

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER 2020

Present: Councillors Brice, M Burton, Chappell-Tay, Clark, Cox (Chairman), English, Mrs Gooch, Harvey, McKay, Mortimer, Perry, Powell, Round, Springett and de Wiggondene-Sheppard

Also Present: Councillors J and T Sams

88. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Newton.

89. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Councillor Powell was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Newton.

90. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were two urgent items that had been published within the amended agendas; Item 12 – Committee Work Programme and Item 16a – Appendix 2 – Proposed Design Scheme. These were not available at the time of agenda publication.

91. **CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Item 17 – EU Transition would be taken before Item 16 – King Street Car Park, to ensure that all public proceedings would have taken place prior to the Committee entering private session, if necessary, to discuss Item 18 – Exempt Appendix 2, King Street Car Park, Financial Summary.

92. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillors J and T Sams were present as Visiting Members for Item 15 – Council-Led Garden Community Update.

93. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

94. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

All Members had been lobbied on Item 15 – Council-Led Garden Community Update.

Councillors Chappell-Tay, Cox and de Wiggondene-Sheppard had been lobbied on Item 13 – Medium Term financial Strategy – Update.

Councillors Brice, Cox, Chappell-Tay, English and McKay had been lobbied on Item 14 – Fees & Charges 2021/22.

Councillors M Burton, Chappell-Tay and Cox had been lobbied on Item 16 – King Street Car Park.

Councillors Chappell-Tay, Cox and de Wiggondene-Sheppard had been lobbied on Item 17 – EU Transition.

95. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed unless any Member of the committee indicated a wish to refer to Item 18 – Exempt Appendix 2, King Street Car Park, Financial Summary.

96. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2020

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2020 be agreed as a correct and signed at a later date.

97. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

98. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

99. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

100. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement requested that a report on Granada House be presented to the Committee in January 2021.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

101. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY - UPDATE

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced the report which provided an update following the presentation of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy at the previous meeting of the Committee. The Local Government Finance Settlement had not yet been released, but a note would be circulated to all Councillors following its announcement.

The Chancellor's spending review and the impacts for the Council were highlighted; financial support for the losses suffered from Covid-19 by

local authorities would be extended into the next year and the cost of borrowing would be reduced by 1% for investment that did not focus solely on generating income.

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement confirmed that the settlement figures would not close the Council's budget gap. The approach remained one of using the New Homes Bonus to bridge the budget gap, alongside the development of savings proposals. Detailed savings proposals would be presented to the Council's service committees in January 2021.

It was noted that all Councillors would have the opportunity to attend briefings on the details of the Chancellor's spending review, the local government finance settlement and draft savings proposals prior to Christmas.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

102. FEES & CHARGES 2021-22

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced the report and noted that the Fees & Charges were reviewed annually, in accordance with the Charging Policy as set out in Appendix 2 to the report. The Council's other Service Committees had reviewed and agreed the fees and charges relevant to their service area, except the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee which had requested further information on the cemetery and crematorium charges. Where appropriate, the charges had been frozen.

In relation to the Committee, the main increase in fees and charges arose from legal fees that had been increased by inflation.

The publicising of the Town Hall as a venue was questioned, with the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirming that the commercial strategy for the building was currently under review and highlighted the importance of the building for Council use given the reduced space available within Maidstone House.

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement confirmed that the landlord accreditation fees applied to houses in multiple occupation. The Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed that research had been undertaken prior to the proposed increase for garden waste collection fees, with the Council remaining cheaper when compared to other Kent authorities. Further information on fly-tipping and the payment methods available within car parks would be provided by email.

RESOLVED: That

1. The proposed discretionary fees and charges, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed;

2. The expected statutory fees and charges, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted; and
3. The overall changes in fees and charges, attached within Appendices 3-5 of the report, be noted.

Note: Councillor Brice requested that her dissent with the third resolution be recorded.

103. COUNCIL-LED GARDEN COMMUNITY UPDATE

Mr Steve Heeley addressed the Committee on behalf of the Save Our Heathlands Action Group.

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced the report and highlighted that as Land Promoter, the Council should submit representations to the current Regulation 18 preferred approaches document public consultation and sustainability appraisal, in which the proposal was included. Further work would be conducted with the Local Planning Authority, Kent County Council, in submitting a third stage submission. This had to occur in the last quarter of the financial year.

