

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2018

Present: Councillors D Burton (Chairman), Clark, Cox, Field, Garten, Mrs Grigg, Munford, Perry and de Wiggondene-Sheppard

Also Present: Councillor B Hinder

115. AMENDMENT TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED: That Item 18. Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Call for Evidence was to be discussed before Item 13. Statement of Community Involvement 2018 - Summary of the Consultation.

116. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Parfitt-Reid.

117. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Perry was substituting for Councillor Parfitt-Reid.

118. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had agreed to take urgent updates to the following items:

- Item 14. Loose Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Response (Regulation 16). The reason for urgency was that the update provided information to the Committee regarding its role in respect of the submission of the consultation response, and adjusted the report recommendations accordingly.
- Item 15. Lower Thames Crossing Formal Consultation Response. The reason for urgency was that the report extract provided additional clarity regarding traffic modelling, which was received after the deadline for publication.

119. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor B Hinder was present as a Visiting Member, and indicated his intention to speak on Item 15. Lower Thames Crossing Formal Consultation Response.

120. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

121. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

All Councillors stated that they had been lobbied on Item 13. Statement of Community Involvement 2018 - Summary of the Consultation.

Councillor Grigg stated that she had been lobbied on Item 14. Loose Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Response (Regulation 16).

122. 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.

123. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 NOVEMBER 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

124. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

125. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

126. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Mr Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development, addressed the Committee regarding the Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP) business cases. Mr Jarman stated that the Director of Regeneration & Place at Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) had contacted the Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste at Kent County Council (KCC) requesting an update. The status of the business cases had not yet been communicated. Regular liaison meetings between MBC and KCC were scheduled to take place, and updates were to be provided to the Committee following these meetings.

Mr Mark Egerton, Strategic Planning Manager, informed the Committee that the business case submission deadline had been revised to February 2019 by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).

The Committee requested that an update on the MITP was added to the Committee Work Programme and stated that it would be beneficial for the business cases to be shared with MBC.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

127. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED: That the Reports of Outside Bodies be noted.

128. REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARKS AND AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY- CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Mrs Deanne Cunningham, Team Leader (Heritage, Landscape and Design), outlined that the Kent Downs Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) had agreed a strategic response to the 2018 Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The proposed representation by MBC endorsed the JAC response. The representation included additional wording regarding the extension of AONBs and boundary reviews. This reflected the aspirations of the Council regarding the Greensand Ridge AONB and the designation of an additional tier of statutory protection for other areas in the Borough.

The Committee commented that the MBC representation appropriately addressed the Council's specific needs regarding the Greensand Ridge.

Mrs Cunningham explained that liaison with neighbouring authorities was to be commenced following the submission of the representation on 18 December 2018.

RESOLVED: That

1. The JAC's approach to the 2018 Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) be endorsed.
2. The proposed response to the Review be approved.

Voting: Unanimous

129. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT 2018 - SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION

Mr Stuart Watson, Planning Officer (Strategic Planning), informed the Committee that the Statement of Community Involvement 2018 (SCI) did not require adoption by Full Council. The report recommendation was therefore amended to:

That the Statement of Community Involvement 2018 be adopted.

Mr Watson stated that the report summarised the consultation process and the responses received. Copies of the SCI had been made available in libraries, at the Maidstone Link and online. In total, there had been 20

representations made. The SCI was expected to make a positive contribution towards community engagement, as it detailed consultation approaches for planning matters.

Following questions from the Committee, Mr Mark Egerton, Strategic Planning Manager, stated that engagement with relevant groups had taken place to facilitate the consultation process. The response rate was in accordance with expectations.

The Committee commented that:

- The events in Lenham and Yalding were examples of Officers effectively consulting with residents.
- The organisation of an event in Maidstone for future consultations would be beneficial, as the transport links would encourage participation.
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), particularly regarding consent to share personal information as part of development management, enforcement and consultation responses, were a key consideration of all future consultations.
- It was important that the requirement to publish personal information did not act as a deterrent to those wishing to respond to a consultation.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Statement of Community Involvement 2018 be adopted.

Voting: Unanimous

2. A report clarifying the policy for publishing respondent's personal details as part of consultation processes, and in particular planning matters, be submitted to the Committee.

Voting: For – 5 Against – 4 Abstentions – 0

130. LOOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN CONSULTATION RESPONSE (REGULATION 16)

Mr Egerton informed the Committee that Loose Parish was designated as a Neighbourhood Area in 2013 under the Neighbourhood Planning Act. Loose was consulting on the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan. Mr Egerton stated that Loose had afforded Officers the opportunity to comment informally on the plan and had responded positively to the suggestions that had been made.

