

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE LEISURE AND PROSPERITY OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY
28 SEPTEMBER 2010**

PRESENT: Councillor Paine (Chairman)
Councillors Burton, Mrs Gibson, Mrs Joy, Nelson-
Gracie, Pickett and Mrs Smith

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

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

37. Apologies

No apologies were received.

38. Notification of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

39. Notification of Visiting Members

It was noted that Cllr Lusty and Cllr English were visiting Members and both wished to speak on agenda item 43, 'Call-In: Core Strategy Housing Target Distribution of Development.

40. Disclosures by Members and Officers:

There were no disclosures of interest of whipping Cllr Paine disclosed that he had been lobbied in relation to Agenda Item 8, Call-in: Core Strategy Housing Targets and Distribution of Development.

41. 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 proposed.

42. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27 July 2010.

The minutes of the meeting dated 27 July 2010 were agreed subject to an amendment of minute 20, paragraph 3 where toll should be replaced with tow.

Resolved: That subject to the amendment of minute 20, paragraph 3 to replace "toll path" with "tow path", the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2010 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman.

43. URGENT ITEM: Call-In: Core Strategy Housing Targets and Distribution of Development:

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Mrs Fran Wilson and Councillor Tony Harwood to the meeting and invited them to set out the reasons for the call-in. Councillor Harwood stated that through the Local Development Framework the Council had the opportunity to influence the growth of the borough. He thought that the report could have been better written, that it was too weighted and that it should consider the localism agenda. He stressed the need to plan for local sustainable developments with solid infrastructure and that it was not necessary to test everything.

Councillor Mrs Wilson agreed with Councillor Harwood's comments. She queried the size of a Strategic Development Area (SDA), stating that she had received conflicting figures, one of 2,500 and one of 5,000, and questioned that if this was the case the 8,200 figure put forward for testing would be too small to support an SDA and therefore there would be no validity in testing the 8,200 option at all. Councillor Mrs Wilson stated that the Council was open to scrutiny and that any option tested should have evidence to support testing. She commented that the 11,000 figures set out for testing within the report did not have this evidence in place. Councillor Wilson also commented that the administration need to be clear if they wanted an SDA or not.

The Chair invited Councillor Chris Garland, Leader of the Council to respond. Councillor Garland stated that he agreed with some of the points made by Councillors Harwood and Wilson, however, although the case for a SDA had been weakened it was still too early to rule out the possibility entirely. He made it clear that the report would not be withdrawn but would be superseded, that meaningful data was being sought and that detailed testing would be carried out on all options.

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Councillor Malcolm Greer informed the Committee that he agreed that it would be wrong not to test all the options so that sound decisions could be made. Alison Broom Chief Executive of the Council stated that the report was already in the public arena but that there would be a further report going forward in the process which would be going through this committee. Mrs Broom acknowledged the weaknesses in the original report however; the Committee noted that the associated risk was low. Mrs Broom advised the Committee that no direction had been received from the Cabinet on a preferred option and the analysis being undertaken would be objective.

The Chairman invited visiting Members to present their concerns to the Committee. Councillor Clive English stated the need for sound evidence and concern about greenfield sites stating that it was easier and cheaper to develop greenfield sites than others. Councillor Richard Lusty expressed

the importance of Officers and Members working together, he suggested this could be achieved through the Local Development Document Advisory Group (LDDAG), playing a greater role in the development of the Core Strategy. In response Mrs Broom suggested that LDDAG be requested to review and shape the evaluation framework based on the concerns debated by the Committee to ensure that regeneration and economic factors were considered, this was endorsed by the Committee.

The Committee noted that most of the original recommendations that they had put forward had been incorporated and endorsed by Cabinet but the outstanding issue was that of the SDA. The Committee was keen to understand the reasoning behind the 3 options and asked what evidence there was to support option 3-11,000 dwellings. It was explained that the original figure was 11,250, which had been reached using a 19 year population trend this had then been rounded down to 11,000. The Committee recommended that all Members should receive an explanation on how figure for option 3 – 11,000 dwellings had been developed.

There was concern around the supporting infrastructure required both for an SDA and a dispersal pattern of development and in particular the impact on congestion in the town centre. Mr Thornton stated that traffic modelling had been done both with and without the construction of the bypass the results of which were that even without the bypass there was very little impact on town centre traffic flow. Early findings also showed that the cost of infrastructure to support a dispersed pattern of development would be of similar cost to that required for a SDA.

The Committee considered the comments that a SDA would not automatically support regeneration and that a SDA would not be viable for the lower figure, option 1 – 8,000. It was debated whether option 2 – 10,080 dwellings was a viable figure for testing as it would leave only a small margin if an SDA was required. Councillor Garland agreed with the assumption made by the Committee in relation to option 1- 8,000 dwellings but defended testing of option 2 – 10,080 for an SDA. The Committee concluded that a Strategic Development Area should not be tested for Option 1 – 8,200 dwellings, as this was not viable for the number of houses in the option.

It was resolved: that the decision on the core strategy: housing targets and distribution of development be referred to Cabinet with the following recommendations that:

- (a) a strategic development area not be tested for Option 1 – 8,200 dwellings, as this was not proposed as viable for the number of houses in the option;
- (b) the Local Development Document Advisory Group be requested to review and shape the evaluation framework based on the concerns debated by the Committee including stimulating regeneration and economic factors; and

- (c) explanation be given to all Members on the reasoning for the figure for option 3 – 11,000 dwellings.

44. Duration of the Meeting

6.30pm to 8.55pm.