The collaboration agreement proposed would include the actions to be undertaken by the Council over the next five years; policy and design code formation and the submission of planning applications, with continued promotion of the scheme through the Local Plan Review. The £3 million allocated for the scheme would then be shared with Homes England. The agreement would outline how the Council and Homes England would work on the delivery phase of the project, with the options outlined in the report having been examined by the Corporate Leadership Team.

Several Members of the Committee did not feel that enough information had been provided on the proposal's finances, nature of the collaboration agreement with Homes England and wastewater and mineral treatment sites. Concerns over the lack of a motorway junction within the proposal was reiterated. The Director of Regeneration and Place highlighted that the £3 million allocated for the proposal had been previously agreed by the Committee, with further restricted financial information provided for the July 2020 meeting of the Committee. The Council's input into the design and place-making of the proposal over the next five years was reiterated, in response to concerns over the Council's control of the proposal. The status and experience of Homes England was highlighted.

The Local Plan Review timeline would not be impacted by the Committee receiving a report on a proposed collaboration agreement, prior to its agreement.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Council continue to pursue a collaboration agreement with Homes England for the purposes set out in the report, and for this

agreement to reflect Option 2B; the Council to co-fund the circa £3m (Council share circa £1.5m) required to continue to promote Heathlands through the Local Plan Review, secure planning consent and the land options with the principal landowners and landowners north of the railway line (Land Option(s)) but limit financial exposure to this phase, and recover this investment through a 'Share of Planning Uplift' over the duration of the circa 25-year delivery phase, with any profits realised to be reinvested within the new community itself, be agreed;

2. The collaboration agreement provide both officer and Member input both in the pre and post delivery phases, with those Members of the Committee;
3. The Director of Regeneration and Place be given delegated authority to submit representations to the Regulation 18 consultation of the Local Plan Review in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee; and
4. The Director of Regeneration and Place be given delegated authority to make a third stage submission on the Heathlands proposal by the end of the financial year to the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Note: Councillor Brice exited the meeting during the item's consideration.

104. EU TRANSITION

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced the report and highlighted the traffic management plans and site locations shown within Appendix 1 to the report. The management plans would have been drafted irrespective of a trade deal between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

The Council and Kent Resilience Forum had been engaging to ensure an integrated approach and response to traffic management and the Covid-19 pandemic. A significant level of uncertainty remained, however the preparations undertaken were positively referenced.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

105. KING STREET CARPARK

The Housing Development Officer introduced the report, with the development proposed to compromise of 16 residential units with either one or two bedrooms, of which six would be provided at social rent. Four parking spaces would be lost, due to the under-croft parking made available through the scheme's design.

Modern methods of construction were proposed to minimise disruption during construction, through the LHC framework that would be produced

off-site and reduce the amount of parking bays to be temporarily closed. 33 parking bays would be closed for approximately 13 weeks, followed by the facility's full closure for a further three weeks.

ZPODS had been chosen as the preferred contractor following a procurement exercise. It was noted that the homes had been designed to have low energy and carbon usage and low running costs. Solar panels would be fitted on the units.

In response to questions, the Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that residents would be able to park their vehicles for free outside of the car parks operating hours. A contingency budget of between 10-15% had been set aside for the delivery of the scheme.

RESOLVED: That

1. The part redevelopment of the King Street Car Park, as per the new proposed design scheme shown in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed and that the indicative financial returns shown at Exempt Appendix 2 to the report, be noted;
2. The Director of Finance and Business Improvement be granted delegated authority to appoint and enter into a Joint Contracts Tribunal (JCT) pre-contract services agreement (PCSA) with the preferred contractor ZPODS for the stage 1 (pre-consultation phase) works to King Street Car Park;
3. The Director of Finance and Business Improvement be granted delegated authority to enter into a JCT design and build works contract with the preferred contractor ZPODS for the stage 2 (construction phase) works to King Street Car Park, subject to satisfactory performance, a viable scheme and planning consent being achieved in Stage 1;
4. The Director of Finance and Business Improvement be granted delegated authority to grant such lease(s) of the property as necessary on terms to be agreed and authorise the completion of such lease(s) and all ancillary deeds and agreements and the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be authorised to complete the necessary legal formalities for such lease(s) in due course;
5. The Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be authorised to instruct and appoint the solicitors required and to complete the necessary contract documentation and agreements associated with the works and consultancy provided for King Street Car Park, on the terms as agreed by the Director of Finance and Business Improvement; and
6. The relevant Ward Members be involved with the development and delivery of this project in relation to the local community.

106. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.42 p.m.