

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH
2020**

Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Chappell-Tay, Mrs Gooch (Chair), Hastie, Joy, Lewins, Perry, Purle and Webb

76. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

77. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

78. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

79. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

80. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

81. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

82. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The Committee Meeting was adjourned between 6.32 p.m. and 6.35 p.m., in order that Maidstone's Honorary Alderman could be presented with their broach, in recognition of the position awarded.

83. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

84. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2020

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed.

85. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

86. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

87. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

88. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager noted that an additional column to display the origin of an item had been included in the Committee Work Programme. It was confirmed that no further items would be added to the Committee Work Programme, due to the possibility that the work schedule for the Committee may differ in the next municipal year.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

89. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Joy presented an update report on the Maidstone Street Pastors.

RESOLVED: That the Reports of Outside Bodies be noted.

90. CONSULTATION RESPONSE ON THE MOTION - MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager introduced the report, reminding the Committee that there was no affirmative recommendation on the report due to the Consultation being as a result of a Member request.

It was confirmed that the majority of Members consulted were in favour of the Motion (proposed at Full Council on 18 December 2019) and that the risks arising from this change were low, as summarised in Section 4 of the report. A proposed protocol in choosing Members for Licensing Sub-Committee was shown in section 4.3 of the report. It was stated that the enforcement of this protocol would be the responsibility of the Licensing Committee.

Members of the Committee thanked Officers for the work associated with the Motion since it had been moved.

RESOLVED: That;

1. The motion concerning Membership of Committees be approved; and
2. Full Council be recommended to approve the amendments arising from this motion, to the Constitution.

91. AMENDED CONSTITUTION 2020/21 - REFORMATTING, MINOR AMENDMENTS, AND MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS AT COMMITTEE

The report was introduced by the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, noting that some of the changes proposed to the Constitution originated through its difficulty being used in practice. This included the layout, formatting, incorrect references and the changes in officer structure not being noted, amongst others.

It was noted that:

- Appendix A included the proposed changes to the Constitution, such as to the procedure rules which govern public and member questions at Committee Meetings; and
- The Code of Conduct would not be revised as a new standards code is due to be launched by the Local Government Association in the Summer of 2020.

The Committee felt that Rule 14, which allows Members to ask questions of the Chairman at Committee Meetings, was valued and wished to be kept in operation as a tool of scrutiny.

Additionally, there was discussion concerning Rule 13.1 which allows Group Leaders to respond to Public questions at Full Council. It was felt that the rule was not conducive to public engagement, in that it allowed Members to spend long periods of time answering each question. The Committee decided to amend the proposed rule change, to remove the group leader's capacity to respond after the appropriate Chairman had responded. This amendment was to apply to Committee Meetings also.

The Committee expressed thanks for the work undertaken by officers in updating Maidstone Borough Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED: That;

1. The amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix A, be agreed, subject to the following:

- the continued application of Rule 14 to Committee Meetings; and
- Rule 13, Section 13.1, be amended to read as follows:

'At ordinary meetings of the Council members of the public may ask questions of the Chairman of any Committee provided written notice has been given in advance as set out below. This question and answer session will be limited to one hour.'

2. Subject to the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager finalising further corrections in the document, the reformatted and amended Constitution be recommended to Council for adoption.

92. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.07 p.m.