

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7  
JUNE 2011**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mrs Wilson, Mrs Gooch, Barned, English,  
Mrs Gibson, Hogg, Paine and Pickett

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

**Resolved:** That all items be web-cast.

**13. Apologies.**

Councillor Harwood sent his apologies.

**14. Notification of Substitute Members.**

Councillor English substituted for Councillor Harwood.

**15. Notification of Visiting Members.**

There were no Visiting Members.

**16. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

The question of what made a good Chairman was something that some Members felt needed to be explored as the Committee had yet to appoint a Chairman for the year. The Committee discussed the position they were in with regards to appointing a Chairman. Following the recommendation sent to the Standards Committee which was to be examined at the following day's Meeting, Members agreed that the appointment of Chairman should be deferred.

**It was resolved that:**

- a) The Committee would undertake the suggested Skills of Chairman task at the end of the Meeting as part of the the future work programme item;
- b) Councillor Fay Gooch would be appointed as temporary Chairman for the Meeting; and
- c) Councillor Stephen Paine would be appointed as temporary Vice-Chairman for the Meeting.

## **17. Disclosures by Members and Officers:**

Councillors Gooch, English and Gibson disclosed an interest in Item 9, Work Programming, in respect of the suggested topic 'Concurrent Functions'. This was by virtue of their positions on their respective Parish Councils, Barming, Tovil and Headcorn. In addition to this Councillor English also highlighted his position on the Kent Association of Local Councils, Parish representatives.

Councillor English disclosed that he had been lobbied in relation to Item 9, Work Programming, and the afore mentioned 'Concurrent Functions' suggested topic.

## **18. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.**

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

## **19. Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 May 2011**

Members highlighted an error on page one of the minutes and made suggestions for amendments on page two and five of the minutes.

**It was resolved that:** subject to the amendment of the minutes as follows:

- i) Cllr Gooch be added to the list of attendees;
- ii) Minute 5 second sentence be amended to replace Councillor Paine with Councillor de Wiggondene; and
- iii) An additional sentence be added to paragraph 3 of minute 5 to reflect the discussion on the role of shadow cabinet members.

the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed by the Chairman.

## **20. Work Programming**

The Chairman introduced the Work Programming item to the Committee, which had begun, in part, at the previous meeting. The Chairman explained that she had sought advice from the Officer in charge of Concurrent Functions, Zena Cooke, and it had been explained that work had already begun on this, following on from the Best Value Review. A Member informed the Committee that an exploratory meeting had taken place and advised that it was a sensitive issue and it maybe not the most appropriate time for the Committee to be involved. Members gave the topic some consideration and resolved that the Committee would be best placed to look at this topic at stage two of the process which would involve asset management and devolution of functions, areas appropriate to the Committee's remit. Members highlighted that Concurrent Functions was an area many Councillors would have very little knowledge of;

therefore it was felt that it would be beneficial for all Members to be informed.

Councillors moved on to the other suggested topics that would form part of their work programme for the year. 'The Council as a Business' was suggested as a review topic, exploring the financial restraints the Council face and how savings and income generation could be achieved in a more innovative manner. Members suggested that their starting point would be to firstly answer the question: is the Council a Business? They felt that the review topic would provide the opportunity to demonstrate the four scrutiny principles which included providing the 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision makers and enabling the voice and concerns of the public.

The Committee was unanimous in their support of the review but immediately appreciated its expense. Looking at their other suggested topics they decided to combine elements of those that related to the issue of the council as a business, making it their major review for the year with one other, one off review.

Members decided to use the meeting as an opportunity scope the topic with the Head of Change and Scrutiny. They discussed the outcomes the review could achieve and the witnesses and research that would be beneficial. They decided that the timescale for the review should be 6-9 months and would aim to feed into the Budget Strategy in January 2012 by making a preliminary report in December 2011. If the review required more time then a substantive report could be made after the budget to feed into future planning.

#### **It was resolved that**

- a) The Best Value Review that had been carried out on Concurrent Functions should be looked at as a basis for providing a briefing note to all 55 Councillors. This should be a principled overview rather than an in depth report; and
- b) 'The Council as a Business' would be the Committee's major review topic for the year and 'Community Halls' would become a one off review.

## **21. Future Work Programme**

The Committee discussed their future work programme, giving consideration to the Forward Plan. Members discussed the Leader and Cabinet Member Updates. The Leader and Cabinet Members were due to come to the Committee's next meeting to update them on their priorities at the start of a new Municipal year.

The Head of Change and Scrutiny facilitated a discussion with the Committee on the skills and qualities they felt made a good Chairman. These included:

- An understanding of Council Budgets and Policies & willing to learn;
- Facilitation skills;
- People skills;
- Listening skills;
- Open mindedness;
- To be able to allow and shape discussion without dominating it; and
- To be reflective.

It was also felt that the role of Vice-Chairman should be seen as an opportunity to grow and develop, with a view to becoming Chairman.

**It was resolved that:**

- a) Written Updates should be requested from the Leader and Cabinet Members for the next meeting, giving the Committee the opportunity to formulate questions and invite them to a later meeting; and
- b) The Budget Strategy should be timetabled to come to the Committee's August Meeting.

**22. Duration of Meeting**

6.30p.m. to 19.33 p.m.