

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20  
NOVEMBER 2019**

**Present:** Councillors Mrs Blackmore, M Burton, Chappell-Tay, Clark, Cox (Chairman), English, Mrs Gooch, Harvey, McKay, Mortimer, Powell, Purle, D Rose and Springett

99. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies were received from Councillors Newton, Perry and Round.

100. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

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

- Councillor Powell for Councillor Newton
- Councillor D Rose for Councillor Round

101. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items and it was noted that item 15. – Reference on Whole Council Elections on the agenda had been withdrawn as there was no reference from Democracy and General Purposes.

102. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting members.

103. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

104. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

105. 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.

106. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 OCTOBER 2019

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2019 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed.

107. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2019

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2019 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed.

108. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

110. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement presented the Work Programme and informed the Committee that due to the large number of items on the agenda for 22 January 2020 the items on Asset Management Strategy and Equalities Update would be moved to 12 February 2020. There would be an additional item on Weaving Heath for 22 January 2020.

**RESOLVED:** That the amended Committee Work Programme is noted.

111. 2ND QUARTER PERFORMANCE AND BUDGET MONITORING

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement presented the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Performance and Budget monitoring report. The biggest adverse variance for Policy and Resources was income from commercial property. There was currently a commercial deal going through that if completed would mean that four months of income would be received and the variance would be reversed. The fall back position in the event of the commercial deal not being completed would be to freeze discretionary spending.

Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee's budgets were showing adverse variances in parking and planning income. The drop in income was primarily from major planning application income reducing. Officers workloads had not reduced commensurately as they had been working on the local plan review. It was therefore possible to cover some of the deficit through using monies set aside to fund the local plan review. The Director was confident that there were measures to address the remaining overspend.

For performance monitoring Policy and Resources were receiving highlight indicators only.

The Committee noted the update, but raised concerns over discretionary spending being frozen if it meant a freeze on recruitment.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The revenue position at the end of the Quarter 2 and the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted;
2. The Capital position at the end of Quarter 2 be noted; and
3. The Summary of Performance for Quarter 2 for Key Performance Indicators is noted.

112. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020/21-2024/25

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25 and circulated an update from the service committee considerations of the same item for Policy and Resources to consider. The update showed that Economic Development and Leisure Committee had considered allocating funds to relocate Maidstone Mela to Mote Park but would consider alternative approaches to funding such as external sponsorship and Members' devolved budgets. Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee had raised their concerns regarding the Planning overspend, due to reduced major applications income, and that they questioned whether a 5% increase in parking fees would automatically lead to a 5% increase in revenue.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy had no major changes due to the recently adopted Strategic Plan and the roll forward of the Local Government spending settlement. This meant that a standstill budget could be set as long as the committed savings were made and Council Tax was increased by the rate of inflation. Inflation had also been factored into costs within the Strategy.

Questions were raised over a proposed highways scheme, a red route along Bishop's Corridor and how that would get into the capital programme if the Borough were to contribute to it. It was noted that officers had to make bids into the capital programme in November and certainly no later than December.

Concerns were raised over the potential impact of the General Election and changes to the Local Government Financial Settlement. An additional diary date of 8 January 2020 for an urgent Policy and Resources had been put in, if it was required. Regardless of what emerged the Council had to set a balanced budget so it might have to draw on reserves, but this was a contingency plan and the money could only be spent once.

**RESOLVED**: That

1. Council is recommended to adopt the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A;
2. Council endorses the financial assumptions underlying the Medium Term Financial Strategy;
3. Council agrees the Council Tax setting principle set out in paragraph 2.12 of the report.

113. REFERENCE ON WHOLE COUNCIL ELECTIONS FROM THE DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2019 (IF ANY)

This item was withdrawn as there was no reference from Democracy and General Purposes Committee.

114. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.05 p.m.