

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **SPATIAL PLANNING STRATEGY ADVISORY GROUP**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2013**

**Present:** Councillor Lusty (Chairman), and  
Councillors Burton, Mrs Gooch, Harwood, Moss and  
Mrs Wilson

**Also Present:** Councillors Ash, Garland, Newton, Paine,  
Paterson and Springett

23. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

24. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no Substitute Members.

25. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillors Ash and Paterson indicated their wish to speak with regard to Agenda Item 10 – Landscape Character Assessment 2012. Councillors Newton, Paine and Springett were in attendance and Councillor Garland was in attendance to present Agenda Item 8 – Core Strategy/Local Plan Progress.

26. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

27. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

28. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

**RESOLVED:** That the Items on the Agenda be taken in public as proposed.

29. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Chairman confirmed that the Summary and the Amended Appendix C to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment – Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012 be taken as urgent items.

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 October 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed.

31. CORE STRATEGY/LOCAL PLAN PROGRESS

The Leader of the Council addressed the Group regarding the Core Strategy/Local Plan progress. He explained to the Group that the Council wanted to go for a housing target of 10,080 but that recently other authorities that have taken their Core Strategies to the Planning Inspectors for approval, have been denied because their housing figures were not high enough and did not have enough supporting evidence. He informed the Group that housing is one of the Prime Minister's priorities and that the implications for Maidstone are that we will need to re-consider our housing target upwards. Kent County Council and the Department for Communities and Local Government ("DCLG") have stated that the population trend means we would need to aim for an additional 16,000 home (this includes the original target of 10,080) for the period 2011-2031. It is important that there is a strong evidence base to support this.

The Leader mentioned that a new Strategic Housing Land Allocation Assessment ("SHLAA") was started just before Christmas and closes on 25 January 2013. A number of sites have now been submitted, but the indications are there will not be enough to provide the housing need. The results of the SHLAA will be available in 4-6 weeks.

He reminded the Group that the National Planning Policy Framework takes over in March 2013 and following consultation undertaken last year regarding development in the North West and South East of Maidstone, a report will come to Cabinet to recommend approving an interim Core Strategy and the allocation of strategic sites in these areas.

The Leader then addressed the Committee regarding the Integrated Transport Strategy ("ITS") saying that he knows it has not been a popular piece of work amongst Members of Maidstone Borough Council ("MBC") and Kent County Council ("KCC"). Cabinet will need to look at this later in the year. The Leader encouraged Members to remain open-minded, he was aware it was going to be controversial, but we need these documents to all be in place by the end of this year. This is the Leader's number one priority. A small group of KCC and MBC Members have been formed to look at the ITS in the hope of achieving a "coming together" on views.

The Leader then went on to address the distribution of the required housing. He said there were two "schools of thought" emerging from Members; i) consider the South East urban extension again and the Leeds/Langley by-pass, or ii) a free standing village near Harrietsham or Lenham. These ideas need to be worked through and a final decision made in the autumn.

Members raised concerns regarding the possible increase in the housing target and felt it was important that Members were shown the evidence for this new figure, the constraints to development in the Borough, liaison with neighbouring authorities and a vision for the Borough.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT:

1. That full information on how the new housing target is arrived at be circulated to all Members.
2. That Officers be urged to actively seek to evidence the constraints to development in this Borough, e.g. water supply, and infrastructure constraints.
3. That Officers be encouraged to raise horizons in relation to discussion with neighbouring authorities on how we can help their regeneration.
4. That a vision for the Borough spatial patterns, growth and regeneration sites and how we deliver that be made.

32. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2011/12

The Group considered the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment regarding the Annual Monitoring Report 2011/12.

Members were informed that a further graph at paragraph 2.2 needed to be inserted regarding net inward migration (persons).

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT:

That the Annual Monitoring Report 2011/12, including the further graph at paragraph 2.2, be approved and published on the Council's website.

33. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT 2012

The Group considered the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment regarding the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012.

An executive summary and an Amended Appendix C were circulated to Members at the meeting. Members were informed that this is essentially a document describing landscape character which can be used for land management purposes, through informing policy, landscape guidelines, development proposals and land managers on how to manage their land.

Members raised concern regarding interpretation and consistency within the Landscape Character Assessment ("LCA") document and felt that the pilot study should include the whole of the Medway Valley that runs through the Borough, rather than stopping at Tovil and that a specific

preamble should be included at the beginning of the document to explain the purpose of the document.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT:-

1. That the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012 be deferred so that a cross party discussion with Officers can take place to identify the inconsistencies and proof read the document and then the amended version be brought to a future meeting of this Group.
2. That parts of the adopted Maidstone Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines 2000 be saved and published as the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment Supplement 2012 (as set out in Appendix B to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment) as a material consideration in development management planning decisions.
3. That the methodology of the Landscape Value Pilot Study, as set out in Amended Appendix C to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment be endorsed.
4. That the whole of the Medway Valley from Laddingford to Allington Lock be the proposed Pilot Study Area.

34. DURATION OF MEETING

6.00 p.m. to 8.38 p.m.