

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Councillors Garten, Joy, D Mortimer (Chairman),
Newton, Perry, Purle, Mrs Robertson, Rose and Webb

Also Present: Councillor McKay

87. **AMENDMENT TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS**

RESOLVED: That Item 13. Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019/20 - 2023/24 was to be discussed before Item 12. Agenda Item Request - Graffiti and Overgrown Trees in St Peter Street.

88. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Powell and Councillor M Burton.

89. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

The following Substitute Members were present:

- Councillor Perry for Councillor M Burton
- Councillor Newton for Councillor Powell

90. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

91. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillor McKay was present as a Visiting Member and indicated his intention to speak on Item. 14 Maidstone Housing Delivery Partnership Proposals.

92. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

Councillor Purle said that, with regard to Item 12. Agenda Item Request - Graffiti and Overgrown Trees in St Peter Street, he lived on the street, but intended to speak and vote when the item was considered as it was not a disclosable interest.

93. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

94. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION.

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

95. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

96. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

97. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY)

There were no questions from members of the public.

98. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

99. DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2019/20 - 2023/24

Ms Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance, informed the Committee that the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019/20 - 2023/24 was presented for consideration and comment. Ms Dunnet explained that as there was financial uncertainty for the period of 2020 onwards, three scenarios had been modelled to reflect neutral, adverse and favourable revenue projections. It was stated that the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy was to be developed alongside the New Strategic Plan, to ensure consistency.

The Committee commented that the Draft Strategy was well balanced considering the financial uncertainties that were being faced. Consideration was given to the commercialisation of services such as Grounds Maintenance, as well as the promotion of economic development through the acquisition of land and commercial property to generate rental income.

Officers agreed to provide further information on the Grounds Maintenance Service to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the feedback and suggestions provided by the Committee be noted and shared with Officers.

Voting: Unanimous

100. AGENDA ITEM REQUEST - GRAFFITI AND OVERGROWN TREES IN ST PETER STREET

Councillor Purle introduced his report.

The Committee recognised that the issue of graffiti impacted areas across the borough, and therefore a wider piece of work to target large landowners with graffiti problems was required.

Mr William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place, stated that Network Rail had been approached since the matter was raised, and that further work would be undertaken ahead of a report being discussed at the Committee.

RESOLVED: That an Officer report be submitted to the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee outlining options to resolve the issues of graffiti and other nuisances in the St Peter Street & Buckland Hill area and identify and pursue other action for areas in the borough.

Voting: Unanimous

101. MAIDSTONE HOUSING DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS

Mr Cornall informed the Committee that entering a Housing Delivery Partnership would mean a return to building affordable housing. This would represent a reversal of the Council decision in 2004, which transferred the Council's affordable housing stock to Golding Homes. Mr Cornall explained that the Council no longer held a Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which was required to hold and fund housing. The HRA could be reopened, but it would have no borrowing capacity as it held no assets or income. A specialist legal firm were therefore appointed to advise on the mechanisms that could achieve a return to building affordable housing. The Local Plan sought to create 883 new houses each year, of which 332 were affordable homes. Over the last seven years, 64% of the affordable housing target had been achieved.

Councillor McKay spoke as a Visiting Member.

The Committee commented that:

- It was crucial to select an appropriate Registered Provider partner, to ensure that those living in affordable housing received the right level of front-line services.
- There was a need to ensure that any new houses were built in an appropriate area, at the right level of quality, quantity and dispersion to avoid any stigma regarding affordable housing.
- Consultation with Parish Councils was crucial, and that dialogue with each Parish individually would be beneficial.

- Consideration needed to be given to those currently living in affordable housing owned by Housing Associations, to ensure that they were not disadvantaged.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Cornall stated that this was the first step to return to building affordable housing, and that it would require commitment from both Members and Officers to deliver. While governance would be complex, and there were significant financial considerations, the proposal would ensure that Maidstone Borough Council held a position of both enabler and provider in the affordable housing market. Furthermore a full procurement process would be undertaken when selecting a partner.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) An Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance be produced.
- 2) The Policy and Resources Committee are recommended to agree the funding of £7.5m per annum over a five year period for the Maidstone Housing Delivery Partnership Proposal.
- 3) Subject to funding approval of £7.5m per annum over a five year period by the Policy and Resources Committee, the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee agrees that:
 - a) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee, to secure co-investment between the Council and Registered Provider of £15m pa total over a 5 year period.
 - b) Co-investment between the Council and a Registered Provider be targeted at achieving a 50% market share of the S106 affordable housing market in Maidstone.
 - c) A programme of engagement with Parish Councils be commenced, to gauge the appetite for bringing forward rural exception sites for affordable housing, on a Parish by Parish basis.
 - d) Further consideration be given to choosing an appropriate Registered Provider partner.

Voting: For – 8 Against – 1 Abstentions – 0

102. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.12 p.m.