

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 2 MARCH 2021

Present: Councillors Joy, Khadka, Mortimer (Chairman), Powell, Purle, Mrs Robertson, D Rose, M Rose and Young

Also Present: Councillors Brice, Kimmance and Perry

145. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor M Burton.

146. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Councillor Purle was present as a Substitute Member for Councillor Burton.

147. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

148. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillors Brice and Perry were present as Visiting Members for Item 15.

Councillor Kimmance was present as a Visiting Member for Items 14 and 15.

149. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

Councillor Purle disclosed a professional connection to a company that provides emergency accommodation to Maidstone Borough Council.

150. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

Councillor M Rose had been lobbied on Item 12 – Committee Work Programme.

151. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

152. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2021**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed at a later date.

153. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

154. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

155. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

Question from Councillor Brice to the Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

'What is the ratio of reports of fly-tipping to fines issued and / or prosecutions across Staplehurst?'

The Chairman responded to the question.

Councillor Brice asked the following supplementary question:

'What more can be done to support more fines and more prosecutions?'

The Chairman responded to the question.

The full responses were recorded on the webcast and made available to view on the Maidstone Borough Council Website.

To access the webcast recording, please use the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OT6PaMimwQ>

156. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Concerns were raised at the number of items scheduled for the April meeting of the Committee, and the potential impact this could have on the time given to each item. It was suggested that the Heather House and Pavilion Update be moved to the following meeting of the Committee.

The Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed that the Anti-Idling Policy report would not be completed in time to be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

157. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

158. HOMELESSNESS ACTIVITY DURING 2020

The Head of Housing and Community Services presented the report and explained that the number of homeless applications remained consistent

with previous years, however the number of successful preventions has increased significantly. The threat of homelessness due to loss of private rented accommodation had seen a decrease, largely impacted by the moratorium of possession proceedings. The increase in alternate threats of homelessness, including domestic abuse and family and/or friends no longer providing accommodation during the pandemic was highlighted.

There was an increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) and the Winter Provision. Since the data in table 4 was gathered, the number of RSI cases had halved, with households having moved on to more sustainable accommodation.

In response to questions, the Head of Housing and Community Services confirmed that the Council could not prevent other Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) from housing their residents within the Borough. However ongoing communication between the Council and other LHAs would ensure that the latter provided the support necessary to reconnect their residents to the original area of residence.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

159. RE-PROCUREMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S WASTE & RECYCLING SERVICE

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced the report which was based on the scoping report presented to the Committee in June 2020, and took into account the feedback received from the Member workshop exploring options for the waste contract. The waste and recycling service was contracted out to Biffa by Mid Kent Waste Partnership, with the contract ending in October 2023, with the street cleansing service carried out by an in-house Direct Labour Organisation (DLO).

Feedback from Members had indicated satisfaction with the current service, and therefore the report recommended retaining the current service delivery, however alternative options were explained. Recycling could be twin-streamed rather than the current co-mingled service, which would add £294,000 to the cost of the contract, and an additional £300,000 cost for provision of bin infrastructure. Kent County Council (KCC) could incentivise this change up to £180,000 however this sum would not be guaranteed.

The four delivery models were outlined, and an error in the table at 3.2.2 was noted, whereby Local Authority Trading Company (LATCO) and Direct Service Organisation (DSO) had been swapped.

Although a LATCO was the cheapest option, the preferred route was to continue with the current model due to price certainty, quality and discharge of service risks. It was noted that an increase of £600,000 was expected if the current model was retained, and this had been budgeted for in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Maintaining an in-house service for street cleansing would allow control and add resilience to the depot services.

In response to questions, Chris Stannard of Waste Management advised that partnerships were attractive to contractors and that continuing as part of the Mid Kent Waste Partnership would likely offer better value for the council, although it would be possible to procure a waste contract for Maidstone as an individual borough. It was also confirmed that performance monitoring was measured per borough rather than per partnership.

Concerns around service level agreements (SLA) and contractor accountability were raised, and it was confirmed that the facility for public access to read-only, real-time information on contractors' services is in progress, which would enable the public to self-serve. The Director of Regeneration and Place would investigate the feasibility of contacting the local Ward Member when a complaint to the service was received from a resident.

Following the concerns raised and questions arising from the recent purchase of the Litter Cam, it was confirmed that a briefing be arranged to update Members on the introduction of litter enforcement cameras to Maidstone, and to answer questions arising from the scheme.

RESOLVED: That

1. The collection of recycling be continued as a co-mingled stream;
2. In-House services be retained to provide street cleansing, and the waste collection contract be re-tendered; and
3. Maidstone Borough Council remains within the Mid Kent Waste Partnership.

160. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.11 p.m.

Due to technical difficulties, the meeting adjourned between 7.58 p.m. and 8.10 p.m.