

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2018

Present: Councillors M Burton, Garten, Joy, D Mortimer,
Powell, Purle, Mrs Robertson, Rose and Webb

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Gooch

70. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

71. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

72. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

73. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Gooch was present as a Visiting Member, and indicated her wish to speak on Item 12. Reports of Outside Bodies.

74. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

75. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

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

Mr Mark Green, Director of Finance and Business Improvement, advised the Committee that the Exempt Appendix to Item 16. Heather House contained commercially sensitive information relating to detailed estimates of costs for work to the hall.

RESOLVED: That the Exempt Appendix to Item 16. Heather House be considered in private, as proposed, due to the likely disclosure of exempt information.

77. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

78. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

80. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee requested a regular report concerning Temporary Accommodation Occupancy figures.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

81. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Mortimer presented an update on the Kent County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Gooch updated the Committee on the work of the Kent & Medway Police and Crime Panel.

The Committee requested that the dates of the quarterly Kent & Medway Police & Crime Panel be shared via email.

RESOLVED: That the Reports of Outside Bodies be noted.

82. DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Mrs Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance, informed the Committee that the Strategic Plan formed part of the Council's policy framework. The draft Strategic Plan set out the ambitions of the borough through a clear vision, objectives and outcomes. These had been developed through workshops with Members. Feedback from the Committee was requested ahead of discussion at the Policy and Resources Committee in November 2018.

The Committee made the following comments:

- An additional word, such as "progressive", could be inserted into the vision to ensure for impact.

- That biodiversity, particularly in urban areas, needed to ensure that the right trees were planted in the right places, in the correct quantity.
- A reference to climate change would enhance Objective 1 "Great Environmental Quality".
- The inclusion of "a Council that engages with community groups" would enhance Objective 2 "Well Connected Safe and Empowered Communities".
- Energy efficient homes were important to consider under Objective 5 "A Good Home for Everyone".

RESOLVED: That the feedback and suggestions provided by the Committee be noted and shared with Officers.

Voting: Unanimous

83. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT

Mrs Tracey Beattie, Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager, introduced the Environmental Health Annual Report. Mrs Beattie explained that the report provided an overview of work from 2016 to 2018. The Annual Status Report, provided by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), summarised the work being undertaken regarding air quality.

The Committee requested that further training be provided on the subject of environmental health issues and the services delivered by Mid Kent Environmental Health.

In response to questions from the Committee, Officers stated that:

- Treatments that required injections, such as lip filler or skin plumping, were likely to be controlled under medical regulations. They were therefore not included in Special Treatment Registrations data.
- The feasibility study into a Low Emissions Zone was an element of the Low Emissions Strategy. This had been formulated through workshops with Members. A tendering process had begun, inviting consultants to bid for this work.
- Air quality was monitored continuously at Upper Stone Street, however monitoring took place in other locations when it was deemed necessary to do so by Officers.
- Work was undertaken with the Planning Service to ensure that emissions from new housing developments were mitigated. Further information on this topic was to be shared with Members.

- Food hygiene training uptake had been impacted by the prevalence of online training. Mid Kent provided classroom training and organised this in a manner that encouraged the highest possible attendance.

Mrs Beattie offered to circulate information to members regarding Special Treatment Registrations and work undertaken with the Planning Department regarding emissions as a result of new developments.

RESOLVED: That the Environmental Health Annual Report be noted.

84. ROUGH SLEEPING INITIATIVES

Mr John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services, addressed the Committee on the topic of Rough Sleeping Initiatives. Mr Littlemore stated that rough sleepers were a small client group who were difficult to engage with and not likely to respond to the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The report therefore outlined new ways of working to assist this client group.

Following questions from the Committee, Mr Littlemore explained that:

- Relief Lite addressed a key criticism of the Homelessness Reduction Act; the bureaucracy associated with the process. Relief Lite therefore flexed the legislation to meet the needs of a small, specific client group of approximately 20 individuals. There was a risk that Relief Lite did not provide paperwork to the clients per the legislation, however, due to the nature of this client group this was unlikely to be an issue.
- Guidance had been sought regarding the legal risk that was presented by Relief Lite. Using this guidance, it was judged that the risk was minimal, as the approach was not contradictory to the intention of the legislation.
- A quarterly update was to be provided to the Committee to ensure that Members were adequately updated on the level of risk associated with the work.
- A workshop for Members, led by operational staff, was to be arranged to describe the customer journey through the service. This was to be supported by job shadowing, subject to confidentiality and consent being agreed where appropriate.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the rough sleeping initiatives in Section 1 of the report be noted.

- 2) That the new ways of working (outlined in Section 2 of the report) regarding Eligibility, Relief Lite and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) be agreed.

Voting: Unanimous

85. HEATHER HOUSE

Miss Lucy Stroud, Corporate Property Manager, addressed the Committee. Miss Stroud outlined that in June 2018, the Committee resolved that a survey be commissioned to assess the safety of Heather House. A condition Survey Report, in Exempt Appendix 1, showed the condition of Heather House. This was used to estimate the costs of Heather House remaining open for a five, ten and fifteen year period.

The Committee acknowledged the difficulty of the decision that needed to be made regarding the future of Heather House, and that the options presented in December 2018 were unlikely to provide a simple solution. It was suggested that in order to comprehensively consider the future of Heather House, a Partnership or Trust approach should be considered.

Mr William Cornall, Director of Regeneration & Place, stated that even if the property were to be redeveloped, rather than refurbished, it still would still require a significant subsidy. It was therefore important for Officers as well as Councillors to try to identify alternative funding streams to support the options to be presented in December.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Condition Survey report prepared by Faithorn Farrell Timms LLP, as detailed in Exempt Appendix 1, be noted.
- 2) That a further report be submitted to the Committee outlining redevelopment options.

Voting: Unanimous

86. DURATION OF MEETING

6.32 p.m. to 8.37 p.m.