

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 21 JUNE 2022

Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Brice, Cannon, Conyard, English (Chairman), Garten, Hastie, Hinder, Jeffery, Knatchbull, McKenna, D Wilkinson and T Wilkinson

Also Present: Councillor Round

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Cleator.

2. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Councillor D Wilkinson was present as Substitute for Councillor Cleator.

3. **ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED: That Councillor English be elected as the Chairman for the 2023/23 Municipal Year.

4. **ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED: That Councillor Cannon be elected as the Vice-Chair for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

5. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Chairman stated that additional review topics had been received for Item 15 – Receipt of Suggested Review Topics (if any).

6. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillor Round was present as Visiting Member for Item 16 – 2022/23 Work Programming.

7. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members and Officers.

8. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

All Committee Members had been lobbied on Item 16 – 2022/23 Work Programming.

9. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

10. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

11. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from Local Residents.

12. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

13. NOTIFICATION OF 'CALL-IN' OF AN EXECUTIVE DECISION

There were no Executive Decisions to be reviewed.

14. RECEIPT OF COUNCILLOR 'CALL FOR ACTION'

There were no Councillor 'Call for Action's.

15. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman stated that Item 15 - Receipt of Suggested Review Topics (if any) would be presented alongside Item 16 – 2022/23 Work Programming, due to the related subject matter.

16. RECEIPT OF SUGGESTED REVIEW TOPICS (IF ANY) AND 2022/23 WORK PROGRAMMING

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and referenced the suggestions put forward by the Council's Wider Leadership Team and the Executive, as contained within Appendix B to the report. The additional proposals received had been circulated to the Committee ahead of the meeting.

Specific reference was made to the statutory guidance applicable to Overview and Scrutiny, alongside the Council's new governance arrangements whereby pre-decision scrutiny would be undertaken by Policy Advisory Committees. It was recommended that the Committee choose the topics to be included within its 2022/23 work programme to maximise the time available to approach and conduct the reviews, whilst allowing for flexibility.

The next steps in preparation for the 19 July 2022 Committee Meeting were outlined.

The Lead Member for Environmental Services was invited to answer questions from the Committee on the suggestions included within

Appendix B to the report. Support was expressed for the Committee reviewing the Council's enforcement in relation to its resourcing.

In response to a query on how many reviews the Committee would be able to complete over the municipal year, the Chairman stated that he expected two to three large reviews, supplemented by small reviews depending on the method chosen to conduct the reviews. The Committee discussed the topics contained within Appendix B to the report, with support expressed for reviewing enforcement generally. Consideration was given to the benefits of conducting internal versus external scrutiny, and vice versa. Several Members felt that the Committee should focus on areas within the Council's direct control and influence to maximise its effectiveness, whilst the Committee increased its experience in conducting reviews. However, the importance of and ability to influence other bodies through external scrutiny was also highlighted.

In response to questions, the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance advised that the Committee might wish to conduct its reviews at its scheduled meetings, as it would not be conducting pre-decision scrutiny. This was a function of the Council's Policy Advisory Committees. The various methods to conduct a review including spotlight reviews, working groups and evidence collection through internal and external witnesses, were briefly outlined. The staff resources available to support the Committee were currently reduced due to the two vacancies within the Democratic Services Team.

The Committee supported selecting a few topics to include within its work programme, whilst maintaining its flexibility for unexpected items. To narrow down the topics for scoping, the Committee decided to briefly adjourn the meeting to allow for informal discussion. The adjournment took place between 7.13 p.m. to 7.20 p.m.

Following the meeting's recommencement, additional suggestions included:

- Water Management Cycle
- Safety & Enforcement (as a combined suggestion from the agenda papers and Councillor suggested topics topic)

A vote was taken on each topic and each Committee Member could vote for up to three topics. The four topics that received the highest number of votes would be scoped and presented to the next meeting of the Committee, for formal agreement as work programme items.

These were:

- Safety and Enforcement (12 votes)
- Water Management Cycle (11 votes)
- The Council's performance in relation to Waste Strategy (6 votes)
- Health Inequality (4 votes)

The Committee extended its thanks to the Lead Member for Environmental Services for attending the meeting. It was emphasised that

external review topics, such as the cost-of-living crisis, were very important issues and were being addressed elsewhere within the Council through alternative means.

RESOLVED: That the following topics be scoped and presented to the Committee at its next meeting, prior to their formal inclusion within the 2022/23 work programme:

- Safety and Enforcement
- Water Management Cycle
- The Council's performance in relation to Waste Strategy
- Health Inequality

17. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.33 p.m.

Note: The Committee adjourned between 7.13 to 7.20 p.m.