

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19 JANUARY 2016

Present: Councillor Burton (Chairman), and Councillors English, Mrs Gooch, Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer, Springett and Mrs Wilson

Also Present: Councillors Newton and Perry

194. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor de Wiggondene.

It was noted that Councillor Paine was absent.

195. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

196. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

The following Members were in attendance reserving their right to speak on all items:

- Councillor Perry
- Councillor Newton

197. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

198. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that all Members had been lobbied on the North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan.

199. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman stated that, in his opinion, the urgent item, report of the Head of Planning and Development - Maidstone Borough Local Plan – Publication (Regulation 19), should be taken as an urgent item as it contained important information regarding the Committee's recommendation to Full Council from their meeting on 13 January 2016.

200. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

201. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

202. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED:

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

203. NORTH LOOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Committee was asked to recommend to Full Council that approval be given for the North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan (NLNDP) to go to referendum as the final stage of the neighbourhood planning preparation process prior to adoption.

The Committee heard that the Inspector had recommended the NLNDP for referendum with no significant modifications. It was confirmed that all comments made by the Committee had accompanied the plan to the Inspector and officers were confident any concerns had been taken into account by the Inspector.

The Committee congratulated the North Loose Residents Association and requested that their hard work in getting the plan to this stage was noted.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommends that Full Council approves the North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan to proceed to referendum.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

204. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-20 REFRESH

The Committee was asked to review the projects and related draft action plan in the Strategic Plan 2015-20 refresh identifying any changes they considered may be required.

The Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee had the opportunity to shape the work that delivered the following priority action areas:

- Securing improvements to the transport infrastructure of our Borough
- Planning for sufficient homes to meet our Borough's needs.

The Strategic Plan 2015-20 refresh would be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee along with any suggested changes from the Committee on 24 February 2016 and would be agreed at Full Council on 2 March 2016.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee considered the projects under the Priority Action areas presented in the Strategic Plan 2015-20 refresh report dated 19 January 2016, noting that there was nothing the Committee wished to add at this point.
2. That the Committee agreed the action plan, milestones and outcomes (attached at Appendix I) to the report.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

205. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016-17 ONWARDS - FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee was asked to consider proposals for setting the level of fees and charges for 2016/17 for services where the Committee raised income by charging the user of the service and where the setting of the fee or charge was discretionary; and to also note the level of any fees and charges that may be set in accordance with statutory requirements where these apply to the Committee's range of services.

The Committee was also asked to consider the impact of the proposed changes in the level of fees and charges on the Council's medium term financial strategy and the budget for 2016/17.

The Committee heard once the fees and charges for 2016/17 were agreed they would then move to the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Committee was informed that the table on page 61 of the agenda point 2.6 showed the actual deliverable budget for the coming year along with the new proposed budget which proposed a £100k increase to just under £5m. This was not considered a stretching target.

The Committee heard there was little it could do to set fees and charges locally as Building Control fees were set annually as a statutory requirement and planning fees were set by Central Government. Off Street Parking was more flexible and proposals were to increase parking charges to manage demand for popular car parks and redirect users to other car parks. However, the proposed increases would not bring the 2016/17 budget up to the level of income in 2014/15.

The Head of Finance and Resources confirmed he had responded to the Government consultation on the financial settlement and had suggested local authorities needed the ability to set their own fees and charges for services that were currently set by Central Government. As a minimum

this should be to enable the Council to recover the full cost of services such as development management.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee approves the proposed fees and charges for 2016/17 as set out in detail in Appendix A of the report of 19 January 2016.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 0 Abstentions - 0

2. That the Committee approves the budget increase set out in Appendix A and summarised in Table 1 at paragraph 2.6 of the report of 19 January 2016.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

206. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016-17 ONWARDS - FINAL UPDATE

The Committee was asked to consider the resources available to provide the services that were its responsibility and comment to Policy and Resources Committee on any matters for their consideration before a recommendation was made to Council in March 2016.

The Committee was also asked to approve the addition of £20,000 income from Street Naming and Numbering to Appendix B – Additional Savings Proposals for 2016/17.

The Committee heard that the provisional local government finance settlement was announced by Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Local Government, on 17 December 2015. The settlement was significantly worse than expected for this Council. However, the settlement provided information for four years which would enable better planning for the delivery of future efficiencies. The Revenue Support Grant would not be paid from 2017-2018 and 2019-2020 the Council will be paying £1.6m of Business Rates to Central Government on top of the tariff already paid. This was significantly more than was assumed in the report to Policy and resources Committee on 16 December 2015 as, prior to the settlement announcement, it was expected Business Rates would remain neutral until 2020.

The Committee heard that the situation left the Council in need of £628k to balance the budget next year. The budget for this year would need to be balanced by the Full Council meeting in March 2016.

Discussions with Officers had taken place and Appendix B of the report showed this Committee's contribution towards savings. The Committee was informed that, as discussed in the previous item, Planning fees and charges could not be increased. However, because of the demand for the services the income was £40k in excess of the budget.

The Committee also heard that the Street Naming and Numbering service budget could be increased by £20k without increasing charges due to the volume of new development in the Borough. This meant a further £20k could be added to the savings for this Committee making the total contribution £63k.

The Committee requested that the Head of Planning and Development provided a report to a future meeting of the Committee providing some insight into the resourcing needs of the department going forward to ensure the necessary level of service was provided.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee agrees the additional savings and efficiencies set out in Appendix B of the report with the addition of a further income of £20,000 from Street Naming and Numbering.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 0 Abstentions - 0

2. That the Committee agree the budget proposed for 2016/17 as set out in Appendix C of the report and confirm the decision to Policy and Resources Committee.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 0 Abstentions - 0

3. That the Committee agree the capital programme 2016/17 to 2020/21, for this Committee, as set out in Appendix F of the report subject to the addition of any schemes agreed as part of the Committee's consideration of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and submit the decision to Policy and Resources Committee for inclusion in the full programme.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

207. URGENT ITEM - REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN - PUBLICATION (REGULATION 19)

The Committee heard that since the meeting of the Committee on 13 January 2016, officers had scrutinised every single development allocation policy. It was found that many of the amendments were subject to approved Section 106 agreements, either fully signed and sealed or in a draft negotiated form following Heads of Terms agreed by way of a clear resolution of the Planning Committee and therefore had superseded the applicable site specific policy criteria. This meant, therefore, that the decision made on 13 January 2016 had to be amended to include reference to this change.

The Head of Planning and Development also asked the Committee to include the words 'or resolutions' after '(iii) except where decisions...'

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the reclassification of Coxheath as a Larger Village and the insertion of the Indicative Housing Trajectory, Council are recommended to approve the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2016 (attached as Appendix A of the report to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee dated 13 January 2016, revised to reflect (i) insertion of the words 'community and' at line 1 of Policy H1 paragraph 2 on page 78, before the word 'strategic'; and (ii) any previously agreed site-specific infrastructure criterion not covered by (i) which were agreed by the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee or its decision making predecessor and, (iii) except where decisions or resolutions of the Planning Committee and/or the Planning Referrals Committee already supersede (i) and (ii)) for Publication (Regulation 19) and Submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Regulation 22) for examination under Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

208. DURATION OF MEETING

5:00pm – 5:42pm