

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2021 ADJOURNED TO 19 NOVEMBER 2021

Present: Councillors Brindle, Clark, Cooper(Chairman),
19 Mrs Grigg, M Rose, Russell, Spooner and Springett
November
2021

Also Present: Councillors English and Harper

95. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Garten and Munford.

96. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Councillor Brindle was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Garten.

97. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillors English and Harper were in attendance as Visiting Members for Item 7 – Development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy.

98. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

99. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

As declared at the 9 November 2021 meeting, all Committee Members had been lobbied on Item 9 – Local Plan Review Update.

Councillor M Rose had been lobbied on Item 7 – Development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy.

100. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

101. **DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAIDSTONE TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY**

The Interim Local Plan Review Director introduced the report and outlined the impact of historic changes in demand for the town centre, which had been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In an effort to preserve the

facilities available within the town centre area, including retail and office space, the use of an Article 4 direction would be considered.

The development of the Town Centre Strategy was an opportunity to make the town centre more environmentally attractive, user friendly and to reinforce Maidstone's role as the County Town of Kent. The strategy would be considered by the Council's other Service Committees and the feedback provided by the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee was briefly outlined.

During the debate, the importance of providing a cohesive town centre strategy that maximised the town centre's visitor potential was highlighted. This included sufficient parking and public transport provision to enable individuals to travel to the town centre with greater ease and increase its attractiveness, alongside the provision of leisure, culture and arts events. It was felt that greater efforts could be made to promote the town centre's assets, such as the River Medway, alongside increased employment opportunities.

The general maintenance of the town centre was mentioned, due to the importance of promoting a long-term sustainable town centre strategy.

RESOLVED: That the feedback arising from the discussion on the report be used to inform a further report to the Policy and Resources Committee with a more specific proposal on the scope and timing of the Town Centre Strategy.

102. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2021-2024

The Strategic Planning Manager introduced the report and reiterated that the Local Development Scheme (LDS) was a statutory requirement. The changes proposed, if agreed, would reflect the work required to produce two Development Plan Documents (DPDs) alongside the Local Plan Review.

The Gypsy and Traveller DPD was required due to the delay caused by the Covid-19 pandemic to the ongoing needs assessment, which indicated that the Council had a significant need for new pitches. A 'call for sites' exercise would take place from February 2022 and the documents' overall completion was expected by late 2024.

The Design and Sustainability DPD had been agreed by the Committee in September 2021. An initial regulation 18 consultation would take place from April 2022.

There were no changes proposed to the Local Plan Review timetable as contained within the LDS.

RESOLVED: That full council be recommended to approve the Local Development Scheme 2021-2024, as attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

103. LOCAL PLAN REVIEW UPDATE

The Strategic Planning Manager introduced the report and referenced the ongoing Regulation 19 'draft for submission' documents public consultation. A significant number of representations had already been received and had begun to be processed. Subject to the representations received, it was intended that the Local Plan would be submitted in March 2022, as outlined in the current Local Development Scheme.

Several Members expressed concerns that the Regulation 19 consultation form and associated webpages did not provide clear guidance on how to submit a representation. The Strategic Planning Manager confirmed that the comments received on the Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan Review (LPR) should be focused on the 'Tests of Soundness' and 'Legal Compliance' of the proposed Local Plan (LP), as opposed to the wider scope of the questionnaires provided at the Regulation 18 'Scoping Themes and Issues' stage of the LP, for example. The submission form provided on the Council's website was derived from the Planning Inspectorate, however any person that wished to submit a representation was not required to use that form but could for example, submit a letter outlining their representation.

The Committee expressed concerns regarding the provision of transport and highways infrastructure. The Strategic Planning Manager stated that an 'Integrated Transport Package' (ITP) had been produced alongside the 2017 LP, which demonstrated the infrastructure required to support the proposals and growth provided within the current LPR and was a working document. There were two Integrated Transport Strategies (ITS), one for the 2017 LP and an Addendum that reflected the preferred spatial strategy and growth from the ongoing LPR, which were all included within the evidence base of the Regulation 19 documents. The proposed Supplementary Planning Documents for main growth locations were highlighted.

There were concerns that the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board and the Maidstone Strategic Infrastructure Working Group Meeting's should be occurring more often, due to the importance of delivering the required road infrastructure.

The Head of Planning and Development would provide the comments received that contributed to the inclusion of the Beacons Park Site into the Regulation 19 documents to Councillors Clark, Cooper and Grigg as requested.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

104. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.40 p.m.