

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2009**

PRESENT: Councillor Sherreard (Chairman), English, Beerling, FitzGerald, Nelson-Gracie, Paine, Ross, Thick and Mrs Wilson

APOLOGIES: Councillor Batt

120. The Committee To Consider Whether All Items On The Agenda Should Be Web-Cast.

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

121. Notification Of Substitute Members.

It was noted that Councillor F Wilson was substituting for Councillor Batt.

122. Notification Of Visiting Members.

It was noted that Councillor Parr was a visiting Member and wished to speak on Agenda Item 7, 'Call-In: Current and Future Position of Park and Ride'. It was also noted that Councillor Greer was a visiting Member with an interest in all items on the Agenda.

123. Disclosures By Members And Officers:

There were no disclosures.

124. Exempt Items.

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

125. Call-In: Current And Future Position Of Park And Ride:

The Chairman invited Councillors Robertson and Mortimer to explain their reasons for calling in the decision of the Cabinet with regard to the Current and Future Position of Park and Ride.

Councillors Robertson and Mortimer acknowledged the requirement to increase charges to make savings, but expressed their concern that the Park and Ride strategy was being formulated as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF). Councillor Robertson noted that other Local Authorities with LDFs had successfully implemented Park and Ride Strategies, independent from, but fully integrated with their LDFs,

including Canterbury City Council and the metropolitan boroughs in South Yorkshire. Councillors Robertson and Mortimer highlighted that the report concluded that Park and Ride was one of the few tools available to the Council in addressing congestion and that it had been predicted that the town centre would be grid locked by 2011. However they felt that as the LDF would not be adopted until after 2011, the production and implementation of the Park and Ride strategy would not be executed until after the town centre was grid locked. Members felt that an interim strategy was therefore required to address issues in the period prior to the LDF's implementation, including safeguarding sites and addressing congestion.

The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council, Councillor Chris Garland and the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Mark Wooding, to respond to the reasons given for the call-in. Councillor Garland agreed that a strategic, holistic Park and Ride plan was required to provide strategically placed Park and Ride sites and a financially sustainable service. However, he felt that this would be achieved through developing a strategy as part of the LDF. Mr Morgan advised the Committee that the LDF needed to consider all means of reducing congestion in the town centre, noting that the Borough had been identified to potentially accommodate 11,080 homes in the draft South East Plan. He also highlighted that there had been difficulties with the size and location of Park and Ride sites; as well as their funding. He advised the Committee that these difficulties could be addressed by producing a Park and Ride strategy through the LDF. The Park and Ride strategy, as part of the LDF, would therefore bring together and address land use, spatial planning as well as identifying how the sites could be funded. Mr Morgan also advised the Committee that since Park and Ride Sites would be located outside of the urban boundary of the town; potential sites would be protected from development by countryside policies in the interim period prior to adoption. The Committee recommended that an interim Park and Ride strategy be produced to ensure important sites were safe-guarded and that this should be dovetailed with the Local Area Agreement targets and the Local Development Framework.

The Committee noted the difficulties in locating new satisfactory Park and Ride Sites and felt that the Bluebell Hill site presented a unique opportunity. Councillor Wooding advised the Committee that Kent County Council's preliminary feasibility investigation of the A229 Park and Ride site had estimated a cost of £2-3 million and it had therefore been rejected as an option. Councillor Robertson believed that the quote was excessive and that alternative cheaper solutions were available and provided a sketch of a possible solution. The Committee agreed that Cabinet should request clarification of the costings of Kent County Council's proposal and requested that alternative solutions to the egress and exit of the Park and Ride site be considered, including Councillor Robertson's proposal. Members also requested that a detailed map of the A229 Park and Ride site be circulated to Committee Members. A number of Members felt the competitive price of the land at Bluebell Hill should not be overlooked; highlighting that alternative uses to a park and ride site for the land were available. The Committee agreed that the Cabinet

should therefore re-consider purchasing the Bluebell Hill site to prevent a lost opportunity.

Members noted the importance of comparative costs of Park and Ride tickets to the cost of parking in the town centre. Councillor Wooding advised the Committee that Park and Ride ticket prices had not been reviewed since June 2006 and that with the current financial situation changes were required to avoid providing continued financial support. Consultation with 12 weekly and annual season ticket holders had been undertaken, which revealed that customers felt Park and Ride charges represented good value for money. He also highlighted that the previous Cabinet had committed to achieving savings of £61,000 in this service and that the new price structure would achieve this, despite a fall in income from reduced usage and the impact of concessionary fares re-charging. The Committee agreed that the Local Government Association should be lobbied with regard to the impact of including Park and Ride tickets as part of the concessionary fare's scheme. In response to a question with regard to paying to park, Members were advised that this could be explored further. Members recommended that paying to park be considered as part of the future provision of Park and Ride in light of the impact of concessionary fares. It was also recommended that the Council be proactive in its consultation with Government on congestion matters.

The Committee were advised that a number of studies were being undertaken with regard to transport, congestion and park and ride. The Committee requested that Mr Morgan produce a statement on these, to explain the logic and rationale behind the studies for all Members.

The Committee considered the Park and Ride publicity and suggested that the Borough Update be used as a means of advertising the Park and Ride Service to residents.

Resolved: That

- a) The Cabinet clarify the costings of Kent County Council's preliminary feasibility investigation of the A229 Park and Ride site;
- b) The Cabinet consider alternative access and egress plans for the Bluebell Hill Park and Ride Site including the proposal from Councillor Robertson;
- c) An interim Park and Ride strategy be produced to ensure important sites are safe-guarded and that it dovetails with the Local Area Agreement targets and the Local Development Framework;
- d) The Cabinet consider purchasing the Bluebell Hill site to prevent a lost opportunity; and as alternative uses are available;
- e) The Council lobby the LGA with regard to the relationship between park and ride and concessionary fares;

- f) The Council be proactive in its consultation with Government on congestion matters;
- g) The Committee welcomes the fact that the Cabinet is interested in schemes such as pay to park and recommends that this is considered as part of the future provision of Park and Ride;
- h) The Borough Update be used as a means of advertising the Park and Ride Service;
- i) The Assistant Director of Development and Community Services produce a statement on the various studies being undertaken with regard to transport, congestion and park and ride, and that this is circulated to all Councillors; and
- j) A detailed map of the A229 Park and Ride site be circulated to Committee Members.

126. Future Work Programme And Actions Taken Since Last Meeting

The Committee considered its future work programme and discussed the scope of the Economic Development Review. The Committee noted the importance of the Economic Development Review but felt that the required scope would be compromised by the time demands of the three in-depth reviews already being undertaken. Members agreed that they did not have the required capacity to dedicate to such an important review and it was therefore agreed to include the review as part of its 2009/10 work programme.

The Committee agreed it was important to dedicate time to consider each of the upcoming Committee draft review reports. It was therefore resolved to dedicate its February meeting to the 'Enforcement of Planning Conditions and Compliance with Section 106 Agreements Review' draft report and its March meeting to the 'Road Safety Review' draft report.

Resolved: That

- a) The Economic Development Review be included in the Regeneration and Sustainable Communities work programme in 2009/10;
- b) The 'Enforcement of Planning Conditions and Compliance with Section 106 Agreements Review' draft report be considered at its meeting on 10 February 2009; and
- c) The 'Road Safety Review' draft report be considered at its meeting on 10 March 2009.

127. Duration Of The Meeting

6:30 p.m. to 8.10 p.m.