

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2024

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Knatchbull (Chairman), Eagle, Hastie, Joy, Khadka, Mortimer, Riordan, Rose and Springett
Cabinet Members:	Councillors Garten, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Parfitt-Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Health

128. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jeffery.

129. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Eagle was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Jeffery.

130. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

131. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

132. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

133. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

134. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public, unless any Member of the Committee wished to discuss Item 14 – Exempt Appendix 1: Tender Cost, in which case the Committee would enter into closed session due to the possible disclosure of exempt information, for the reason specified having applied the public interest test.

135. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2024

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed.

136. 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.

137. DRAFT KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services introduced the report and stated that it was proposed to increase the number of key performance indicators for the Committee's services. This would bring the Council in line with the Office of Local Government (OFLOG)'s online monitoring tool which compared local government performance and metrics. An online dashboard of the Committee's key performance indicators would also be created and reports on the indicators would be provided to the Committee biannually.

The Committee agreed that the additional key performance indicators were necessary and an online dashboard for the Committee's key performance indicators would be useful.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET: That

1. The draft Performance Indicators at Appendix A of the report be agreed, and;
2. The changes to reporting arrangements be noted.

138. 3RD QUARTER FINANCIAL UPDATE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services introduced the report and stated that:

- The Council was projecting a net overspend of £606,000 for the Committee's services, and as an authority a net overspend of £239,000 for the 2023/24 financial year;
- The largest overspend in the Committee's budget was £990,000 for providing homeless temporary accommodation and there was a slippage in the Capital programme of £14.6 million to 2024/25;
- There were two red key performance indicators: the number of affordable homes delivered, and the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting; and,
- The number of affordable homes delivered was outside of the Council's control and the percentage of household waste sent for recycling was partially impacted by seasonal factors.

RESOLVED: That the following be noted:

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 3 for 2023/24, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified;
2. The Capital position at the end of Quarter 3 for 2023/24;

3. The Performance position as at Quarter 3 for 2023/24, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified; and
4. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund update, attached at Appendix 3 of the report.

Note: Councillor Hastie arrived during the consideration of the item at 6.38 p.m. and had no disclosures or disclosures of lobbying.

139. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2024-2029

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Health introduced the item and stated that the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 had achieved its objectives despite multiple crises including the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and a cost of living crisis. An estimated 1,000 people approached the Council in the last year over homelessness. It was stated that after consultation with service users, stakeholders, Council Officers and Councillors that the priorities of the previous strategy were still relevant and would continue. These included: prevention, accommodation, support for vulnerable groups and alleviation of rough sleeping.

In response to questions the Head of Housing and Regulatory Services stated that certain groups were ineligible for Homelessness assistance, and that included individuals granted a sponsorship visa, students from overseas and those not entitled to public funds. It was stated that Council Housing Officers provided advice to tenants that had been served no fault evictions and that the government was seeking to repeal no fault evictions through the Renters Reform Bill.

The Committee welcomed the strategy and emphasised that the priorities of the previous strategy had been recognised as relevant in the consultation.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to CABINET: That the new Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy attached in Appendix B of the report, be adopted.

140. DEMOLITION CONTRACT - APPROVAL TO DEMOLISH FORMER ROYAL MAIL SORTING OFFICE BUILDINGS AND CANTIUM HOUSE

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Health introduced the report and stated that planning permission (prior approval) to demolish the Former Royal Mail Sorting Officer buildings and Cantium House had been granted by the Council's Planning Committee. It was proposed to enter the demolition contract with the preferred tenderer in order to secure the monies from the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF). The existing tenants of the building had been served notice and were due to leave at the end of March 2024.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to CABINET: That

1. The demolition of the existing buildings at the Former Royal Mail Sorting Officer and Cantium House site be approved, taking note of the contents of the report and tender information in Appendix 1 of the report;

2. The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement, be given delegated authority, to appoint the preferred demolition contract to carry out the necessary works as per the recommended tender price, inclusive of contingency, stated in the exempt appendix of the report; and
3. The Head of Mid Kent Legal Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, be authorised to negotiate and complete all necessary demolition contracts, deeds and agreements arising from or ancillary to the demolition application.

141. EXEMPT APPENDIX 1: TENDER COST

RESOLVED: That the item be considered alongside Item 13 – Demolition Contract – Approval to demolish Former Royal Mail Sorting Office buildings and Cantium House.

142. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.