

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13
FEBRUARY 2019**

Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, M Burton, Cox (Chairman), English, Field, Mrs Gooch, McKay, McLoughlin, D Mortimer, Newton, Perry, Purle, Springett and Mrs Wilson

164. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies were received by Councillors Harvey, Clark and Boughton.

165. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that the following members were present as substitute members:

- Councillor Purle for Councillor Boughton
- Councillor Wilson for Councillor Clark
- Councillor English for Councillor Harvey

Councillor Perry requested that his dissatisfaction be recorded with the decision to not allow the Conservative group to provide a Substitute for Councillor Garland's seat on the Committee following Councillor Garland's resignation from the Conservative Group.

166. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

167. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting members.

168. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

169. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

170. 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.

171. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed, subject to the addition of the words 'for the benefit of residents of the Borough ' after the phrase 'to be invested within the Borough' in item 158.

172. MINUTES (PART II) OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed.

173. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

175. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme is noted.

176. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

The Committee request that a letter of thanks be sent to Derek Butler thanking him for his informative report on the work of the Rochester Bridge Trust.

RESOLVED: That the Report of Derek Butler be noted.

177. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET PROPOSALS 2019/20

Mr Mark Green, Director of Finance and Business Improvement, presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals for 2019/20 to the Committee.

Mr Green outlined that the budget proposals had been considered by each of the Service Committees, who had commented and made amendments to their budgets. The Medium Term Financial Strategy recommended 2.99% rise in Council Tax to ensure the Council's finances were secure and that key services would continue to be delivered.

The Committee discussed the budget proposals and concluded that there were a number of items that were required to be added in to the budget which could be funded through the underspend arising from the better than expected performance of the 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot. These proposals were:

- Retaining the Member Community Grant Scheme for 2019/20, as this scheme had enabled members to make a positive impact in their wards.
- The issue of public toilet provision in the Borough had long been raised by residents, and a thorough review of this issue would be prudent.
- Delaying the savings proposed for the Festivals and Events budget for a year would allow the community events supported by this budget more time to find alternative funding sources.

A further amendment was moved to the budget containing the following proposals:

- Reduce expenditure on Communications (£90k)
- Reduce MBC facilitation on Tourism, Festivals and Events (£30k)
- Redeploy Police and Crime Commissioner's Grant (£40k)
- Move to all out elections every four years (£80k)
- Review Community Partnerships and Resilience (£100k)
- Review Cultural Services Section (£130k)
- Council Tax to remain at the same level in 2019/20 as in 2018/9

However this amendment fell.

RESOLVED: That

1. The outcomes of considerations of budget proposals by Service Committees are noted.
2. The Strategic Revenue Projection set out in Appendix A is agreed.
3. The Budget Proposals set out in Appendix B are agreed, subject to the following additions:

Members Community Grant retained for 2019/20 (up to £60k)

Public Toilets Review (£10k)

Proposed saving in 2019/20 for Festival and Events deferred to 2020/21 (£10k)

4. The allocation of £50,000 from the Parking Fund for Transport Planning in 2019/20 is agreed.

5. Council is recommended to agree the revised estimates for 2018/19 and the Budget Estimates for 2019/20 set out in Appendix C.
6. Council is recommended to agree the Capital Programme set out in Appendix D.
7. Council is recommended to agree the Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Capital Strategy set out in Appendix E.
8. Council is recommended to agree a £7.56 increase in Council Tax for 2019/20.
9. The updated Medium Term Financial Strategy, set out in Appendix G, is agreed.
10. The appropriate matters for decision to set a balanced budget for 2019/20 and the necessary level of Council Tax in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Localism Act 2011 including the decisions made above are recommended to Council.

Voting: For - 10 Against - 2 Abstentions - 2

Note: Councillors English and Purle left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

178. STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-45 ACTION PLAN

Mrs Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance, updated the Committee on the progress of the Strategic Plan 2019-45 Action Plan. The Committee noted that each of the Service Committees had been given an opportunity to make comments on the Action Plan. This was the Committee's opportunity to make final amendments to the Action Plan before consideration and adoption by Council in February.

