

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10 JANUARY 2017

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

Also Present: Councillor Perry

118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Munford and de Wiggondene.

119. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

Councillor Gooch for Councillor Munford
Councillor Garten for Councillor de Wiggondene

120. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

121. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Perry was in attendance as a Visiting Member and indicated his intention to speak on item 12: Local Plan Update and item 13: Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals 2017/18.

122. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

123. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that Councillor English had been lobbied with regard to item 15: Strategic Plan 2015-20, 2017-18 update.

124. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2016

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

125. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

126. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

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

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

128. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman updated the committee on items added to the work programme since the agenda was published.

It was noted that:

The following reports were due to be considered by the committee on 7 February 2017:

- Public Art Policy
- Maidstone Bus Station Options Appraisal
- Kent Minerals and Waste Site Plans consultation response

The following reports to be considered by the committee did not have a confirmed date:

- Statement of Community Involvement
- Self-build and customer build register update

RESOLVED: That the committee work programme be noted.

129. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

The Principal Planning Officer updated the committee on the progress of the Local Plan examination and provided the Government's latest position regarding the Housing White Paper.

The Officer outlined that the Local Plan Inspector had:

- Confirmed that the Council had met its duty to cooperate;
- Endorsed the Council's statement of housing need, but without the market uplift, making the figure 17,660;
- Opined that two sites – New Line Learning and Boughton Lane – should be removed from the Local Plan, and that sites in Yalding allocated for mixed housing and employment should be removed. It was also stated that a reduced housing supply was achievable at the Invicta Barracks site;

- Supported development at Woodcut Farm, Junction 8;
- Requested commitment to a review of the Local Plan from April 2021.

In response to a question it was explained that the five year land supply now stood at approximately 6.21 years. This figure would be updated with more recent completions data when monitoring for the 2016/17 monitoring year was undertaken.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

130. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman proposed that the order of business be changed in the following terms:

- That Item 14: Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18: Fees and Charges be taken before item 13: Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget proposals 2017/18, as the former informed the latter.
- That item 16: Response to the Mayor of London's 'A City for all Londoners' publication be taken before item 15: Strategic Plan 2015-20, 2017-18 Update, as the officer for item 16 was only present for that item.

RESOLVED: That the change to the order of business be noted.

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

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced the report setting out proposed fees and charges for services within the remit of the committee.

In response to questions it was advised that:

- Details regarding the estimated decreased outturn for Street Naming and Numbering would be circulated to Members.
- Charges for Building Control inspection of solar panels were not statutory, but featured within the industry guidance adhered to by the Council.

RESOLVED: That:

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

3. All fees relating to planning and conservation be approved for introduction with effect from 1 February 2017.

For – 9 Against – 0 Abstain – 0

132. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET PROPOSALS 2017/18

The report setting out details of the revenue budget proposals for the committee for 2017-18, and covering the remainder of the five year medium term financial strategy (MTFS) planning period, was presented by the Director of Finance and Business Improvement.

It was highlighted to the committee that:

- The recently announced Local Government Settlement had no effect on the budget, but the cut to the New Homes Bonus translated into a loss to the Council of £750,000 on what was previously expected for 2017-18, and £1.5m over the five year MTFS period. This would affect the capital programme and may require the Council to borrow towards capital projects.
- There was a projected budget gap of £4m over the MTFS period. If agreed, the proposed savings amounted to £3.2m and ensured a balanced budget for 2017-18.

The committee considered Appendix B to the report that outlined the budget proposals for 2017/18 – 2021/22, and in particular the proposed saving of £45,000 from Planning Policy based upon a reduction in staff levels. During discussion the following points were raised:

- The Planning Service had experienced difficulties in past years, however performance had now substantially improved. A reduction in staffing levels threatened to negatively affect the team's improved performance.
- The Local Plan was on track for adoption within the current municipal year, subject to the Inspector's findings, and it could be expected that the conclusion of the process would release Officer resources. However, the Inspector had requested commitment to a full review of the Local Plan, and this may require an allocation of Officer time equalling that given to the Plan's production.
- The committee felt that savings should be sought through the application of system improvements and through maximising income generation rather than reductions in staffing. There were aspirations for income generation in the form of the introduction of Planning Performance Agreements (to be discussed at a future meeting of the committee) and increases in parking charges.

- The loss of a Principal Planning Officer had entailed the use of consultants at a cost to the Council.
- The timetable for the proposed savings, specifically for the full £45,000 saving from Planning Policy to be realised within the single year 2017-18, was felt to appear unrealistic.

Noting the committee's comments the Director of Regeneration and Place advised that, whilst effort would be made to protect staff resources, he could not speculate on the findings of the planning service review ahead of its conclusion.

