

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Scrutiny Coordinating Committee**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 APRIL 2014**

**Present:** Councillor Barned (Chairman), and  
Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Mrs Gooch, Mrs Grigg,  
McLoughlin, Paterson and Mrs Wilson

23. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Joy.

24. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no notifications.

25. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS OR OFFICERS

There were no disclosures.

26. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2014

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2014 be received and approved and the Chairman be authorised to sign them.

27. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT 2014/15

Christian Scade, Senior Corporate Policy Officer, provided an update on the work that had taken place to develop work programming workshops for the first round of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in 2014/15.

It was noted that a Communications Plan had been developed and it was explained that feedback, provided by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee in February 2014, had been used to develop aims and objectives for the workshops.

The following issues were discussed:

- The roles of Overview and Scrutiny
  - Holding to Account
  - Policy Development
  - Policy Review
  - Performance Management
  - External Scrutiny
- The value of in depth scrutiny – it was agreed that review suggestions should be prioritised;

- The relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny and how this could be developed moving forward;
- The need for Overview and Scrutiny to be involved earlier in decision making processes;
- The use of the Future Work Programme item and List of Forthcoming Decisions by each Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- The importance of inviting all Councillors to each workshop;
- Proposals regarding budget scrutiny – it was noted that options would be considered by Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services OSC in June 2014;
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee membership;
- The importance of the workshops being held on an informal basis.

It was suggested that the following information should be made available at each workshop: (i) budget information for each service area and (ii) terms of reference for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee agreed key officers should be invited to take part in the workshops as this would enable scrutiny to gain a better understanding of major pieces of work, applicable to each Committees terms of reference.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- a) The report be noted;
- b) The Committee's feedback (outlined above) be used to develop an effective work programming workshop for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## 28. CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

The Committee noted that their terms of reference included developing mechanisms for addressing cross cutting issues to prevent duplication in the work of individual committees.

It was explained that the Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services OSC had received an update, in March 2014, on the recommendations of the Council as a Business Review and that the same Committee would receive an update, in financial terms, in October 2014.

However, in view of the cross cutting nature of the review, it was agreed that the Economic and Commercial Development OSC should follow up, and monitor, the full Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Action and Implementation Plan (SCRAIP) during the course of the 2014/15 municipal year.

In addition to the Council as a Business Review, the following cross cutting issues were discussed:

- Commercialisation
- Gypsy and Traveller Sites

**RESOLVED:** That:

- a) The SCRAIP for the Council as a Business Review be monitored by the Economic and Commercial Development OSC during the 2014/15 municipal year;
- b) The Council's Commercialisation Strategy be reviewed by the Economic and Commercial Development OSC;
- c) Gypsy and Traveller Sites be considered by Planning, Transport and Development OSC, in June 2014, as part of their work programme development for 2014/15.

29. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FEEDBACK - DISCUSSION ITEM**

Christian Scade, Senior Corporate Policy Officer, informed the Committee of a recent stage 2 complaint. This related to raising issues, on agenda items, at Overview and Scrutiny meetings.

To ensure consistency across each Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was agreed that if a Member wanted to raise an issue at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Member should attend the meeting.

It was also agreed that if, in exceptional circumstances, a Member was unable to attend, but still wanted to comment on an item, the Member should send their comments/concerns to the relevant scrutiny officer before the meeting. This would enable the scrutiny officer to raise any issues with the Chairman before the meeting and the Chairman would be able to use their judgement to summarise matters raised at the meeting. It was noted however, that there was no requirement for an Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman to read out such comments/concerns in full.

The Committee also considered the process for dealing with urgent agenda items.

**RESOLVED:** That a memo be sent to all Members concerning the procedure for raising issues, on agenda items, at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

30. **FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME - SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered topics for inclusion in the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee's work programme for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held in July 2014, after the elections.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- a) The future work programme, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Senior Corporate Policy Officer, be endorsed.
- b) The next Scrutiny Coordinating Committee meeting be held in July 2014, with a time and date to be confirmed outside of the meeting by the Senior Corporate Policy Officer.

31. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Christian Scade, Senior Corporate Policy Officer, explained, that following feedback from Committee in February 2014, the Policy and Information Team had been working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) on a development activity aimed at building relationships between Cabinet and Scrutiny.

The Committee agreed the CfPS event (outlined at Appendix A to the report of the Senior Corporate Policy Officer) should take place, after the election, over a full morning and be open to all Members. It was suggested that scrutiny of the Play Area Strategy and the Making Waste Work for Maidstone Review should be used to highlight examples of Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny working productively together. It was also agreed that the CfPS should be asked to produce a report, following the session, so that this could be circulated to Members unable to attend.

In addition to the CfPS event, the "Questioning / Challenging Skills" session facilitated by the Parliamentary Outreach Service in January 2014 was discussed. It was agreed that a practical follow up session would be useful. The Committee considered the use of role play, the importance of follow up questions, a possible site visit to the House of Commons and the use of the Council's webcasts to highlight issues that would need to be addressed by a future "Questioning Skills" session.

In addition the following issues were discussed:

- Cabinet Member Decisions – it was suggested that it should be made clearer to Members in terms of who they should contact, and by when, if they had comments on a decision;
- Options for scrutiny when considering exempt information;
- Development areas for Scrutiny Chairman;
- The importance of receiving paperwork for meetings in good time (not just online);
- The Council's Member Development Policy.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- a) The CfPS event (outlined at Appendix A to the report of the Senior Corporate Policy Officer) should take place, after the (May 2014) elections, over a full morning and be open to all Members.

- b) The scrutiny of the Play Area Strategy and Making Waste Work for Maidstone Review be used, by the CfPS, to highlight examples of Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny working productively together.
- c) The CfPS be asked to produce a report, following the event, so that this could be circulated to Members – including those unable to attend.
- d) The feedback provided by Committee (outlined in the minutes above) be used to develop a follow up session to the “Questioning / Challenging Skills” event.
- e) The Head of Policy and Communications be asked to review print and courier deadlines for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to ensure hard copies of agendas are received by Committee Members in good time before each meeting.
- f) The Head of Policy and Communications be asked to speak to Cabinet concerning Cabinet Member Decisions to ensure clarity in terms of who should be contacted, and when, if Members had comments on a pending decision.

32. DURATION OF MEETING

09.35am to 11.35am