The Committee considered the Action Plan and requested the following changes:

- Amending 'don't' to 'do not' in the action 'Taking action against those who don't respect our public spaces, streets, green spaces and parks'
- Amending the word 'invest' to 'considers investing' in the action 'The Council leads on master planning and invests in new places which are well designed'
- Removal of the word 'domestic' in the action 'In 2018 the average home broadband speed was around 46.2 Mbps, up from 36.2 Mbps in 2017. We do recognise that in the rural areas there are substantial problems with domestic broadband'

- Removal of the word 'delivering' and replacing with 'enabling' in the action 'Delivering events which assist the people in increasing their pride in communities and our environment'
- Removal of the phrase 'are fit for the future' and replacing it with 'meet future needs' in the action 'Reviewing and delivering leisure and cultural services that are fit for the future'

The Committee requested that the text below the first set of bullet points on page 9, which outlined 'How we do things', be amended to make clear that outcome focussed commissioning and service delivery did not imply that we would not consider in house service delivery.

It was noted that work was required on the Leader's foreword to ensure it made grammatical sense.

RESOLVED: That

1. With the amendments outlined above, Council is recommended to adopt the Strategic Plan 2019-45 Action Plan.
2. Delegated authority is granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, to make amendments to the Leader's foreword before submission to Council.

Voting: Unanimous

179. FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND

Mr William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place, informed the Committee of an opportunity of the Council to make a bid to the Government's Future High Streets Fund. Mr Cornall relayed to the Committee that this fund was intended to provide investment to ensure high streets and town centres were fit for the future. The fund was worth £675 million in total, with bids that could be made for a maximum of £25 million but more typically between £5-10 million.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr Cornall confirmed that an expression of interest would be sought to secure funding for one of the sites already identified in the 'Town Centre Opportunity Areas' project. There were two reasons for this. The first was it was felt that a more focused bid on a specific area of the Town Centre would be more likely to be successful than a large bid for the whole Town Centre. The second was that it meant that some of the preparatory work had already been undertaken, which would form the basis of the expression of interest to be submitted to the Ministry.

RESOLVED:

That delegated authority is granted to the Director of Regeneration & Place, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Policy

and Resources Committee, to develop and submit an expression of interest form to the Future High Streets Fund.

Voting: Unanimous

180. HOUSING DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL

Mr Cornall presented a proposal for a Housing Delivery Partnership to the Committee. Mr Cornall explained that the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee had considered this proposal on 13 November 2018 and had made a recommendation to the Policy and Resources Committee to request funding. The Committee noted that there was a desire for the Council to become involved in the direct delivery of affordable housing again, however the Council didn't have a Housing Revenue Account so was unable to do this on its own. Therefore a partnership with a Registered Provider would need to be formed, with the Council providing a proportion of the capital to fund the new properties.

The Committee considered the proposal and raised concerns that the Council could be providing funding for these properties, but that individuals without a local connection to Maidstone could be housed in them. Mr Cornall confirmed that the Council would retain control over the stock through working closely with the provider, as well as being the authority responsible for managing access to the Housing List through the Housing Allocations Policy.

RESOLVED: That

1. Funding of £7.5 million per year over a five year period is agreed to fund a Maidstone Housing Delivery Partnership.
2. Delegated authority is granted to the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee, to secure co-investment between the Council and a Registered Provider of £15 million per year over a 5 year period.
3. 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.
4. A programme of engagement with Parish Councils be commenced, to gauge the appetite for bringing forward rural exception sites for affordable housing.
5. Firm proposals detailing the intended partner/s and the commercial terms secured are brought back to this Committee in due course for final sign off before any contracts are entered into.

Voting: Unanimous

Note: Councillor Blackmore left the meeting during consideration of this item.

181. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 9.13 p.m.