

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 13 January 2010

**CLOSE CIRCUIT CONTROL CENTRE AND MULTI-AGENCY
COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT**

Issue for Decision

To agree the location of the CCTV control room and the location of the new multi-agency Community Safety Unit (CSU).

Decision Made

1. That officers be instructed to proceed with option 2 for CCTV as set out in the report of the Assistant Director of Customer Services and Partnerships;
2. That £50,000 of the proposed saving be invested in five additional mobile cameras to increase the effectiveness of the service in addressing anti-social behaviour hotspots within the borough; and
3. That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive to finalise the location of the new Community Safety Unit, subject to consultation with staff and key partners.

Reasons for Decision

Following the Best Value Review of CCTV in 2007 a recommendation was made that the CCTV control room remain at the Town Hall, subject to completing works to address health and safety issues. In March 2009, the council reviewed this decision and decided that the control room should be moved to the 6th floor Maidstone House and located with a new multi-agency Community Safety Unit (CSU).

Due to the current external financial landscape and the council's ambitious capital programme, the Leader and Cabinet asked officers to review the council's capital programme in order to identify potential savings. Part of this process has included revisiting the decision to relocate the CCTV control room.

Considerations

Mindful of the council's stated objective in its Corporate Improvement Plan to "make more cost-effective use of the CCTV system" and current external economic conditions and pressures on the council's budgets, the

suitability of the existing location in the Town Hall was reviewed, paying particular attention to initial health and safety concerns and to the implications for the new multi-agency Community Safety Unit (CSU). Changes to the working environment and a new survey on air handling have enabled the proposal for the CCTV control room to remain at the Town Hall to be made.

The previous proposal (option 1), to relocate the CCTV control room in Maidstone House, was allocated a capital budget of £620k. The alternative option (option 2), of retaining the CCTV control room at the Town Hall, upgrade elements of the technology and improve the working environment requires capital funding of £222k. The saving to the capital programme will be £398k, excluding the creation of the new CSU.

Alongside the proposal listed as "option 2", to retain CCTV at the Town Hall, it is proposed that an investment of £50k is made in five additional mobile cameras. Whilst the level of crime and anti social behaviour is reducing within the borough, the additional cameras would significantly increase the capacity of the service to deploy mobile units to crime and ASB "hot spots", to increase public confidence, act as a deterrent and support the identification and prosecution of offenders.

The proposal to retain the CCTV control room at the Town Hall and invest in five new mobile cameras will result in a saving of £348k to the capital programme, excluding the cost of the new CSU.

Health and Safety – The Town Hall Control Room

One of the key issues in considering relocating CCTV from the Town Hall was health and safety, however, since the Best Value review in 2007 a number of steps have been taken to address these issues which have reduced the risk score accordingly. Improvements already implemented include a new fire alarm system, improved egress through better signage and replacement of the matrix and cabling. This work has been completed at a cost of £72,000. As part of the council's ongoing commitment to the health and safety of staff a new evacuation chair is currently being installed along with fire suppressant technology in the equipment racks. A survey was undertaken in December 2009 to identify the works required to improve the air handling within the environment, which has confirmed that the works are achievable.

Included as an appendix to the report of the Assistant Director of Customer Services and Partnerships is the Risk Assessment carried out by the council's Health and Safety Officer in November 2008 and more recently in December 2009. These demonstrate that the risk score has fallen from 40 to 30. This would categorise the risk as "low" and bring the facility in line with other accepted corporate risk assessments.

Additional use of Mobile CCTV

There are currently 116 fixed cameras deployed in Maidstone; the majority of which are in the town centre. A frequent concern that has been raised is about the flexibility and responsiveness of the CCTV coverage. It is the intention to increase this flexibility by purchasing five

Stryker 'Polecat' mobile cameras that can be readily deployed in hot-spot areas where there is a concern about levels of anti social behaviour (ASB) (there are currently two 'Polecat' cameras available for deployment by Community Safety Unit staff and they have been found to be highly effective in gathering evidence and also acting as a deterrent for ASB affected locations).

In advance of deploying the new cameras an audit of existing cameras (fixed and mobile) will be undertaken and matched against reported incidents of ASB to ensure that the additional cameras are deployed in the areas of greatest need and achieve the maximum benefit in reducing crime and ASB.

Multi-agency Community Safety Unit (CSU)

The new CSU is still to be located on the 6th floor in Maidstone House. The capital cost of creating the multi-agency is £73k. Mid Kent Police have committed £65k as their contribution to the creation of the unit, with £20k of the total required for ICT. The net capital cost to the council is £28k.

