

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7 JANUARY 2020

Present: Councillors D Burton (Chairman), Clark, English, Garten, Mrs Grigg, McKay, Munford, Parfitt-Reid and Perry

99. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor de Wiggondene-Sheppard.

100. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Perry was present as a Substitute for Councillor de Wiggondene-Sheppard.

101. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

102. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Purle was in attendance as a Visiting Member and indicated his wish to speak on Agenda Item 13 – Reference from Planning Committee – Matters Arising from consideration of application 17/504568/FULL - and Agenda Item 14 – Fees and Charges 2020/21.

Councillor Spooner attended as an observer.

103. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

104. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that all Members of the Committee, with the exception of Councillor Perry, had been lobbied.

105. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

106. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed.

107. MINUTES OF THE ADJOURNED MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the adjourned meeting held on 19 November 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the following amendment to Item 94 – Protection of Greensand Ridge Update:-

The Committee **agreed noted** that every opportunity should be taken to pursue AONB, or equivalent, status for the Greensand Ridge. However, there was debate over Landscapes of Local Value and the best way to approach those in responding to the review, that had not yet been adopted by the Government. It was felt that the review had reached a certain point and then ended before the work on local landscape designations had been done. ~~The Committee agreed that~~ The work to review Landscapes of Local Value needed to come first before pushing them forwards for national recognition.

108. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12 Claudine Russell presented a petition in the following terms:

The Maidstone Borough New Garden Committees Prospectus (February 2019) states that the qualities of garden village communities include "strong local vision and engagement" and that "local community engagement, involvement and support is also likely to be instrumental to delivering a successful proposal".

As "people who will be most clearly impacted by the new garden community proposal", we do not share the vision of the landowners, do not support the proposal, and will not engage or be involved in the creation of a garden community in or around Marden village".

The presentation of the petition was recorded on the webcast and was made available on the Maidstone Borough Council website and can be viewed here

The Committee agreed to accept the petition as a consultation response to the Local Plan Review.

109. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

110. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Committee Work Programme and agreed the following actions:-

- That the reports due to be presented to the Committee on 4th February be moved to the March meeting in order that a Member Workshop could be held instead on 4 February 2020 to enable Members to be properly briefed on the Local Development Scheme and the Local Plan Review Progress and Update before these are considered in March.
- An additional column be added to the work programme to incorporate who the instigator of the report was.

In response to a question from a Member further clarification was given in respect of the report titled "Ensuring conditions are incorporated in delegated decisions" which was due to be considered by the Committee at their meeting in March. It was noted that there was quite clear guidance from central government on this and officers take action on ecological enhancements according to the needs of the individual sites.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) The revised Committee Work Programme be noted.
- 2) The format for the Work Programme be changed to incorporate an additional column to identify who instigated the report.

111. REFERENCE FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE - MATTERS ARISING FROM CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATION 17/504568/FULL - FORMER KCC SPRINGFIELD LIBRARY HQ, SANDLING ROAD, MAIDSTONE, KENT

The Committee considered the Reference from Planning Committee in regard to a requirement for a Tall Buildings Policy and a development brief to guide potential future development of the remainder of the Springfield site.

The Chairman of the Planning Committee advised that the reason for the Reference was due to the fact that a number of controversial planning applications had been considered by the Planning Committee which had included tall buildings without any criteria or policy to be assessed by in terms of their impact on the landscape or their siting in general.

To move this forward it was felt by Members of the Planning Committee that a Tall Buildings Policy could be incorporated into the local plan review.

The Committee discussed the merits of a Tall Buildings Policy and recognised that such a policy would provide a back up to any decisions made by Planning Committee in dealing with related applications.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) A Tall Buildings Policy be counted as a sister document to the Design for Life Guidance.
- 2) A development brief to guide potential future development of the remainder of the Springfield site not be progressed.

112. FEES & CHARGES 2020/21

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement presented the Fees and Charges 2020/21 Report to the Committee. The report set out the proposed fees and charges for 2020/21 for the services within the remit of the Committee.

The Committee noted that the fees and charges were fundamental to the Council in terms of their provision of an income stream and without them there would be a fifty percent loss of income for the Council.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy had set a standstill budget which had assumed that there would be inflationary increases for both income and expenditure.

It was noted that parking services brought in income of just over £3 million in the current year. However it was not proposed to put up an inflationary increase each year as this would produce very small increases which would be pointless and would irritate customers so it was proposed that the fees would be increased every two to three years.

In response to questions from Members, the Parking Services Manager advised that:

- There was a small risk that some customers would select the new 2 hour tariff for parking instead of the 3 hour thus reducing income. However, to not introduce the 2 hour tariff would not meet customer needs.
- New machines are being installed which would accept credit card payments or cash.

Comments from the Members included:-

- A concern that the rise in car parking fees was being used as a funding source.
- That an increase in car parking fees would have a detrimental effect on trade in the town.
- There should be more promotion of the car parks to boost income.

- Congestion in the town centre caused poor air quality so should the Council be promoting the car parks in the town centre.
- The fees and charges were consistent with the Council's policy.
- Climate change needed to be funded.
- That the planning budget needed to be properly scrutinised to ascertain whether there was sufficient funds going forward for the Local Plan Review.
- That Officers look at re-scoping the street naming, development and conservation control budgets.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) The proposed discretionary fees and charges (including breakeven charges) as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed;
- 2) Officers investigate further the scope of charges related to street naming and development and conservation control practices.

Councillor Parfitt-Reid left the meeting at 8.25 p.m. during the discussion of this item.

113. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET PROPOSALS.

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement which related to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals.

It was noted that at its meeting on 18 December 2019 the Council agreed an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the next five years. The MTFS set out in financial terms how the Strategic Plan would be delivered given the resources available.

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement advised that due to very few new developments being incorporated in the updated MTFS and the delay in the introduction of a new local government funding regime from 2020/21 to 2021/22, a stand-still budget would be set for 2020/21. He added that the financial settlement from central government had been announced and it was in line with the projections.

The Committee noted that there was a contingency of £200,000 per year allocated for the local plan review which would be carried over to the next year if not spent.

In response to Members' concerns about the budget for the local plan review, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement advised that Members would be kept fully apprised of the spend on this budget through the quarterly budgetary reports.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the revenue budget proposals for services within the remit of this Committee, as set out in Appendix A, be agreed;
- 2) That Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to retain the budget of £200,000 per year for the local plan review with the additional caveat that they look in more detail as to whether the budget is sufficient for the ongoing requirements of the local plan review.

114. MAIDSTONE AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Planning Officer – Strategic Planning in regard to the Authority Monitoring Report which was published on the Council’s website on an annual basis.

The report monitored key indicators to inform the Local Plan Review, outlined activity related to the duty to cooperate and provided information on the implementation of policies in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

In response to questions from Members, Officers advised that resources within the team are dedicated to collate the data required but essentially it was raw data as the Council’s duty in this regard does not extend to causes of the findings for the purposes of this report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

115. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 9.10 p.m.