

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**LEISURE AND PROSPERITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

28 SEPTEMBER 2010

REPORT OF HEAD OF CHANGE AND SCRUTINY

Report prepared by Esther Bell

1. Call-In: Core Strategy Housing Targets and Distribution of Development

1.1 Recommendation of the Head of Change and Scrutiny

1.1.1 The reasons for calling-in the Cabinet's decision are stated as:

"The tone and degree of pre-determination apparent within the officer report is counter-productive to the spatial planning process, in that it may well be used in evidence against the council at examination by the Inspector.

The testing of the 11,000 housing figure bestows an unwarranted dignity onto a number with no rigorous under-pinning by research. The 8,200 figure was recommended and justified by research within the KCC structure plan and the 10,080 figure was recommended by MBC for Growth Point funding. The 11,000 figure has no empirical under-pinning – other than being contested actively by MBC in relation to the now defunct South East Plan. In fact if the South East Plan figure is to be used despite the arguments against it during consultation it should at least be accurate at 11,080.

The Local Development Document Advisory Group and Leisure and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee recommendations to jettison the strategic development area aka South East Extension must be respected.

Back bench members understand that development on a scale of 5000 to 6000 properties plus commercial and economic infrastructure will inevitably swamp existing communities and destroy historic countryside and biodiversity to the South East of the town. Further, inadequate transportation links and other infrastructure to the South East of the town will cause unacceptable strain upon established communities. Regeneration and renewal must be at the very centre of spatial planning in Maidstone Borough if an economic and social renaissance is to be delivered.

The spatial direction of neglect currently being pursued will condemn large tracts of our borough to inevitable decline."

- 1.1.2 The Committee is recommended to consider the decision of the Cabinet against the above reasons.
- 1.1.3 Having considered the call-in the Committee has three options for action with regard to the Cabinet's decision:
 - i. **Take no action** – the decision will be implemented as taken by the Cabinet on 15 September 2010.
 - ii. **Refer to the Cabinet**– the comments of the Committee will be referred to the Cabinet for reconsideration of the decision within five working days, after which a final decision will be made.
 - iii. **Refer to Council** – the comments of the Committee and decision of the Cabinet will be referred to Council. If Council does not object to Cabinet's decision it will be implemented. If Council does object, it does not have power to make a decision unless the Cabinet's decision is against the policy framework or contrary to or inconsistent with the budget. Unless that is the case, Council will refer its comments back to the Cabinet for reconsideration of the decision within five working days, after which a final decision will be made.
- 1.1.4 Councillors may also choose to take no action on the decision itself (i.e. allowing it to be implemented as taken) but request further information or clarification on issues raised during the call-in. This information must be provided within one month, as is the case with ordinary requests and recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny.
- 1.2 Reason for Urgency
 - 1.2.1 Call-ins of Cabinet decisions must be heard within ten working days of the expiry of the call-in period. The completed call-in form was received by the Head of Change and Scrutiny on 20 September 2010 and the call-in period expires on 24 September 2010. The Chair of the Leisure and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed to take the call-in at the scheduled meeting of the Committee on 28 September 2010.
- 1.3 Background
 - 1.3.1 Councillors Fran Wilson and Tony Harwood have called-in the decision of the Cabinet with regard to the Core Strategy Housing Targets and Distribution of Development.

- 1.3.2 In order to assist Members in their consideration of this issue the following documents have been attached to this agenda:

Document
Call-in Form
<i>Report for Decision:</i> Core Strategy Housing Targets and Distribution of Development
<i>Record of Decision of the Cabinet:</i> Core Strategy Housing Targets and Distribution of Development

- 1.3.3 The Leader of the Council, Councillor Garland, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Councillor Greer and the Chief Executive, Alison Broom will be in attendance at the meeting for interview.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 None - there are only three actions the Committee can take in response to a call-in as set out at 1.1.3.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 1.5.1 The Options 2 and 3 (subject to further assessment) appear to best reflect the spatial elements of the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy, the Strategic Plan and the Economic Development Strategy.