A number of options have been considered with regards to the size and positioning of the new unit. The new unit will accommodate sixteen fixed desks and have full access to the council's existing facilities.

Although it has previously been reported that locating the CCTV control room with the proposed CSU would provide additional operational benefits, these points have been reviewed and, after further discussion with partners, it is not now considered to be the case. CCTV is only one aspect, the new CSU will have a much broader and more strategic role. The current location of the control room in the Town Hall allows easier access to the control room by town centre police. This may be seeking to view tapes of incidents or taking part in operational activity controlled from the control room. This central location is considered to be most convenient, providing 24 hour access for a range of partners, including the police. Daily briefings are currently held in the control room.

In keeping with the ethos of partnership working, a multi-agency CSU should seek not to duplicate the work of partners but to add collective value. A useful definition of the scope of the CSU is provided by the National Community Safety Network "preventing, reducing or containing the social, environmental and intimidatory factors which affect people's right to live without fear of crime and which impact upon their quality of life. It includes preventative measures that contribute to crime reduction and tackle anti-social behaviour".

It is anticipated that the new CSU will be operational by the end of February 2010 and as part of the process the Cabinet Member and the Maidstone CDRP will receive a more detailed report that sets out the confirmed membership, philosophy, terms of reference, service plan and key objectives.

Through initial discussion the council has received expressions of interest from KCC Community Wardens, programmes running for Youth Intervention & Support, Family Intervention and Parenting Intervention

and a confirmed commitment from Mid Kent Police. Negotiations are continuing with other partners.

A reference from the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee, following their meeting on 13 January 2010, was considered by the Cabinet. The reference raised concern regarding the installation of a fire suppression system in the CCTV cabinets in the control room as the control room was a confined space with limited oxygen available.

It was noted by the Cabinet that the Assistant Director of Customer Services and Partnerships had written to the Councillor who raised the concern outlining the details of the fire suppression system and confirming that it is safe to be used in occupied areas.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

These are included above.

Background Papers

Report from the Best Value Review undertaken in November 2007 and report to Cabinet Member in February 2009 seeking approval for the earlier scheme

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 13 January 2010

BUDGETARY PROVISION FOR KENT INTERNATIONAL GATEWAY

Issue for Decision

To consider the budgetary provision for costs associated with the consideration of the proposed Kent International Gateway and subsequent planning inquiry.

Decision Made

1. That provision be made for the additional costs by means of allocation of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (£526k), re-profiling of the financial provision for the Local Development Framework enabling £304k to be applied for KIG in 2009/10 and use of balances (£470k).
2. That options for the replenishment of balances be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and reported to Cabinet as part of the standard cycle of budgetary and financial monitoring reports.

Reasons for Decision

On 16th December 2009 the Cabinet received a report from the Corporate Management Team setting out the budget strategy for 2010/11 onwards. This flagged up the current budgetary pressure concerning Kent International Gateway.

The initial provision was £400,000 made from balances. However, given the depth of research necessary to enable proper consideration of the planning application and the subsequent planning appeal, the cost of the project has exceeded this provision.

In August 2009 the Cabinet noted that the cost of the project would exceed this provision and that uncommitted Housing and Planning Delivery Grant received up to 2008 would be allocated to cover additional costs for the short term. The current forecast for this contribution is £186k. The Cabinet also agreed, in principle, to the use of balances already set aside for the production of the Local Development Framework ("LDF"). This decision recognised the fact that work completed for one project could be of benefit to the needs of the other.

On 16th December 2009 the Cabinet was advised that, as the public enquiry was near completion, a forecast of final costs suggested a total net expenditure of £1.7 million compared to current revenue budgets of £0.5 million and a contribution from the LDF. An analysis of the projected use of balances for the development of the Local Development Framework ("LDF") demonstrates that of the original £1M provision £884k remained available at 1st April 2009; the forecast spend for 2009/10 is £227k and the need for 2010/11 is £353k leaving a balance of £304k potentially available to support the cost of the public enquiry. This is not enough to fully cover the KIG costs and would require new provision for the LDF to be built into future years including 2011/12 when there is a major cost associated with the examination in public for the LDF. Taking into account reallocation of LDF resources – there would on current estimates be a shortfall of £810k. There are further possible courses of action:

- a) Use uncommitted balances to support the public enquiry costs;
- b) The use of available Housing and Planning Development Grant ("HPDG") funds notified in December 2009; the provisional allocation is £584k

The budget report included a growth item of £200,000 for the LDF for 2011/12 and 2012/13, to enable alternative options to be considered; a commitment was made that Cabinet would receive a further report on the possible use of uncommitted revenue balances and other available resources in January 2010.

