MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2020

Present: **Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Chappell-Tay, Mrs Gooch (Chair), Hastie, Joy, Lewins, Perry, Purle and Webb**

93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

94. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

95. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

96. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

97. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

98. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Chappell-Tay, Mrs Gooch, Hastie, Lewins, Perry and Purle stated that they had been lobbied on Item 14 – Member Agenda Item Request from Cllr Jonathan Purle – Review of Arrangements Empowering Planning Officers to Defer or Overturn Planning Refusals by Elected Members.

99. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

100. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2020

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed.

101. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

102. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

103. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN (IF ANY)

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

104. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

105. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

106. MEMBER AGENDA ITEM REQUEST FROM CLLR JONATHAN PURLE - REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS EMPOWERING PLANNING OFFICERS TO DEFER OR OVERTURN PLANNING REFUSALS BY ELECTED MEMBERS

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager introduced the item noting that as per the Council's Constitution, a Member may submit an item for consideration by the Committee.

Councillor Purle introduced his agenda item request and noted that he was a Member of the Policy and Resources Committee. Research had been conducted as to the prevalence of arrangements similar to those outlined in Rule 30.3, Part 3.1 of the Council's Constitution, in other Kent Authorities.

Several members of the Committee expressed concerns that the training requirements as outlined in the Constitution were too onerous and requested that planning training requirements be included in the officer report produced.

Councillor Hastie seconded the motion as put forward by Councillor Purle, that an officer report be requested.

RESOLVED: That the Committee request an officer report on the item, with the Member planning training requirements as outlined in the Constitution to be included.

107. EXTENSION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT PERSON

The Head of Legal Partnership introduced the report and outlined the legal requirement for an Independent Person to consider Code of Conduct complaints. The term of office needed to be extended from 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021, as the position had not been advertised due to the disruption caused by the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The Head of Legal Partnership explained that the role would then be advertised in January 2021, with any applications received to be reviewed

by this Committee. It was confirmed that the payment for this appointment was £750, which fell within the existing approved budget. A reserve position would also be advertised.

RESOLVED: That

1. Full Council be recommended that the term for the current Independent Person be extended for one year from 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021; and

2. The role of the Independent Person and a reserve position be advertised.

108. MEMBER TRAINING 2020-21, DISCUSSION PAPER

The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance introduced the report and noted that there had been a significant number of activities undertaken over the last year concerning planning, governance and new member training, amongst other topics. It was confirmed that training sessions would be recorded when possible and placed in an area that Members can all access. A short survey to discern Members preferred learning strategies was proposed.

In response to questions, the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance confirmed that the planning training necessary for the Policy and Resources Committee could be recorded and shared with members. It was agreed that discussions would take place between the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance and Councillors Chappell-Tay and Purle regarding member learning styles within the proposed Member survey.

RESOLVED: That the Member Learning and Development Update be noted and the proposed approach to the programme for 2020-21 be agreed.

109. OUTSIDE BODIES - CURRENT STATUS

The Democratic and Electoral Services Managed introduced the report as an update on the administration of Outside Bodies.

It was noted that the Democratic Services team were experiencing as increased workload, in part due to staff shortage and the requirements of remote meetings.

The Committee expressed thanks to the Democratic Services Team for their hard work.

RESOLVED: That the low operational priority currently being given to Outside Bodies administration and the update on Outside Body vacancies be noted.

110. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.25 p.m.