

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY
2017**

Present: Councillor Mrs Wilson (Chairman), and
Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Boughton, D Burton, Cox,
English, Fermor, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Harvey,
McLoughlin, Pickett and Powell

156. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies had been received from Councillors Brice, Garland, Harwood and Round.

157. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:-

Councillor Perry for Councillor Garland
Councillor Mrs Ring for Councillor Round
Councillor D Burton for Councillor Brice
Councillor English for Councillor Harwood

158. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

159. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

160. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

It was noted that Councillors Harper and McLoughlin disclosed an interest in Agenda Item 16 on Council Tax Empty Property Discounts as they were landlords. They indicated that they would leave the meeting whilst this item was considered.

161. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillor Mrs Blackmore arrived at 6.35 p.m.

All Members, except for Councillors D Burton, English, Perry and Mrs Ring stated that they had been lobbied in respect of Agenda Item 15 on Collection Tax – Tax Base 2017/18.

162. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

163. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2016 ADJOURNED TO 3 JANUARY 2017

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2016 adjourned to 3 January 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed.

164. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

166. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Committee Work Programme.

It was noted that the report 'Maidstone Town Centre Investment and Development Plan – Update' would be incorporated into the Housing and Regeneration Strategy Report which would be presented to the committee at its meeting in March 2017.

167. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-20, UPDATE 2017-18

The Head of Policy and Communications presented a report on the Strategic Plan 2016-20, 2017-18 Refresh.

Members made suggested changes to the Strategic Plan within the areas of their specific responsibilities.

The committee noted that the Service Committees had agreed that the performance indicators be considered when the Strategic Plan had been finalised and adopted.

RESOLVED:

1. That the following amendments to the draft Strategic Plan 2015-20, 2017-18 Update be made:-

<u>Page</u>	<u>As presented</u>	<u>Committee's amendments</u> (additions in bold)
Regenerating the Town Centre-Enhancing the appeal of the town centre for everyone		
6	First Paragraph	Maidstone has had an historically thriving town centre, however we

		need to ensure that we keep pace with the changing economic environment and continue to meet the demands of businesses, residents and consumers. Investment in Maidstone town centre is needed if it is to continue to be a popular place for leisure, to live, shop and work. A diverse and thriving town centre requires a full range of business, retail and cultural investment to support them.
6	We will	Delete: Deliver the Town Centre Development Plan Insert: Deliver the Housing and Regeneration Strategy
Promoting a range of employment skills and opportunities across the borough		
7	We mean	Aiming to meet the skills and employment need of our residents and employers Insert: Supporting existing business and attracting new business to the borough

2. That the Key Performance Indicators for the action areas be considered by each Service Committee following the finalisation and adoption of the Strategic Plan 2015-20, 2017-18 update.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

168. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017/18 ONWARDS - CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Members considered the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 Onwards – Capital Programme.

The committee noted the proposed capital programme for the next 5 years, as well as funding arrangements for the programme.

In response to questions from Members the Director of Finance and Business Improvement advised that:-

- £1.5m had been set aside for the acquisition of commercial assets. The fund allowed the Council to take advantage of opportunities that may arise such as premises on trading estates as it had done

in the past.

- The Museum Development Plan had been put in the capital programme, there were still opportunities for savings to be made.
- A vehicle was purchased two years ago to clean chewing gum from the streets.
- Details of the Section 106 contributions would be included in the quarterly budget reports in future.
- The Housing Regeneration programme was realistic but should the potential for a larger project arise then the Council may look at funding with a partner.
- Members could suggest locations that would benefit from a litter bin being sited.
- There was no cap on what the Council could borrow but the amount needed to be sustainable and affordable.
- Funding for Vinters Park Crematorium was still available for 2016/17 but should the work not be progressed then the unspent resources could be carried forward.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The strategy's principles as set out in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.10 of the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be agreed;
2. The capital funding projection as set out in Appendix B to the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be agreed;
3. The capital programme 2017/18 onwards, as set out in Appendix C to the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement, be agreed;
4. In agreeing to recommendations 2 and 3 above, prudential borrowing limit of £29,002,870 over the period of the programme be noted, which will be recommended to Council as part of the Treasury Management Strategy 2017/18 by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee;
5. The Section 106 contributions be reported as part of the Quarterly Budget Monitoring Report.

Voting: For: 12 Against: 0 Abstention: 1

Councillors English and Pickett left the meeting during the discussion of this item and did not vote.

169. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF MID KENT SERVICES - COUNCIL TAX
EMPTY PROPERTY DISCOUNTS

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Mid Kent Services on Council Tax Empty Property Discounts.

Councillors Harper and McLoughlin, having declared an interest in this item left the room.

Councillors English and Pickett returned to the meeting at the start of this item.

Members were informed that under the Local Government Finance Act 2012 the Council had discretionary powers to vary the Council Tax discounts for certain categories of empty properties whilst maintaining a range of mandatory discounts and exemptions.

The Acting Head of Revenues and Benefits set out the two discretions that would be removed and advised that in doing so the Council would generate additional council tax and savings.

In response to a question from the committee the Acting Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that the proposed savings were not in the budget as it had not yet been agreed by Members.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee recommends to Council that the Council Tax Empty Property Discount Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report of the Director of Mid Kent Services be approved as amended.

Voting: For: 13 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

2. That the Committee notes the intention to maintain protection to those properties which are uninhabitable due to natural disaster such as fire or flooding, or malicious damage.

Voting: For: 13 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

170. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT -
MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY - FEES AND CHARGES

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement presented a report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 – Fees and Charges.

Members noted that there were a range of services for which the Council charges, some of which were set by the Council and others that were set by government.

RESOLVED: That:

1. That the proposed fees and charges for 2017/18 as set out in detail in Appendix A to the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be approved;
2. That the fees and charges set by the government for 2017/18 as detailed in Appendix A to the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be noted.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

171. **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - COUNCIL TAX TAX BASE 2017/18**

The committee considered the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement on Collection Tax – Tax Base 2017/18.

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement explained the mechanism for calculating the Council's Tax Base for the year.

RESOLVED: That:

1. Pursuant to the report and in accordance with the Local Authority (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, that the amount calculated by this Authority as its Council Tax Base for the year 2017/18 be agreed as 59,439.3;
2. In accordance with the Local Authority (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, that the amount calculated by this Authority as the Council Tax Base for each parish area for the year 2017/18 be agreed as detailed in Appendix II to the report;
3. The revised council tax adjustment figures as detailed in the revised Appendix III to the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be agreed.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1

172. **DURATION OF MEETING**

6.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.