Housing and Planning Delivery Grant; in December 2008 the Cabinet member for Regeneration made decisions concerning the allocation of HPDG which anticipated that grant would continue to be received in 2010/11. The impact was a commitment of £145k through various staffing arrangements (£37k) and support for expert advice (£20k), LDF (£36k), training (£15k) and IT systems (£29k) and licenses (£8k). £5k was carried forward from previous years' allocations and hence the initial call on any new allocation was £140k. The new provisional allocation, notified in December 2009, is £584k.

The overall aim of HPDG is to incentivise local authorities to improve delivery of housing and other planning outcomes including the LDF. The principles that have been applied in prioritising how HPDG is spent in previous years are

- Improvement of the council's development management and housing and planning policy services
- Co-ordination with other sources of funding including growth point
- Investment to improve the quality and efficiency of customer interaction/care relating to the planning service
- Sustainable investment for future service delivery improvements
- Investment to secure HPDG reward grant in future years where this is practicable
- No long term commitments beyond the period when HPDG will be available

It is suggested that these principles remain valid for allocation of the most recent HPDG provisional allocation. Nevertheless it would be appropriate to review the anticipated initial allocation for 2010/11 as 12 months have elapsed since this planning was undertaken. Details of the historical allocations and the proposed amended allocation are set out in Appendix A of the report of the Director of Prosperity and Regeneration. This would commit £250k from HPDG to housing and planning services for 2010/11 leaving a balance of £340k from the 2009 HPDG allocation available for KIG. In brief, the factors underlying the recommended allocation of HPDG are as follows: -

- Continued support for planning enforcement but at a reduced level; the support is required due to the increased number of enforcement appeals now resulting from both tackling the backlog and a more proactive approach to enforcement action; funding would cover a planning enforcement officer and legal costs.
- Enabling production of the LDF through continuation of fixed term contracts for the conservation and design officer and one planning support officer plus provision for consultancy to support production of a transport strategy.
- Experience of the demands for DC assessment of planning proposals and the expectations created through the regeneration strategy creates a need for expert advice for example with respect to highways, ecology and financial viability; hence it is recommended that provision is made at a level of £20k as originally envisaged
- Provision for the housing home track license
- Provision to support improvement and extension of the IT systems across housing and planning to achieve efficiency (work carried out over the last 12 months has enabled administrative costs to be reduced as reflected in the medium term budget proposals for 2010/11)

If the recommendations for the use of HPDG are accepted then the balance of funding required for KIG is £470k. The remaining options would be to cease spending on other council services or fund the gap from balances.

The report to Cabinet in December on the budget indicated significant revenue budget pressures and the associated assumptions and commitments in terms of management action. The conclusion was that not all pressures could be contained and that there would be a potential demand on balances of £250k. Given this position it is unlikely that any resources could be released to cover the cost of KIG in the period before the end of the financial year.

Uncommitted balances are currently projected at £3.1M; the Council has previously taken a decision that balances should not drop below £2.3M ie there is currently headroom of £800k. The option of using balances to accommodate the pressures both of the general revenue position (£250k) and KIG (£470k) is viable.

However, if this option is pursued then it would be prudent to identify actions which would result in at least a partial replenishment of balances.

It is therefore recommended that this is built into the medium term financial strategy and reported as part of the cyclical budget reports.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

It is imperative that financial provision is made to cover the costs associated with the Kent International Gateway activity. Alternatives include ceasing or reducing other services to achieve an under spend in these areas. The stage in the financial year, the evaluation needed to inform decision making and the relatively short period before the end of the year means that this is unlikely to yield significant sums.

Background Papers

None

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Decision Made: 13 January 2010

INTERNAL AUDIT PARTNERSHIP

Issue for Decision

To consider the final Business Case for the creation of a four-way Internal Audit Partnership between Maidstone, Ashford, Swale and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Decision Made

That Maidstone Borough Council form an Internal Audit Partnership with Ashford, Swale and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council in accordance with the aims and structures that are set out in the Business Case, which appears as an exempt appendix to the report of the Head of Internal Audit & Risk Strategy, be agreed, subject to:

- a) All four partner authorities agreeing to form an Internal Audit Partnership.
- b) Final agreement on any remaining financial issues being delegated to the Director of Change and Environmental Services in consultation with the Director of Resources and Partnerships.

Reasons for Decision

At an early meeting of the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership in 2008, it was identified that Internal Audit would be an appropriate service to be provided in partnership across the four MKIP authorities.

