

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE EXTERNAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 13 APRIL 2010**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Hotson (Chairman)  
Councillors Batt, Mrs Gibson, Hinder, Marchant,  
Paterson, Sherreard and Yates

**126. The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast.**

**Resolved:** That all items on the agenda be web-cast.

**127. Apologies.**

There were no apologies.

**128. Notification of Substitute Members.**

There were no substitute Members.

**129. Notification of Visiting Members.**

It was noted that Councillors FitzGerald and Vizzard were visiting Members with an interest in Agenda Item 14, 'Urgent Item: Call-in, Working with Children Policies'. It was also noted that Councillor Robertson was a visiting Member and wished to speak on Agenda Item 10, 'Draft Rail Services Report'.

**130. Disclosures by Members and Officers:**

Councillors Batt and Williams declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 14, 'Urgent Item: Call-in, Working with Children Policies', due to being prior users of the Hotfoot Scheme. All Councillors declared they had been lobbied on Agenda Item 14, 'Urgent Item: Call-in, Working with Children Policies'.

**131. 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 resolved.

**132. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 9 March 2010.**

The Committee agreed to append a copy of Councillor Williams' speech to the Minutes of the meeting on 9 March 2010.

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2010 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman

subject to the attachment of Councillor Williams' speech as an appendix to the minutes.

### **133. Amendment to Order of Business**

**Resolved:** That

- a) Agenda Items 11, 'Live It Well Strategy Consultation' and 14, 'Urgent Item: Call-in, Working with Children Policies' be taken before Agenda Item 8, 'Leader of the Council – Update on Progress 2009-10'; and
- b) An item on Polish Community Condolences be taken after Agenda Item 7, 'Minutes of the Meeting Held on 9 March 2010'.

### **134. Polish Community Condolences**

A Councillor noted the Polish aeroplane crash that had killed the Polish President and 95 others on 10 April 2010. The Committee agreed to send its condolences to the Polish Community Group given its recent involvement in its Diverse Community Review. Councillor Marchant agreed to produce the letter of condolences in conjunction with Mrs Bell, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

**Resolved:** That a letter of condolences on behalf of the Committee to the Polish Community Group.

### **135. Live It Well Strategy Consultation.**

The Committee noted the importance of responding to the Live It Well Strategy Consultation and agreed that the Joint Mental Health Working Group respond to the consultation at its meeting on Thursday 15 April 2010. Furthermore, the Committee agreed that the working group's response be circulated to the Committee for information. A Member noted that the last sentence of page 6 of the draft Live It Well Strategy document had ended mid-sentence and the Committee agreed to add this in its response to the consultation.

**Resolved:** That

- a) The Joint Mental Health Working Group respond to the Live It Well Strategy Consultation at its meeting on 15 April 2010;
- b) The working group's response be circulated to the Committee for information; and
- c) The consultation response note the error on page 6 of the draft strategy document.

### **136. URGENT ITEM: Call-in, Working with Children Policies**

The Chairman invited Councillors Mrs Marshall and Williams to present their reasons for calling in the decision of Cabinet Member for Community Services with regard to the Working with Children Policies.

Councillor Williams explained that they had called-in the decision of the Cabinet Member as they opposed social services being called after thirty minutes. She believed that this was illogical and unreasonable as there may be a large number of reasons as to why a parent or guardian may not be contactable within thirty minutes of the play scheme ending. Councillors Williams and Mrs Marshall considered that a sixty minute deadline would be more appropriate. They informed the Committee that the second reason for calling in the decision was that the Hotfoot Play scheme application form did not advise parents that social services would be called if staff were unable to contact them within half an hour of the play scheme finishing. Furthermore, Councillor Mrs Marshall was concerned about how the play scheme contact numbers were advertised to parents.

The Assistant Director of Customer Services and Partnerships, Mr Taylor, informed the Committee that there had not been an occasion to contact social services as a result of the thirty minute deadline since the play schemes had opened in 2007. He confirmed that the Council's Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Procedures had been updated to ensure it reflected current advice and that the appropriate advisory agencies including Ofsted and Kent County Council had been contacted and that they had recommended a thirty minute timeframe. The Committee was informed that best practice had also been considered and that the thirty minute rule was consistent with most of these. Bury Metropolitan Borough Council however stated in their policy that it would charge the parent if the child was not picked up, but did not specify a time frame or rate. Mr Taylor agreed to provide Councillor Williams with further details of this policy.

