

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 15 JULY 2014

Present: Councillor J.A. Wilson (Chairman), and
Councillors Mrs Joy, D Mortimer, Munford, Round and
Sargeant

Also Present: Councillors Newton, Perry and
Mrs Ring

12. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEB-CAST

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be webcast.

13. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Watson.

14. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members present.

15. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

It was noted Councillor Newton was in attendance as a visiting member.

Councillor Perry and Councillor Ring were in attendance as Visiting Members, present as witnesses for item 11 - Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services and Cabinet Member for Environment – Priorities for the Municipal Year 2014-15.

John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services was in attendance for item 8 – Review of the operation of the Allocation Scheme 2013-14.

Gary Stevenson, Head of Environment and Street Scene was in attendance for item 11 - Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services and Cabinet Member for Environment – Priorities for the Municipal Year 2014-15.

Ellie Kershaw, Programme Manager (Financial Inclusion and Maidstone Families Matter) was in attendance for item 9 - Maidstone Families Matter Programme Update and item 10 - Financial Inclusion and Capability.

16. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures.

17. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

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

18. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2014

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. ORDER OF THE AGENDA

RESOLVED: That agenda item 11 be taken before agenda item 8.

20. CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND LEISURE SERVICES AND CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT - PRIORITIES FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014 - 15

Community and Leisure Services priorities for 2014-15

Councillor Perry presented his priorities for the 2014-2015 Municipal Year and explained the rationale behind them.

During discussions and questioning the following points were raised:

Parish Liaison:

- The planned work under the heading of Parish Liaison was ambitious. The staff team were keen to get started and were planning visits and meetings with parishes and the Cabinet member. Plans were afoot to delegate some of the work, with the 41 parishes in the borough, to council members;
- Parish Liaison included communities as well as parishes;
- More help would be provided to the smaller parishes and would be proportionate to the size of the parish;
- The Parish services scheme would be mapped out to see what could and could not be changed;
- In terms of performance against priorities for Parish Liaison, the Cabinet member agreed it would be useful for him to report back on:
 - Partnerships formed
 - Outcomes achieved

- Results for residents;
- Regarding the allocation of sites for the Local Plan housing numbers, (allocation and spatial issues) once known – the Cabinet member confirmed these would be looked at at Parish level and relevant evidence put forward as part of the consultation process;
- The Cabinet member explained he believed the Local Plan should take a whole community, two pronged (parish and borough), approach with neighbourhood plans taken into account and he would not be limited by the time frame of the Local Plan to make this happen;

Parks and Leisure:

- The Committee agreed it would be useful to look at ownership of allotments along with fairness of allocation of allotment sites;

Supporting Disadvantaged Communities:

- The Cabinet member confirmed his plan regarding community work would not just be based on disadvantaged families. It would focus on the priority work being done in communities where it would make the biggest difference, for example rural communities, elderly. The Cabinet member stated communities would be at the heart of the Parish Charter.

Environment priorities for 2014-2015

Councillor Ring presented her priorities for the coming Municipal year.

During discussion and questioning the following points were highlighted:

- It was noted the freighter service would not be discontinued. European Union laws prevented the council from picking up certain items. During August 2014 the Cabinet member and staff would be going out with the collection service to establish why people used it, how often and gather ideas for other ways of delivering the service, for example charities collecting old furniture etc.;

Street Scene Standards

- Street scene standards re-introduced the 'ward walks' with a new way of measuring the standards. Stakeholders responsible for maintaining the street scene standards (ie police, private and social landlords, Kent County council) had been invited to attend and assist with rating the standards and putting things right;
- Concern had been raised regarding maintaining the standards. It was hoped by making improvements it would influence a change in residents' behaviour to maintain the standards;

- The Cabinet member explained street cleaners had an 'app' on their mobile phone that enabled them to report repairs, fly tipping etc. needing attention while on site. This had resulted in a reduction in the time between reporting the issue and it being dealt with;
- The reduction of littering from passing cars had been looked at by the Kent Resource Partnership of 13 councils;

