

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2015

Present: Councillor Mrs Ring (Chairman), and
Councillors Hemsley, D Mortimer, Newton, Perry,
Mrs Robertson, Webb and J.A. Wilson

Also Present: Councillor Sargeant

37. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was noted that apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Parvin and Webster.

38. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Councillor Hemsley substituted for Councillor Mrs Parvin.

39. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillor Sargeant was in attendance as an observer.

40. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by members or officers.

41. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

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

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

43. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2015**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September be approved as a correct record and signed.

44. **PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)**

There were no petitions.

45. **QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF
ANY)**

Joan Langrick asked the following question of the Chairman:

When are Maidstone Borough Council going to start presenting the homeless and social housing in a more positive light as they need the public's understanding and co-operation to in order to help solve these problems as perception is everything?

The Chairman replied that: Maidstone Borough Council has always been determined to provide a range of housing, so that all members of our community have somewhere decent and affordable to live. Our record to date of providing more affordable housing over the last 10 years than any of our neighbouring districts is testament to that commitment.

However, we are not complacent about the challenges ahead, which is why the Housing Strategy that we are due to debate tonight will set out our on-going pledge to reduce homelessness and provide housing that our residents can call their home.

46. REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND SHARED SERVICES - NEW ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POWERS

Martyn Jeynes, Waste and Street Scene Manager introduced the report on Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Powers which provided an overview of the new tools available and the action taken to ensure officers were equipped to use these. The Committee were asked to consider the levels of fixed penalty notices (FPN) which could be utilised by officers.

It was explained that the legislation provided tools for officers to continue to tackle and improve ASB.

During the course of the discussion the following points were made:

- The Council were looking at schemes to ensure that issues affecting vulnerable people such as the homeless could be looked at holistically and they would not be further marginalised if issued a FPN.
- The maximum FPN proposed would be £100.
- Designated powers for social landlords were not yet in use.
- The reporting period for the Community Trigger was six months. Ongoing issues were discussed on a weekly basis at the Community Safety Unit meeting which meant the facility for partnership was already in place.
- The 6 month timescale for the use of the Community Trigger was deliberately short to ensure there was a focus on the case.

The guidance document on changes to ASB legislation, produced for Councillors, was commended by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the new Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) powers, available to the Council under new legislation as described in the Members Guide, the amendments made to the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the officer authorisations, the Enforcement Policy for Environmental Enforcement Policy and relevant procedures to allow implementation including a new Community Trigger be noted.
2. That the fixed penalty notice (FPN) amount served where the authorised person believes an offence has been committed under sections 48 of The Act (Community Protection Notice) of £100 be approved.
3. That any FPN that is served where the authorised person believes an offence has been committed under sections 63 or 67 of The Act (Consumption of Alcohol Order or Public Space Protection Order) be £100 unless an alternative amount is stated in any such order creating an offence be approved.

For:8

Against:0

Abstentions:0

47. REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - MAIDSTONE HOUSING STRATEGY 2016-2020

John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Communities introduced the Housing Strategy 2016-2020 report. The Committee was asked to consider the Key Priority Themes identified for a new Housing Strategy, approving them for consultation with key partners and stakeholders in order to develop the Action Plan.

The Committee was given a background to housing dating back to the Industrial Revolution which saw a move to urban areas and the relationship between poor housing standards and poor health develop. This led to a health inequality cycle that exists to the present day.

It was explained that the Housing Strategy was trying to tackle this. It was not just looking at affordable housing; it would be addressing the entire housing market.

During the course of the discussion the following points were made:

- Housing completions had fallen significantly since 1980.

- Privately rented property was dominating social housing in the housing rental market for the first time since World War 2.
- The number of homelessness decisions made by the Council had increased from 80 in April 2011 to 604, representing a 655% increase over the last 5 years. From April 2015, 314 decisions have already been made.
- As a result of homelessness and the lack of available affordable housing the use of temporary accommodation has increased. In the past five years the net cost to the Council had increased from £118,620 to £584,055.
- The Council had an Empty Homes Strategy in place.

In relation to Priority Theme 1 Outcomes, the figure of 18,500 homes was identified in the Strategy. This was in reference to the emerging Local Plan. As the proposed Housing Strategy related to the period 2015-2020 and the Local Plan period ended in 2031, members felt that the reference to the number of homes should be removed.

The Committee considered housing development and felt that a key theme of the emerging Local Plan was developing sustainable communities. Therefore it was proposed that the following wording be added to the end of Priority Theme 1: to develop sustainable communities.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Action Plan attached at Appendix E to the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services – Maidstone Housing Strategy 2016-2020, showing achievements against the stated outcomes from the previous Housing Strategy 2011-15 be approved.

For:8

Against:0

Abstentions:0

2. That the Key Priority Themes identified for the new Housing Strategy 2016-2020 be approved for consultation with key partners and stakeholders, in order to develop the Action Plan outlined at Appendix A (to the report) and stated outcomes for each Key Priority Theme with the following amendments:

- The addition of the following wording to the end of Priority 1: to develop sustainable communities; and

For:8

Against:0

Abstentions:0

- The removal of the figure of 18,500 from the Priority 1 outcomes.

For:6

Against:0

Abstentions:2

48. REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - THE COST OF THE MAIDSTONE NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report on the cost of the Maidstone night time economy. The report detailed the costs of managing Maidstone's night time economy in terms of policing, CCTV, street cleaning and licencing.

During the course of the discussion the Committee questioned the true cost of the resources detailed in the financial snapshot given in the table at 5.2 of the report, with particular reference to CCTV and the night time economy.

It was agreed that a follow up report would be considered at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted.

49. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 8.13pm