The Cabinet Member for Community Services, Councillor Mrs Ring, agreed to amend the play scheme application forms to include information on the policy regarding children not being collected within half an hour of the scheme finishing. Councillor Williams felt that this information should be advertised on the front page of the application form to ensure that parents were aware of the policy. The Committee agreed that the forms should be amended, but felt that this should be written in the general guidelines.

In response to a question, Councillor Mrs Ring clarified that there were nine hotfoot scheme emergency contact numbers available to parents and that these were advertised on a notice board at the location of the play scheme. The Committee agreed that the scheme's contact telephone numbers should be further advertised to parents. The Committee was informed that the telephone numbers did not change and Members agreed that the numbers should therefore be advertised to parents on their initial joining letter, in annual play scheme publications and on the website.

Mr Taylor informed the Committee that social services were contacted for advice after thirty minutes of the scheme finishing, rather than for its intervention (unless this was appropriate). The Committee agreed that the Council's procedure should be amended to reflect this.

Councillor Mrs Williams was concerned that Councillors were not required to be CRB (Criminal Record Bureau) checked, and noted that Kent County Councillors conversely were. The Chairman suggested that individual Members contact the relevant Committee to investigate if they had concerns.

The Chairman thanked Councillors Mrs Marshall, Williams and Mrs Ring for attending the meeting and the Committee agreed to receive the suggested insertions and amendments once they had been made. The Chairman also thanked Paul Taylor for his contribution and noted that he would soon be leaving Maidstone Borough Council to work for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. He thanked him for his hard work and wished him well for the future.

A Member raised concern that a change in a procedure had not been considered by a relevant Committee and the Chairman suggested that this may be something Members suggest for review in 2010/11.

**Resolved** That:

- a) The Hotfoot General Guidelines be amended to include information on the policy regarding children not being collected within half an hour of the scheme finishing;
- b) The Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Procedures' last bullet point of paragraph 7.4 be amended to read 'then call KCC Social Services Duty Team *for advice*';
- c) The scheme's contact telephone numbers be included in the parent's initial joining letter, in annual publications and on the website; and
- d) The suggested insertions and amendments be circulated to the Committee for information.

### **137. Leader of the Council - Update on Progress 2009-10:**

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor Garland to the meeting and asked him to outline his progress made in the areas of his portfolio over 2009/10 relevant to the remit of the Committee.

#### Mid-Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP)

Councillor Garland considered MKIP particularly important in light of the recent economic pressures and noted that it had played a crucial role in working towards delivering the same level of service at the lowest cost across the Mid-Kent Councils. Joint working with Ashford had been at a slower rate compared to with other Councils. In response to a question Councillor Garland informed the Committee that some had felt that MKIP had not progressed joint working as quickly as Maidstone had liked. However, he felt that joint Human Resources and Information Technology facilitated bigger financial savings in the long run as they enabled joint back office functions, such as Revenues and Benefits, and it was therefore important to get this right. He hoped that a common company for shared services would be created in three to five years.

In response to a question, Councillor Garland informed the Committee that KCC (Kent County Council) had not engaged with MKIP as much as he would have liked and that he had approached Paul Carter to address this. MKIP had explored using KCC's legal service but this had proved more expensive than the Council's existing package.

#### Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The LSP had four thematic groups and these were chaired by external bodies. The Council and Police had tried to ensure that the groups were more inclusive to improve the influence of the other agencies. The relevant National Indicators were monitored and those with poor performance were analysed by the relevant LSP group.

In response to a question, Councillor Garland informed the Committee that the LSP had received £270,000 from Government and this had been distributed to projects across Maidstone. The LSP had undertaken a resources mapping exercise which had identified areas of duplication, which had in turn enabled money to be reinvested in the future.

#### Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP)

Councillor Garland felt that the SMP had improved during 2009/10, but noted that the IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency) peer review had identified possible improvements. He informed Members that some partners had felt excluded and that the Council and Police had previously been too influential on the SMP, but that he thought that the SMP had now become more inclusive. Councillor Garland highlighted that there had been a 10 percent reduction in crime, despite increased unemployment.

#### Community Safety Unit (CSU)

Councillor Garland considered that the introduction of the CSU had been a big achievement and that locating both the SMP and CSU in Maidstone House was an effective tool in addressing crime.

#### Planning for Real

He informed the Committee that this pilot had been successful in identifying people's perceptions of their local area and that this would inform the LSP and the SCS (Sustainable Community Strategy). 3-400 people had contributed to the Park Wood pilot model by identifying the locations of their concerns and fears. Councillor Garland advised Members that they planned to undertake the projects in Maidstone's more deprived areas. A Councillor welcomed the opportunity to undertake the project in Shepway Ward.

#### Kent County Council (KCC)

Councillor Garland stated that relations with KCC had continued to improve. KCC had offered financial support for the regeneration of the High Street and was actively supportive of Maidstone's Regeneration Strategy.

#### Other

Councillor Garland advised the Committee that a citizen panel was being considered and that he was looking at ways to implement the Sustainable Communities Act.

A Councillor noted the work undertaken on Total Place and the Committee agreed that all Members should be kept updated on this.

The Committee congratulated the Leader on the progress he had made over the last two years and agreed to note the update.

**Resolved:** That

- a) The Leader's update be noted; and
- b) Councillors be updated on the work of Total Place.

**138. Cabinet Member for Community Services - Update on Progress 2009-10:**

The Chairman asked the Cabinet Member for Community Services, Councillor Mrs Ring, to update the Committee on her progress over 2009/10.

Councillor Mrs Ring provided the Committee with a report of the progress that had been made through 2009/10. She felt that her greatest achievements had included achieving more funding from partners towards the Hotfoot scheme; the work with the older person's Forum and its steering group; and the success of the 'Planning for Real' pilot in Park Wood.

In response to a question Councillor Mrs Ring advised the Committee that she had held a Parish Council liaison day and discussed the possibility of implementing Planning for Real projects in parished areas. The Committee congratulated Councillor Mrs Ring on the success of the pilot and agreed this would be a useful resource for parishes. Councillor Mrs Ring advised the Committee that the scheme cost £8,000 and had been partly funded by grants. The Committee agreed that Councillor Mrs Ring send copies of her Annual Report to Parish Councils, highlighting the Planning for Real pilot results.

Councillor Mrs Ring confirmed that the Town Centre Youth Café, Switch, had opened on 20 March and that management of the café had been handed over to the Trustees.

The Chairman congratulated the Cabinet Member for Community Service on her progress over the last two years and the Committee agreed to note the update.

**Resolved:** That

- a) The Cabinet Member for Community Service's update be noted; and

- b) Copies of the Cabinet Member for Community Service's Annual Report be sent to Parish Councils, highlighting the results of the Planning for Real pilot.

### **139. Draft Rail Services Report.**

The Chairman thanked Councillor Robertson for attending as a visiting Member to comment on the Committee's Railway Review Report and asked him to update the Committee on any railway developments.

Councillor Robertson congratulated the Committee on its railway review report. He informed Members that the May timetable had recently been published and had given some minor improvements to the Medway Valley timetable, although there continued to be no direct link to the city. He therefore considered it important to keep lobbying for the Thamelink Service to be introduced as soon as possible. Councillor Robertson advised Members that the KCC (Kent County Council) Railways Summit had recently taken place and had been extremely successful. It had highlighted a commonality of railway problems across Kent and had been well attended by parliamentarians. The Chairman thanked Councillor Robertson for the update and the Committee agreed to receive an update in August 2010.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Mrs Bell, highlighted the following to the Committee:

- The report implied that there was no underground station at Blackfriars. However this was not the case as it was currently closed with extensive rebuilding work expected for completion in late 2011. The Committee agreed it prudent to note this in the report;
- Paragraph 8.2.1 stated that the Thameslink was a 4-5 million investment, when in fact it was a 4-5 billion pound investment. The Committee agreed to this amendment;
- The suggested recommendations regarding the clarification of roles and responsibilities after paragraph 7.1.4. The Committee agreed to this recommendation; and
- The question regarding Member support of Park and Rail after paragraph 8.5.1. The Committee agreed it supported this as a long term option, noting the challenge of needing a large enough car park to support it.