Bereavement Services

- The Cabinet member explained the provision of a florist at the crematorium was a new idea looking at ways of making residents' council tax go further and accepted it may be in competition with local florist businesses;

Flooding

- The Cabinet member confirmed the workshop on flooding would be attended by the Environment Agency and would be held in time to action ideas on how to deal with floods better;

Housing

- The Housing Strategy review would take place in six months in line with the Local Plan affordable housing policy;

Maidstone Town Centre Community Toilet Scheme

- The Cabinet member confirmed the Community Toilet scheme worked well and she planned to visit every toilet in the borough during the year. No toilets in the scheme would be shut unless minimum standards were not met;
- The Cabinet member stated portable toilet facilities were too expensive and there was no funds available to build more. The aim was to improve what was already available.

RESOLVED: That the:

- a. Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services and the Cabinet Member for Environment priorities for the Municipal year 2014-2015 be noted;
- b. Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services report back to the Committee, in terms of performance against priorities for Parish Liaison, on:
 - Partnerships formed
 - Outcomes achieved
 - Results for residents

- c. Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure services investigate ownership of allotments along with fairness of allocation of sites.

21. REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE ALLOCATION SCHEME 2013/14

John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services presented the report and outlined the main points.

During discussion and questioning the following points were raised:

- Information days to HM Forces explaining their eligibility to housing in the borough using local connection criteria had an anecdotal effect on the number of lettings to ex-service personnel;
- The council cooperated with local authorities and social housing providers outside of the borough using mutual exchange as a means to move;
- The figure considered as sufficient funds (to access the private rented accommodation or purchase) of £30,000 (10.4 of the Allocation Scheme document) was reviewed annually with stakeholders;
- Prison applicants who had worked in the community while serving their sentence would be able to apply the local connection criteria provided the work was on-going after their release;
- The lack of 1 bedroom units was due to increased demand and units demolished through regeneration work not being replaced. The figures gathered would be used to demonstrate the need and encourage further development.

RESOLVED: That the report reviewing the operations of the Allocation Scheme 2013/14 be noted.

22. MAIDSTONE FAMILIES MATTER PROGRAMME UPDATE

Ellie Kershaw, Programme Manager (Financial Inclusion and Maidstone Families Matter) presented her report.

An update since the report had been published was provided as follows:

- The programme worked with 182 families. More referrals had been received and would continue to be accepted after the 189 targeted families identified had been reached;
- There was no information on what the programme would look like after April 2015 other than the criteria would increase from 23 to 29 points. This was considered a positive move;
- A calculator was being developed by the Department for Communities and Local Government. It was hoped this would

provide regular reports on the cost benefits of improvements made by the programme;

- Gypsy and Traveller families were accepted onto programme provided they met the criteria. The referrals came from a number of sources for example, education and the Community Safety team.

RESOLVED: that the report on the Maidstone Families Matter programme be noted and the Committee receive regular progress reports.

23. FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND CAPABILITY

Ellie Kershaw, Programme Manager (Financial Inclusion and Maidstone Families Matter) presented her report.

Ms Kershaw explained a seminar for front line workers on 17 July 2014 had attracted 60 organisations. The seminar focussed on providing information on where service users could get financial support.

Special projects for older people, school children and digital inclusion were being considered.

The Committee agreed to feed in ideas to the project when receiving regular project updates and not take the project forward as a review topic.

RESOLVED: That the:

- a. Financial Inclusion and Capability report be noted, and;
- b. Committee receive regular updates on the work of the Financial Inclusion and Capability project.

24. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That:

- a. The items detailed on the Future Work Programme (Appendix A of the report) be agreed;
- b. An email be sent to all committee members and substitutes asking for interested members to form a working group to meet with Zena Cook, Director of Regeneration and Communities on 22 July 2014 to scope the reviews of:
 - Health and Wellbeing Boards, and;
 - Adult and Older People Services,

- c. The scoping documents for the Health and Wellbeing Board review and the Adult and Older People Services review be prepared for consideration by the Committee at the meeting of 12 August 2014;
- d. Anne Barnes, Kent Police Crime Commissioner be invited to the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 October 2014.

25. DURATION OF MEETING

18:30 to 20:18