

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 30
APRIL 2013**

PRESENT: Councillors English, Mrs Gibson, Mrs Gooch
(Chairman), Hogg, Moss, Pickett, Mrs Stockell and
Yates.

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

It was agreed that all items be web-cast as proposed.

99. Apologies.

Apologies were received from Councillor Grigg.

100. Notification of Substitute Members.

There were no Substitute Members.

101. Notification of Visiting Members.

There were no Visiting Members.

102. Disclosures by Members and Officers.

There were no disclosures.

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

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

104. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2013.

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 April be agreed as a correct record and duly signed.

105. Review of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Priorities for the Municipal Year 2012-13.

The Leader and members of the Cabinet provided the Committee with an end of year update on their priorities for the past year.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Leisure highlighted the following areas within his portfolio:

- The adoption of a new Housing Allocation Scheme;
- Empty Homes – 120 had been brought back into use against a target of 67;
- Domestic Violence was a continued priority. This involved tackling the number of repeat victims;
- Road Safety remained a high priority;
- Maidstone had become a British Heart Foundation 'heart' town; and
- There was an ambition to have a sporting federation in Maidstone.

The Cabinet Member for Environment highlighted the following areas:

- £1m savings per year had been achieved as a result of the new Waste Contract in partnership with Ashford and Swale;
- Glass and all types of plastics would now go into the same recycling bin as part of the new contract arrangements;
- A new Commercial Waste service was being offered. There were approximately 38 customers; and
- There would be a zero tolerance on litter enforcement and fly tipping.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration highlighted the following areas:

- Phase 2 of the Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery (KIMS) was underway and there would be a public consultation on 9 May 2013 at the Hilton Maidstone;
- KIMS would bring 400 jobs to Maidstone;
- Signage in Maidstone was to be replaced – the 1st phase of this would take place later in the month;
- The vacant Army and Navy store on Week Street was to be occupied by Morrison's with Housing above;
- Discussions regarding future development at Maidstone East were ongoing;
- There was money available through English Heritage to move forward The development site at Wren's Cross;
- Visitor Economy Business Unit (VEBU) were looking to maximise on the council's assets, including Jubilee Square by putting Events Management in place to develop the economic benefit;
- The closure of King Street Car Park and possibility of the adjacent bowling alley becoming vacant provided an opportunity to explore; and
- Investment Plan – this was ongoing.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services highlighted the following areas from his portfolio as achievements from the past year:

- Development of a Procurement and Commissioning Strategy;
- Unreasonable Complaints Policy;
- Asset management Strategy;
- Shared Service – finalised IT shared service with TW and Legal with Tunbridge Wells and Swale;

- Customer Services Improvement plan – addressing the preferred way in which the public want to communicate with the Council; and
- Confirmed the future use of the Town Hall was to be linked to an enhanced mayoralty.

The Leader reported on the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development, making the following points:

- The development of the Local Plan provided a number of options for members to explore in relation to Transport, Housing and Growth;
- Any Transport Strategy would be controversial;
- The Leader highlighted need for an evidence based local Plan in light a number of Las plans rejected on belief;
- The Council had made a 'call for sites' via its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), 160 sites had come forward so far;
- This process demonstrated an evidence , robust planning approach to defend Maidstone's housing need; and
- If there was no Local Plan in place, the result for Maidstone would be a 'Developers charter.'

In response to Members questions, the Leader explained that Cabinet had taken the decision to have an interim Local Plan to allocate strategic sites in February 2013 inline with Government regulations. Councillor Garland informed the Committee that the timetable involved the undertaking of a SHLAA and housing assessment, once completed the Council would have an estimated final housing target and a Local Plan by next year.

Members questioned how the public would be informed. They were informed that it would be a priority for the Head Communication to manage the local plan process in the next Municipal Year.

It was resolved that the Leader and Cabinet Member updates be noted.

106. Equalities Policy

Clare Wood, Performance and Scrutiny Officer introduced the Equalities Policy to the Committee which the Council had a duty to update as a result of the Equalities Act 2010.

There were 9 protected characteristics .The Council had carried out consultation on the Equalities Policy and as a result it would be updated on an annual basis.

The Committee considered the policy. A member of the Committee highlighted to the officer that there was some discussion on the inclusion of a 10th characteristic which could result in an earlier review of the document than expected.

The Committee discussed the characteristic 'gender reassignment' and recommended to the officer that an expert be consulted with when the policy was revised.

The Committee commented on the wording of the footnote on Page 21 of the document and recommended that this be reviewed before the publication of a final version.

It was resolved that:

- a) The wording of the footnote on page 21 be reviewed before the publication of a final version;
- b) An expert in gender reassignment be consulted with when the policy is next revised.

107. Draft Capital Programme Review Report

The Committee considered the draft Capital Programme Review report. It agreed that it should go forward to Cabinet for approval.

It was resolved that the Capital Programme Review report be agreed.

108. Future Work Programme 2013-14 and Outcomes 2012-13

The Committee considered the report on the Future Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny and the outcomes of its recommendations for the past Municipal Year.

Members felt that there should be a follow up on past reviews in the forthcoming Municipal Year and made reference to the Disability Review.

It was recommended that there be a follow up on the implementation of past reviews, citing the Disability Review as an example.

109. Duration of meeting.

10am to 12.30pm