

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER 2022

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Louise Brice (Chairman), Mrs Gooch (Vice Chair), Brindle, Cannon, Cooke, Cox, Harper and English
Lead Members:	Councillors Perry (Lead Member for Corporate Services)

65. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Hinder and Khadka.

66. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor English was present as a Substitute Member for Councillor Khadka.

67. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

68. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

69. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

70. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

71. 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.

72. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2022 be agreed as a correct record, and signed.

73. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from Members of the Public.

74. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

75. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

76. FORWARD PLAN RELATING TO THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement informed the Committee that a further report regarding budgets would be presented to the Committee's January 2023 meeting, which would cover revenue, capital and council tax base proposals.

It was noted that the February 2023 meeting of the Committee had been rescheduled to Monday 6 February to allow the PAC to consider budget proposals ahead of the Executive meeting on Wednesday 8 February.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference be noted.

77. FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24

The Lead Member for Corporate Services introduced the report and outlined the key areas for the Committee's consideration. Fees and charges relating to legal services would increase by approximately five percent, and the Town Hall charges were significantly higher. The Committee's feedback was welcomed, particularly in regard to the Town Hall

The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement noted an error on the headings of Tables 3 and 5 of the report, which were a year out of date.

The Committee felt that the Town Hall could be utilised more as a venue for commercial and community events, although it was noted that this would require staffing numbers to be reviewed. An explanation of which types of letting would be classified as 'commercial' was requested to provide further clarity.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted, and that the Committee's comments be considered by the Executive.

78. PROCUREMENT POLICY CHANGES

The Lead Member for Corporate Services introduced the report and explained that the updates regarding sustainability would bring the procurement processes in line with the Council's aim to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Social Value Policy would ensure a rounded view of procurement and the impacts socially, and the Modern Slavery Statement would ensure procurement policies were in line with the Modern Slavery Act (2015). It was recognised that it may be difficult to implement some aspects of the policy, but that a partnership approach would be taken.

In response to questions, the Procurement Manager agreed that reference should be made to biodiversity within the Sustainable Procurement Policy, and it could

also be added to the Social Value Policy. Further explanation could be added to the Community Benefits bullet point in section 3 of the Social Value Policy, to include reference to the voluntary sector. Within the Modern Slavery Statement, reference could be made to the possibility of domestic servitude occurring in a family situation.

Some Members expressed concern that the policies would create barriers for some smaller local businesses, and that there should be support for those businesses to achieve the policy requirements.

In response to questions, the Procurement Manager explained that the Council did aim to be inclusive to local businesses and that outside of tender processes, small businesses could contact the Council for advice in achieving the necessary requirements to meet the Council's procurement standards. It was not possible at the current time to set up procurement frameworks specifically with local suppliers, however new legislation may allow this to be implemented in the future.

The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement confirmed that the contracts register was published and so information on the Council's contracts, including with small businesses, was publicly available.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Committee note the contents of the report;
2. The Lead Member be recommended to consider the following comments:
 - a. Reference to biodiversity be added to the both the Procurement Sustainability Policy and the Social Value Policy;
 - b. Reference to community groups and voluntary organisations be added to the bullet point on community benefits, in the Social Value Policy;
 - c. Reference to the potential occurrence of domestic servitude in family situations be added to the Modern Slavery Statement;
3. Updates be provided to Members on work being carried out to engage local businesses, including the potential for implementing procurement frameworks for local suppliers; and
4. A breakdown of contracts awarded by the Council be provided alongside the annual review of procurement policies, to include business type, size and location.

79. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.13 p.m.

Note: The Committee adjourned between 7.25 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. due to technical difficulties, and parts of the meeting are unavailable on the YouTube webcast.