

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present: Councillor Mrs Gooch (Chairman), and
Councillors Ash, Butler, Edwards-Daem, Mrs Grigg, Long,
Pickett and Mrs Stockell

Also Present: Councillor English

48. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEBCAST

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be webcast.

49. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs Parvin.

50. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

51. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

Councillor English was in attendance.

52. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

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

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

54. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 AUGUST 2014

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 August 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

55. COMPLAINTS REPORT QUARTER 1 2014/2015

Senior Corporate Policy Officer, Christian Scade, introduced the Complaints Report for Quarter 1, and made reference to the number of complaints that were received with regard to the Landed Festival, the number of complaints received overall and the number that were responded to outside of time. The Committee questioned the presentation of numerical data in the report and were advised that the use of these would be considered in future reports.

In response to questions regarding the Landed Festival the Parks and Leisure Manager, Jason Taylor, explained that:

- The event organisers did not breach any restrictions or licenses;
- The sound limit of 69 decibels was adhered to, as was set out in the Purple Guide written by The Events Industry Forum in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive;
- The same sound levels were used without detriment during events held in Mote Park, which suggested that the geographical location of Whatman Park may have contributed to the issue. However it was noted that both the Proms in the Park and the Outdoor Cinema that were held in Whatman Park had not attracted complaints, which indicated that the issue was not simply volume but also the type and duration of sound vibrations;
- Ward members had not been consulted on the event as no issues were expected to arise; and
- During the event affected residents contacted the out of hours phone number which connected to Medway Contact Centre, however it had been reported that there had been issues in getting information across to the Enforcement Officers at the site of the event.

The Head of Finance and Resources, Paul Riley, addressed the Committee with regard to Electoral Registration complaints and advised that:

- There was no overall theme for complaints received;
- Two complaints received regarding a canvasser and a teller were the responsibility of the relevant political parties, however these had also been recorded as complaints by Maidstone BC; and
- The complaints that received late responses had been adversely affected by prioritisation of the May 2014 local election. The service had also experienced additional pressure due to the need for an additional permanent staff member, delayed canvassing, preparation for a new individual electoral registration system, and the introduction of temporary election staff.

In response to questions the Head of Finance and Resources explained that:

- New job descriptions had been formulated to take into account changes to electoral registration. The new system would mean the majority of registrations would occur online, and that data matching between Local Authorities and Central Government would be projected to achieve a 90% accuracy rate for information.

Members wished to draw attention to the table a 1.11.1 of the report, and the later statement at 1.11.5, and requested that clarification on the levels of

complaints received compared to compliments received by each service be reported back to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That the performance in relation to quarter 1 complaints be noted, in particular:
 - a) The high number of complaints received about the 'Landed Festival' held on Easter Sunday at Whatman Park;
 - b) The increase in overall numbers of complaints as a result of this festival; and
 - c) The higher than usual number of complaints received about electoral registration, including the high proportion of complaints responded to outside of target time for this service.
- 2 That the compliments received by teams and individual officers be noted.
- 3 That the prominent themes mentioned on social media during quarter 1 be noted.
- 4 That the Head of Commercial and Economic Development be asked to consider distributing event notices for the attention of ward members, to ensure members are informed, and able to offer advice on events/festivals planned for their wards.
- 5 That the presentation of the complaints report, with particular reference to the communication of numerical data and use of percentages, be reconsidered by report authors for future reports.
- 6 That the Shared Head of Environment and Public Realm be asked to ensure Medway Council's out of hours Contact Centre are aware of event/festivals taking place across Maidstone borough to ensure if complaints are received out of hours, these are passed on to the appropriate MBC staff to deal with in a timely fashion.
- 7 That the communication process between Medway Contact Centre and Maidstone BC be clarified and reported back to the Committee via a SCRAIP update.
- 8 That clarification be provided by the report author on sections 1.11.1 and 1.11.5 of the report with regard to the levels of complaints and compliments received per service.

56. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME AND SCRAIP UPDATE

Senior Corporate Policy Officer Christian Scade introduced the Future Work Programme and SCRAIP update report.

During discussion it was agreed that:

- The Irrecoverable Business Rates report should come to Committee in conjunction with the Debt Recovery Policy;
- The terms of reference of the Budget Working Group should be altered to include wording that incorporates the challenging of information;
- The Budget Working Group should be cross party with an invitation extended to Labour members. In the event that a member was unable to attend a substitute should be invited to attend in their place; and
- The Budget Working Group should be open to all members of the Council who had an interest in attending.

RESOLVED:

1. That the future work programme be noted and agreed subject to the inclusion of the following items: Irrecoverable Business Rates and Debt Recovery Policy (Date TBC)
2. That the List of Forthcoming Decisions be noted.
3. That the terms of reference for the Budget Working Group be agreed subject to the following amendments:
 - i. Considering the information and challenging assumptions used to create the strategic revenue projection
 - ii. Considering and challenging the level of resources available to support the programme
 - b) That the Budget Working group be a cross-party group comprising of Councillors Ash, Butler, Edwards-Daem, English, Mrs Grigg, and Mrs Gooch, with a Labour member to be invited to attend as a member, and substitutes be asked to attend where possible when apologies are received.
 - c) That all members be invited to attend and contribute to meetings held by the Budget Working Group.
 - d) That the date of the first meeting be arranged, outside of the meeting, by the scrutiny team.
4. That the SCRAIP update for recommendations made at the meetings on 7 July and 8 July be noted.
5. That, in support of continuous professional development, a Challenging and Questioning training activity be provided to members, and that members of the Budget Working Group advise officers should additional specific training sessions be required.

57. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.49 p.m.