Councillor Robertson noted that Paragraph 7.1.4 and recommendation (f) contradicted each other as he understood the coal yard at Bearsted was owned by the property arm of Network Rail. The Committee asked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to clarify who owned the coal yard and to make the necessary amendments in consultation with the Chairman.

The Committee agreed that the final draft of the report would be approved by the Chairman prior to its submission.

**Resolved:** That

- a) That the Committee receive a Railways update in August 2010;
- b) The Chairman approve the final Railways Review report prior to its submission;
- c) That the report be amended to include the following:
  - i. The situation regarding Blackfriars underground station;
  - ii. The Thameslink was a 4-5 *billion* pound investment;
  - iii. A recommendation regarding the clarification of roles and responsibilities of Network Rail and Southeastern;
  - iv. The Committee's long term support of Park and Rail; and
  - v. Clarification of who owned the coal yard at Bearsted Station.

**140. Department for Health Response.**

The Committee noted the response of the Department for Health regarding its acceptance of its delayed consultation response. Members remained disappointed that publicity of the consultation had not been targeted at Local Authorities and noted that the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the topic of consultation.

**Resolved:** That the response be noted.

**141. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010-11.**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer requested that the Committee consider what items it would like to suggest for the work programme for 2010/11. The Committee agreed to commend a Holiday Play Schemes Review. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer apologised for not including the requested Play Scheme scoping document, attached at Appendix A, in the agenda. The Committee approved the completed scoping document subject to the inclusion of non-service user consultation to identify why they had not used the service.

**Resolved:** That a Holiday Play Scheme Review, with the attached scoping document, be considered for the 2010-11 work programme.

**142. Duration of the Meeting.**

6.30 pm to 8.30pm.



<p><b>Name of Review: Holiday Play Schemes</b></p>
<p><b>What are the objectives and desired outcomes of the review</b></p> <p>To consider the Hotfoot Play Scheme in light of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether Hotfoot offered value for money;</li> <li>• Who was using Hotfoot;</li> <li>• Whether the hours that Hotfoot was available suited parents;</li> <li>• Whether more focus should be on community play schemes;</li> <li>• Whether the advertising for Council-funded play schemes should include advertising for private play schemes, which could help to pay for marketing; and</li> <li>• Whether Kent County Council should be providing play schemes instead of the Borough Council.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What equality issues will need to be considered as part of the review – giving consideration to the 6 strands:</b> Age Gender Race Sexual orientation Faith Disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check whether play schemes offered by the Council are inclusive.</li> <li>• If the Council did not offer its play schemes, would there be alternative provision for all groups?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which witnesses are required?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Community Services</li> <li>• Sports, Play and Youth Development Manager</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other ways to seek evidence? E.g. site visits, involving members of the public, consultation. *</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service user consultation</li> <li>• Visit a play scheme</li> </ul>
<p><b>What information/training is needed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on other services provided and on what other local authorities provide</li> </ul>
<p><b>Suggested time for review and report completion date</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 months – one meeting for interviews, one to consider evidence and agree recommendations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How does the review link to council priorities?</b></p> <p>A place to live and enjoy.</p>
<p><b>How does this item deliver CfPS effective scrutiny principles?</b></p> <p>1 Provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers</p>

2	<i>Enables the voice and concerns of the public</i>
3	<i>Is carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny role</i>
4	<i>Drives improvement in public services</i>
1	– Providing a 'critical friend' challenge to a Council service.
4	– Ensuring that services respond to public demand.
<b>Any co-optees or expert witnesses?</b>	
Co-opt a service user?	

\* What do you know about the equality groups and the make-up of the people using the service or in the area? Qualitative and quantitative information

Think of the wider 'community' including people who possibly do not currently use the service but could or should.