009;

- d) Officers ensure that a Supplementary Planning Document with regard to pollution issues is produced in time to feed into the Local Development Framework; and
- e) Information with regard to what European Standard the Service Buses used for Park and Ride Service meet be circulated to the Committee.

116. Future Work Programme and Actions Taken Since Last Meeting.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that the Cabinet Members for Environment and Leisure and Culture would be in attendance at its next meeting to discuss their progress over the municipal year 2008-09. The Committee was also informed that the Director of Change and Environmental Services would also be in attendance to discuss the Best Value Review of the Waste Service and how the Committee could be involved.

Resolved: That the future work programme be noted.

117. Duration of Meeting

6.30pm to 8.55pm.