A report was provided to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services on 27 March 2009 seeking approval to move to the next stage in creating a four-way partnership. The proposal had previously been discussed at a meeting of the Audit Committee on 16 February 2009.

The decision of the Cabinet Member was that:

- i) An Internal Audit Partnership with Ashford Borough Council, Swale Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, subject to the proposals on Risk Management being in place before the partnership commences and that the [Audit] committee receive a report on this matter, be agreed.
- ii) The structure for the service, as set out in Appendix B to the Report of Management Team be agreed.
- iii) A provisional level of 36 audits per year for Maidstone equating to a total of 540 'chargeable' days audit work per annum be agreed.

- iv) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Change and Environmental Services to put in place arrangements to cease the current Audit arrangements between Ashford Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council and to progress the Audit Partnership.
- v) A report be presented to Cabinet in May 2009, after all of the boroughs have considered the proposals.

Actions taken since March 2009

The arrangements have taken considerably longer to progress than was envisaged in March. This has been largely because of the need to take all aspects of the partnership arrangements through the decision making process of the four partner authorities and to adhere to four separate sets of policies for dealing with personnel.

As part of the decision making process, further financial analysis was required by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. An interim business case was therefore prepared and reported to the Tunbridge Wells Cabinet on 23 June 2009. The interim business case contained a more detailed assessment of costs and also made comparisons with the private sector. The private sector comparisons clearly demonstrated that the in-house approach would not only be less expensive but also had a number of other benefits over the out-sourced option. Tunbridge Wells was therefore able to agree to move forward following the June meeting.

As all four authorities had confirmed their intention to proceed in principle, it was possible to appoint the Head of Internal Audit Partnership (in designate). The post was subject to interview on the 2 September 2009, which resulted in the appointment of Brian Parsons, the current Head of the Internal Audit Partnership for Maidstone and Ashford.

The Head of Internal Audit Partnership's first priority was to complete an updated Business Case, which would include a staffing structure and job descriptions for each of the new posts.

The draft Business Case was completed by the end of September and provided to all audit staff in the four authorities as part of the formal consultation process.

The individual job descriptions were worked up to become Job Evaluation Questionnaires, which allowed each post to be evaluated and a salary to be established. The results of the job evaluation have been made available to staff.

The staffing structure has the effect of deleting one operational auditor post with subsequent savings as set out in the Business Case. This means that the efficiencies for Maidstone will predominantly occur from the commencement of the partnership. However, this creates a potential redundancy scenario whereby, should the current Principal Auditor not be successful in her application for the post of Audit Manager in the new structure, there will be four audit staff seeking appointment for only three

jobs. The potential impact of a redundancy is shown on the final page of the exempt appendix – the Business Case.

The Business Case was considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 30 November 2009. The Committee endorsed the creation of the four-way partnership having been satisfied that proper arrangements will be put into place for Risk Management.

Although the Business Case is comprehensive and sufficient to allow a decision by the Cabinet to commit to the Audit Partnership, a number of issues remain unresolved at this point in time. The actual redundancy costs will not become clear until staff are appointed to the various posts. Furthermore, discussions are continuing at the MKIP Board level about how the costs of any potential redundancies at the other authorities will be met and in particular, whether those costs will be funded by the savings that will arise from the creation of the partnership. In order to be able to progress to a point where the interviews can take place, it is recommended that the Cabinet agree to enter the partnership but delegate any final decision based on final costs to the Director of Change and Environmental Services. A delegation has already been agreed at Ashford and at Tunbridge Wells. A similar approach at Swale may be delayed pending further 'due diligence' work on the impact of the Business Case, which includes a service review by the external auditors.

Any costs arising from the setting up of the partnership will be met on an 'invest to save' basis from the future savings as set out in the Business Case.

If any of the four partner Councils decide not to proceed with the partnership, the Business Case set out in the current document will need to be re-evaluated. Therefore, a decision by Cabinet to form the partnership is subject to all four partner authorities agreeing to proceed.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

In the course of the lengthy process that preceded the report of the Head of Internal Audit & Risk Strategy, all other options have been considered, including the potential for outsourcing the service. It is considered that the proposals contained within the exempt appendix to the report of the Head of Internal Audit & Risk Strategy provide the best option moving forward.

Background Papers

Report 'Mid Kent Internal Audit Partnership', Audit Committee 16 February 2009 and minutes of meeting

Report 'Mid Kent Internal Audit Partnership', to Cabinet Member for Corporate Services 27 March 2009 and record of decision.

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