The Committee congratulated Loose on the successful work on the Neighbourhood Plan, and commented that it was positive to see MBC supporting this process effectively.

The Committee commented that land ownership issues were not within the remit of the Committee and that this aspect should therefore be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee. There was a need to ensure that a response was submitted before the deadline of 14 December 2018.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Loose Neighbourhood Plan be supported and an appropriate response be made by the Head of Planning and Development.

Voting: Unanimous

2. A reference be made to the Policy and Resources Committee on 5 December 2018 regarding the Council's response to the Loose Neighbourhood Plan Consultation, with respect to land ownership issues.

Voting: For – 8 Against – 0 Abstentions – 1

131. LOWER THAMES CROSSING FORMAL CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Mrs Tay Arnold, Planning Projects and Delivery Manager, informed the Committee that the deadline for submitting responses to the Lower Thames Crossing 'Pre-Application' Public Consultation was 20 December 2018. The pertinent issues for MBC were the forecasted increase in traffic on roads such as the A229, A249, and M2 and subsequent air quality issues. The urgent update provided additional information on traffic modelling, which supported the proposed response.

Councillor Grigg left the meeting at 7.48 p.m.

In response to questions from the Committee, Officers stated that:

- The implementation of the crossing generally led to a relatively small increase in road traffic in Maidstone, and therefore no direct funding to address associated traffic capacity was available from this scheme.
- There was an opportunity to work with Highways England to identify opportunities for funding to address existing road traffic capacity issues and the cumulative impact of the crossing.
- Traffic modelling was not currently undertaken by MBC. Consultancies were instead used to conduct this work. This was a similar approach to other authorities such as KCC.
- Ensuring Officers could interpret traffic models was more important than the in-house production of models. Therefore, no Officer capacity was assigned for modelling.

The Committee commented that there was already significant pressure on roads in Maidstone. With the opening of a new crossing, Highways England should consider diversifying traffic from the Dover port and Folkestone railhead. Ferry traffic from Dover could be redirected along Jubilee Way, which would require an extension to the A2 in Dover and surrounding Districts.

RESOLVED: That the responses set out in paragraphs 1.28 to 1.33 be agreed as the Council's response to the Highways England 'pre application' consultation on the Lower Thames Crossing, subject to the following amendment to page 68:

"At a local level, improvements to the A229, particularly the interchange with the M2 (Junction 3) are imperative. Consideration of routes further down to Dover is required to enhance the free flow of traffic."

Voting: Unanimous

132. AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT 2017/18

Mr Watson addressed the Committee, stating that the Council must publish information at least annually to demonstrate progress with Local Plan preparation, report any activity relating to the duty to cooperate and show the how the implementation of policies within the Local Plan had progressed. The report demonstrated that the Council had continued to make good progress.

Mr Watson stated that there were two minor amendments to the report.

Paragraph 1.18 was amended to:

The five-year housing supply at 1 April 2018 demonstrates a surplus of 1,557 dwellings which represents 6.5 years' worth of housing land supply.

Paragraph 1.23 was amended to:

Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 there has been an increase of 2,142sqm in net sales area of comparison and convenience retail floorspace from completed permissions. However, consented permissions result in a loss of 6,878sqm net sales.

RESOLVED: That the Authority Monitoring Report 2017/18 be approved for publication on the Council's website.

Voting: Unanimous

133. TECHNICAL CONSULTATION ON NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Mrs Sarah Lee, Principal Planning Officer (Strategic Planning), introduced the report. Mrs Lee stated that the proposal to introduce a new standard methodology for calculating local housing need figures created uncertainty at a key point in the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan Review. The proposed response reasserted that the current standard method was beneficial as it provided certainty. Furthermore, the percentage cap, which limited the increase in figures was helpful, however, this cap could be lower.

Mr Jarman outlined to the Committee that numerous factors would influence the success of new housing delivery in Maidstone. These factors included differentiating the type of available housing, the emphasis on good quality design and ensuring that infrastructure was built alongside housing rather than at a later date.

The Committee recognised that a long-term view needed to be taken on potential development sites. Although smaller sites were quicker to deliver, it was important that these sites were not exhausted to achieve targets in the short term. Instead, a combination of smaller and larger sites should be used to ensure that a sustainable approach was taken.

RESOLVED: That the responses set out in Appendix 1 be agreed as this Council's response to the technical consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance.

Voting: Unanimous

134. DURATION OF MEETING

6.31 p.m. to 8.26 p.m.