

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2021**

**Present:** Councillors Bartlett, Joy, McKenna, Mortimer, Newton, Purle (Chairman), M Rose, S Webb and Young

87. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

88. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no Substitute Members.

89. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Chairman informed the Committee that he would take an urgent item on the River Len Local Nature Reserve. The reason for urgency was public concern, and the item would be taken after Item 17 – Housing Allocation Scheme.

90. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

There were no Visiting Members.

91. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

92. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

93. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

**RESOLVED:** That all items be taken in public as proposed.

94. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2021**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

95. **PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS**

There were no petitions.

96. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

97. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

98. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

In response to questions, the Director of Regeneration and Place explained that the status of the planning application for Heather House and Pavilion had not changed since presented at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 10 February 2021. A report would be presented to this Committee once the application had been determined, however it was agreed that an update report could be brought back to the Committee in January or February 2022.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

99. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

100. REFERENCE FROM LICENSING COMMITTEE - DRAFT STREET TRADING POLICY 2021-2024

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the reference from the Licensing Committee and explained that the Street Trading Policy reflected the current practice and regulations on the Council's approach to the administration of the Street Trading Consent function. The new policy would be beneficial to applicants, officers and residents, and the Licensing Committee had recommended that the policy be approved.

**RESOLVED:** That the Street Trading Policy, attached at Appendix A to the reference, be approved.

101. PHASE 5 PURCHASE & REPAIR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ACQUISITION

The Housing Delivery Manager introduced the report and outlined the previous four phases of the programme, which had been successful in providing council-owned temporary accommodation. The Purchase and Repair programme provided a more cost-effective solution for temporary accommodation compared to nightly paid accommodation, and the need for further properties still existed. Each property considered for purchase would continue to be approved on a case-by-case basis, with a mix of units sought to accommodate a range of need. Ward Councillors would be notified of the council's intention to purchase any property that falls within their ward.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The addition of the £481,570 underspend from previous phases of the project to the capital programme allocation, giving a total of £3,007,570 for investment in further properties for use as temporary accommodation, be noted;
2. The Director of Regeneration and Place be given delegated authority to determine the size and type of temporary accommodation required; and
3. The Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to give delegated authority to the Director of Finance and Business Improvement to purchase properties for use as temporary accommodation up to the total value of £3,007,570 in consultation with the Chair of Policy and Resources.

102. CARAVAN SITES FIT & PROPER PERSON

The Community Protection Manager introduced the report and explained that legislation introduced in 2020 required local authorities to implement an assessment process for managers of mobile home sites to be a fit and proper person. The policies presented would only apply to relevant sites, and costs could be recovered as set out in the fee policy.

In response to questions, the Community Protection Manager explained that the fees suggested had been calculated to cover the exact costs of the assessment, as set out in the legislation.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The proposed Fit & Proper Person Fees Policy and the Fit & Proper Person Determination Policy, attached at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report, be approved, and
2. The Fit & Proper Person Fees Policy be reviewed after six months to ensure fees are appropriate and be brought back to Committee should amendments be required.

103. HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME

The Head of Housing and Community Services introduced the report and explained that the effect of the temporary changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme policy introduced in April 2020 had been reviewed. The aim of the changes was to encourage households to remain in current accommodation where possible and avoid the use of temporary accommodation. An increase of 92% in the number of successfully prevented homelessness cases had occurred for the period August 2020 to July 2021, compared to the period August 2019 to July 2020. The comparison of the two periods also showed a 27% decrease in the number of households placed into temporary accommodation and vacated within

the same 12 months, although the average length of stay was slightly longer.

**RESOLVED:** That the proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme, set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved and incorporated into Version 2.2 of the Housing Allocation Scheme, attached at Appendix B to the report.

104. URGENT ITEM: LEN RIVER LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

The Chairman introduced the urgent item and explained that a photograph had been received of litter accumulated in a section of the River Len within Len Valley Nature Reserve, along with reports of sewage contaminating the river. Input was requested as to whether an additional report should be brought to Committee on this issue or incorporated into existing reports.

The Director of Regeneration and Place gave a summary of actions taken and explained that a similar incident whereby sewage had leaked into the river had been reported to the Environment Agency (EA) in July 2021. A street cleansing team attended the site at that time, but a full response had not been received from the EA. Following notification of the most recent incident, another report was made to the EA who had confirmed receipt. An instruction had been issued to the duty officer to inspect the site, and it was expected that an update would be sent following the site visit. The street cleansing team would attend the site the following day to clear remaining litter.

In response to questions, the Director of Regeneration and Place indicated that the severity of the contamination reported previously had not caused a serious health and safety risk to the public visiting the nature reserve.

The Committee felt that a report should be added to the Work Programme with more information on the management, ownership and accountability of the river at the nature reserve.

**RESOLVED:** That a report on the litter and sewage leaks at the River Len within Len Valley Nature Reserve be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

105. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 7.09pm.