RESOLVED: That:

1. It be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee that the proposed budget reduction of £45,000 within planning policy for 2017/18 is not supported, as it is believed that to make this cut would lead to a reduction in the service to a level of deterioration which would be unacceptable. It is therefore requested that alternative areas for savings be considered.
2. Further comment on future years be deferred for consideration following the results of the planning service review.

For – 9 Against – 0 Abstain – 0

133. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - RESPONSE TO THE MAYOR OF LONDON'S 'A CITY FOR ALL LONDONERS' PUBLICATION

The Principal Planning Officer presented the report which advised Members of the publication of 'A City for All Londoners' by the Mayor of London, and note the officer's comments which were returned by the deadline of 11 December 2016.

The Officer explained that consultation on the draft London Plan would open in autumn 2017, with publication of the final Plan scheduled to take place in autumn 2019.

The committee noted that housing and transport issues within the plan affected Maidstone, and therefore must be factored into the council's response to the consultation for the London Plan.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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

The Head of Policy and Communications introduced the Strategic Plan 2015-20 refresh with draft amendments as proposed by Policy and Resources Committee on 3 January 2017.

The Committee debated the Plan and proposed a number of amendments.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The following amendments to the draft Strategic Plan 2015-20 be recommended to Policy and Resources Committee:

Plan Page	As presented	Committee's amendments (additions in bold)
Vision, Mission and Values Section		
3	Our Vision section followed by Our Mission section.	Reformat so that Our Mission is first section, followed by Our Vision.
Action Section		
3	Prioritisation of three actions for 2017/18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a clean and safe environment • Regenerating the town centre • A home for everyone 	Supported by Committee.
3	Regenerating the town centre.	Maintaining and enhancing the town centre.
3	A home for everyone.	Planning for the delivery of sufficient homes to meet our borough's needs.
Our Values Section		
3	Section placed on page 3.	Section to be relocated to last page of document.
Respecting the Character and Heritage of our Borough Section		
5	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver and honour our Parish Charter • Deliver the Communication and Engagement Action Plan • Work with our Parishes and Communities on the design of their communities 	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver and honour our Parish Charter • Deliver the Communication and Engagement Action Plan • Work with our Parishes and Communities on the design of their communities • Deliver the blue and green infrastructure strategy and the biodiversity action plan
Maintaining and enhancing the town centre Section (formerly Regenerating the town centre)		
6	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 and consumers.	Maidstone has a 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.	
6	We mean: Ensuring we have a thriving and attractive town centre that is fit for the future.	We mean: Ensuring that we provide a diverse and thriving town with a full range of business, retail, cultural, and leisure opportunities with the investment to support them.
6	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Destination Management Plan 	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver (review and update) the Town Centre Development Plan • Deliver the Destination Management Plan
6	Measured by: <i>Bullet points deleted.</i>	Measured by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of vacant retail units • Target to minimise conversion of office space to residential • % hotel occupancy • Resident satisfaction • How Maidstone is rated as a retail, cultural and leisure destination
Securing Improvements to the Transport Infrastructure for the Borough Section		
6	We mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A transport network that meets the needs of residents and businesses We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver an Integrated Transport Strategy and work with our partners to seek improvements to the transport infrastructure • Deliver the Local Plan • Introduce Community Infrastructure Levy • Create a transport operators group 	We mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sustainable transport network that meetings the needs of residents and businesses We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver an Integrated Transport Strategy and work with our partners to seek improvements to the transport infrastructure • Deliver the walking and cycling strategy <i>Remaining bullet points deleted.</i>
Promoting a range of employment skills and opportunities across the Borough Section		
7	We mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the skills and employment needs of our residents, supporting and attracting businesses and 	We mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the skills and employment needs of our residents and employers, supporting and attracting

	not becoming a dormitory Borough.	businesses and not becoming a dormitory Borough.
Planning for the delivery of sufficient homes to meet our Borough's needs Section (formerly A home for everyone)		
7	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Local Plan • Deliver the Housing Strategy • Implement the Housing Assistance Strategy • Deliver the Homelessness Action Plan • Deliver the Affordable Housing Programme • Deliver the Temporary Accommodation Strategy 	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Local Plan • Deliver the Housing Strategy • Implement the Housing Assistance Strategy • Deliver the Homelessness Action Plan • Deliver the Affordable Housing Programme • Deliver the Temporary Accommodation Strategy • Develop and implement a housing standards strategy

2. It be recommended to Policy and Resources Committee that the Key Performance Indicators be considered by each Service Committee following the finalisation and adoption of the Strategic Plan 2015-20.

135. DURATION OF MEETING

6.33 p.m. to 8.44 p.m.