

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 23
SEPTEMBER 2008**

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Blackmore (Chairman) and Butler, Chittenden, Daley, Field, Mrs Gooch, Hinder, Verrall and Yates.

APOLOGIES: There were no apologies.

51. Web- Casting

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

52. Notification of Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

53. Notification of Visiting Members

There were no visiting Members.

54. Disclosures by Members and Officers

There were none.

55. Exempt Items

Resolved: That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

56. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 August 2008 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman

57. Litter Update

The Chairman welcomed the Environmental Services Manager, Mr Malcolm Wells, the Street Scene Manager, Mr David Hitchings and the Waste Management Education Officer, Ms Alison Sollis to the meeting. Following a brief introduction from the witnesses regarding the initiatives to prevent littering, the Committee discussed the following topics:

- Street litter signage, highlighting the importance of appropriate positioning;
- Problems with litter on railway land. Following the initial work undertaken by Clean Kent, officers had been placing

pressure on the various railway authorities to clear the litter from their land;

- The damage caused by the high power cleaning jets when used to clean pavements to the substructure of block paving laid on sand. Mr Wells highlighted that this was a national problem but that officers were investigating alternative methods;
- The Education Officer's work in schools to discourage littering included initiatives such as, 'Litter and You', 'Street Wise' and litter picks;
- Enforcement with regard to under 16s. This highlighted that Head Teachers had been supportive in dealing with repeat offenders;
- Offenders litter picking in Maidstone as part of the Community Payback scheme; and
- Missing bins from Mote Park following the Radio One Big Weekend. Members requested that this be addressed.

Members suggested the following ideas:

- The possibility of schools using litter picking as a form of detention. However, Members agreed against this as it may conjure up negative associations and instead students should be encouraged to take pride in their environment;
- The possibility of creating a schools littering league table, displaying the total weight of the litter collected from outside each school in a week. However, it was felt that the results may be disputed given the close proximity of some schools to each other;
- Encouraging schools to get involved with litter picking by offering incentives such as a league table shield, financial benefits or passes for leisure activities; and
- The Council undertake a time-limited period of zero tolerance and give on spot fines to individuals who litter cigarette butts.

The Chairmen thanked the officers for attending.

The Web cast from this session is available at <http://clients.westminster-digital.co.uk/maidstone/archive.aspx> (00.06.00 to 01.10.00).

Resolved: That

- a) Officers produce and submit to the Committee a report on the success of enforcement with regard to litter;
- b) Officers investigate and replace any missing bins from Mote Park;
- c) Investigate the possibility of providing incentives to encourage schools to litter pick, such as financial benefits, free access to leisure services or a league table of amount of litter collected; and

- d) The Council undertake a well publicised time-limited period of zero tolerance and give on the spot fines to individuals who litter cigarette butts

58. Public Conveniences - Terms of Reference

Resolved: That the Scoping Report for the Public Conveniences Review be agreed.

59. Public Conveniences Review

The Committee interviewed the Environmental Services Manager, Mr Wells and the Street Scene Manager, Mr Hitchings in relation to their in-depth review into public conveniences. Following a short introduction from each witness outlining the initial findings of their internal review, the Committee discussed the following:

- The standard of the public conveniences offer. The Committee identified that the general standard of public conveniences was usually higher by those that had an attendant, were maintained by the private sector and/or those that charged;
- The findings of the internal review had highlighted a lack of signage and a lack of parent-baby changing facilities;
- The cleanliness and decorative state of public conveniences in Maidstone. The team was made up of seven cleaners and one supervisor. Town Centre toilets were cleaned around four times a day. However, the decorative state of many public conveniences was poor and gave the impression that they were not maintained;
- The findings of the toilet tour inspections. This highlighted that although public conveniences were functional, they generally required some maintenance, re-decoration and a deep clean;
- With regard to damage and maintenance, cleaners reported problems to Property Services and a support team repaired and replaced items such as toilet seats and soap dispenser. Contractors repaired locks or changed electrical lights within seven days;
- There were 24 public conveniences maintained by Maidstone Borough Council at a cost of £537, 590 per annum;
- Alternate methods of public convenience provision. This included a Maidstone Toilet Community scheme and an automatic public convenience funded by advertising- possibly as part of the high street improvements;
- The involvement of Parish Councils. This included the possibility of using them to monitor their public conveniences or to work in partnership with the Council;
- The requirement for a defined role and responsibility of Property Services against that of Environmental Services with regard to public conveniences to ensure appropriate procedures were in place;

- The impact to tourism of the standard of the public conveniences offer; and
- Town Centre Management's recommendations, including their support for the Community Toilet Scheme and improved signage.

The Chairman thanked the officers for attending and the Committee requested that the officers from property services attend a future meeting as part of the review.

The Web cast from this session is available at <http://clients.westminster-digital.co.uk/maidstone/archive.aspx> (01.15.35 to 02.04.45).

Resolved: That

- a) The evidence of the Environmental Services Manager and Street Scene Manager be included in the Committee's review of public conveniences; and
- b) Officers from Property Services be invited to attend a future meeting to respond to questions as part of the review.

60. Future Work Programme 2008-09

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer discussed the future work programme with the Committee, highlighting that an update would be received on memorial safety and that officers from Property Services would be in attendance to respond to questions regarding the public conveniences review. Members of the Committee agreed to complete the checklist for their allocated public convenience.

A Member informed the Committee that he had been disappointed with the response from Cabinet to the Committee's recommendations regarding the sustainable construction options for the new depot. The Committee agreed to keep a watching brief on this and requested officers provide an update once a decision had been made.

Resolved: That

- a) Members of the Committee take photos and complete the checklist for their allocated public convenience to bring to the Committees meeting on 28 October 2008;
- b) The Sustainable Construction options for the depot be added to the Committee's watching briefs and an update be received once a decision had been made.

61. Duration of the Meeting

6:30pm to 8.45pm.