

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY, LEISURE SERVICES AND
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16 JULY 2013**

PRESENT: Councillors Brindle, Mrs Gibson, Mrs Joy (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Mannering, D Mortimer, Newton and Yates

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

It was resolved that all items be web-cast.

12. Apologies.

Apologies were received from Councillors Ash, Beerling, Mrs Blackmore and Munford.

13. Notification of Visiting Members.

There were no Visiting Members.

14. Notification of Substitute Members.

Councillor Newton and Councillor D Mortimer attended as Substitute Members for Councillors Munford and Beerling respectively.

15. Disclosures by Members and Officers.

There were no disclosures.

16. To consider whether items on the agenda should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.

It was agreed that all items be taken in public as proposed.

17. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2013.

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June be agreed as a correct record and duly signed.

18. Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services - Priorities for the Municipal Year 2013/14

The Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services provided an overview of his priorities for the year (attached at **Appendix A**), highlighting five priority areas:

1. Young People;
2. Road Safety (Killed or seriously injured);
3. Health Inequalities (including families with 0-5 years);
4. Housing Services; and
5. Parks and Leisure Services.

The Committee questioned young people's involvement in the youth forum and whether or not this had increased. The Cabinet Member agreed to investigate this and provide Members with an update.

A Member of the Committee highlighted an issue with play facilities for young children near to Heather House in Park Wood being misused by young adults. The Committee requested an update on this, included information on alternative facilities available for older children/young adults in the area.

In relation to priority area 4, Housing Services, the Committee requested an update on the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation by Maidstone Borough Council for temporary housing.

It was resolved that:

- a) Further information be provided to the Committee on the youth forum and whether or not there has been increased involvement;
- b) The Committee be updated on its concerns regarding the play facilities for young Children at Heather House and the alternative facilities available for young adults in the area who are currently using them; and
- c) An update on the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation by Maidstone Borough Council for temporary housing be provided to the Committee.

19. Draft Report: Approval of a new Play Area Strategic Standard

The Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services provided an overview of the Play Areas review and the options going forward which had first come to Scrutiny in April 2013. It was at this meeting that the Committee had agreed for further work being undertaken on 'option 3' which would be reported back to Scrutiny.

Option 3 was the strategic standard for the provision of Play Areas in the borough. The criteria for which was to have a play area within 12 minute minutes walk for all residents across the borough. It was proposed that there would be an investment of £1.8 million to bring all Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Strategically Important Play Areas to a Green Standard. It was estimated that 20 MBC Non Strategically Important Play Areas would not be invested in. Non Strategically Important Play Areas would be offered to Community Groups and Parish Councils and MBC would offer support to these groups.

Jason Taylor, Park and Leisure Manager provided a verbal update to the Committee's recommendations (Appendix B).

In response to Members questions it was clarified that play equipment would be removed from non- strategically important sites within 1 year and returned to an open space if not taken on by another body (i.e. a community group or Parish Council).

A Member raised concerns about play areas being returned to open spaces and possible issues with misuse by older teenagers. Amanda Scott, Play Facilities Development Officer explained that older teenagers tended to go to areas where they could sit. Therefore if a play area was to become a non-strategically important play area and returned to an open space, it would become less attractive. It would also be more visible from the roadside to Police and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

The Chairman moved the recommendations in the report. Members agreed the recommendations as set out in paragraph 2 of the report with some additional wording.

It was resolved that the Committee agree the following recommendations, as set out in paragraph 2 of the draft report with some additional wording added which is highlighted in bold.

That the Cabinet Member agrees to:

- a) A new borough wide standard of play provision being "that most residents across the borough will live within 12 minutes walk of a good standard play area";
- b) Available funding in future is targeted at these Strategically Important Play Areas;
- c) That any non Strategically Important Play Areas be offered to the community **and added to the Community Right to Bid list of Assets**; and
- d) After one year any Non Strategically Important Play Areas that are not taken on by the public will have the equipment removed, but will be retained as open **space for perpetuity**.

20. Future Work Programme.

The Committee considered its Future Work Programme and the Committee's training needs. Members specified that they would like training in 'challenging' or questioning skills.

It was resolved that no changes be made to the Committee's work programme at present and training be organised on challenging and/or questioning skills.

21. Duration of Meeting.

6.30 p.m. to 7.40 p.m.