

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 14 MARCH 2023

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors McKenna (Chairman), Newton, Bartlett, Brindle, Fort, Young, Cleator and Conyard
Lead Members:	Councillor Parfitt-Reid, Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement Councillor S Webb, Lead Member for Housing and Health
Visiting Members:	Councillors Jeffery, Round, Russell and S Webb

139. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Khadka and Rose.

140. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Conyard was present as Substitute for Councillor Khadka.

Councillor Cleator was present as Substitute for Councillor Rose.

141. URGENT ITEMS

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 February 2023 had been circulated for approval by the Committee, and would be taken under Item 8 – Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 February 2023 – To Follow.

142. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillors Jeffery, Round, Russell and S Webb were in attendance as Visiting Members for Item 14 – KCC Community Services Consultation Response.

143. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

In relation to Item 14 – KCC Community Services Consultation Response, Councillor Cleator stated that she was employed by Kent County Council (KCC) and Councillors Parfitt-Reid and S Webb stated that they were also KCC Members.

144. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

145. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

146. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2023

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 February 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

147. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

148. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from Local Residents.

149. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

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

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

151. REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE SERVICE POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE - UTILISATION OF HOUSING

The Democratic Services Officer briefly introduced the referenced received from the Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee, following that Committee's consideration of the Council Tax Base 2023/24 and Collection Fund Adjustment item at its January 2023 meeting. The relevant Lead Member and Officers were referenced.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be requested to produce a report with any further information as to the nature of any unoccupied properties and their future utilisation.

152. KCC COMMUNITY SERVICES CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement introduced the report, stating that Kent County Council (KCC) were consulting on the way community services were delivered across the Kent Districts. The proposals affected Maidstone with the proposed closure of two children's centres in the Marden and Yalding and East Wards, with the adult education centre to be moved from the High Street Ward to Bridge Ward.

The Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement stated that following an assessment of the proposals and supporting data provided, it was felt that the proposals' impacts to Maidstone had not been properly considered. The consultation response attached at appendix A to the report reflected that residents should have access to these services and was substantiated with the 2021 Census data and health inequalities data that had not supplemented the

proposals originally. The impact to vulnerable residents within the wards where the services were currently provided was emphasised, if the proposals were agreed by KCC, particularly to the High Street and Shepway North Wards which were classed as areas of significant deprivation. The minor data errors contained within appendix A to the report were outlined.

The workshops proposed by KCC to discuss the data supporting the proposals with the other district authorities had not taken place.

The committee expressed support for the comments made by the Visiting Members, emphasising the points raised, including: the proposals would reduce KCC's carbon footprint, but would increase Kent's carbon footprint as the number of journeys to the alternative sites proposed would increase; the significant costs, increased travel time and unreliability associated with using public transport to access the proposed alternative sites; the lack of and increased age of the data accompanying the proposals and the detrimental impacts that would be experienced by vulnerable individuals and families, particularly in areas of deprivation, through moving the facilities.

The Officers were thanked for the work undertaken and the detail contained within the papers.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to submit the response attached at Appendix A to the report on behalf of the Council, in accordance with the Committee's comments.

153. PURCHASE & REPAIR, TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ACQUISITION (PHASE 6) AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND

The Lead Member for Housing and Health introduced the report and referenced the £32 million within the Council's capital programme allocated to purchasing and repairing properties for use as temporary accommodation. The projected spend across the next three years was outlined, with particular attention drawn to the Local Authority Housing Fund. The Council's portion of the fund totalled just under £2.5 million and could be used to supplement the proposed purchases.

The committee expressed support for the programme's continuation but felt that further oversight was needed from the Lead Member for Housing and Health on the types of properties to be purchased. To achieve this, it was recommended that the delegation to the Director of Regeneration and Place be given subject to the requirement for the Lead Member for Housing and Health to be consulted on the matter. In response to questions, the Lead Member for Housing and Health referenced the robust, open discussions they had with the Director of Regeneration and Place as part of their working relationship, and that they would like to purchase larger properties.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to

1. Give delegated authority to the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing and Health, to determine the exact size, quantum and type of temporary accommodation required;
2. Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing and

Health, to purchase properties as determined by the Director of Regeneration and Place in recommendation 1, for use as temporary accommodation up to the total value of £15.8 million in 2023/24;

3. Participate in the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) in accordance with its allocation set out in the report, and for the Director of Regeneration and Place to finalise the deployment of those monies in consultation with the portfolio holder for Housing and Health; and
4. Give delegated authority to the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services to negotiate and complete all necessary legal documentation and formalities to give effect to these recommendations.

154. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.14 p.m.