

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 3 November 2020

Time: 7.30 pm

Venue: Remote Meeting - The public proceedings of the meeting will be broadcast live and recorded for playback on the Maidstone Borough Council Website.

Membership:

Councillors M Burton, Joy, Khadka, Mortimer (Chairman), Powell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Robertson, D Rose, M Rose and Young

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

AGENDA

Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Urgent Items
4. Notification of Visiting Members
5. Disclosures by Members and Officers
6. Disclosures of Lobbying
7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.
8. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 6 October 2020 1 - 5
9. Presentation of Petitions (if any)
10. Questions and answer session for members of the public (if any)
11. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any)
12. Committee Work Programme 6
13. Reports of Outside Bodies

Issued on Monday 26 October 2020

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this remote meeting, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 30 October 2020). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

If your question is accepted, you will be provided with instructions as to how you can access the meeting.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 30 October 2020). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to comment on.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk.

To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk.

Should you wish to refer any decisions contained in these minutes to the **Policy and Resources Committee**, please submit a Decision Referral Form, signed by **three** Councillors, to the **Head of Policy, Communications and Governance** by: **30 October 2020**

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2020

Present: Councillors M Burton, Joy, Khadka, Mortimer (Chairman), Powell, Mrs Robertson, D Rose, M Rose and Young

56. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

57. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

58. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

59. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

60. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

61. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors M Burton, Joy, Mortimer, Powell, Mrs Robertson and D Rose stated that they had been lobbied in relation to Item 15 – Heather House and Pavilion Building.

62. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed unless any member of the Committee indicated a wish to refer to Item 16 – Exempt Appendix – Heather House and Pavilion Building – Financial Summaries.

63. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 AUGUST 2020

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 August 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed at a later date.

64. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

65. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

66. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

Question from Councillor M Rose to the Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

The Chairman read out the question on behalf of Councillor M Rose.

'Can Maidstone Borough Council tell this Committee their plans for affordable housing in Maidstone and further to what they consider to be affordable as far as buying and renting?'

The Chairman responded to the question.

The full response was recorded on the webcast and were made available to view on the Maidstone Borough Council Website.

To access the webcast recording, please use the below link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Of-tQIT6vU>

67. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Several Members felt that the Work Programme contained too few items and it was highlighted that any Member could submit an agenda item request.

In response to questions, the Director of Regeneration and Place noted that the transition to homeworking had been excellent with multiple staff surveys conducted with a generally positive response. Meetings now occurred digitally, with monthly staff webinars and the Communications team ensuring newsletters were regularly provided to the Council's Staff.

The Access to Services Review Task and Finish Group would meet at the end of October 2020.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

68. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

69. FIRST QUARTER FINANCIAL UPDATE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT 2020/21

The Head of Finance introduced the report and highlighted that the current forecast overspend of £136k, which was higher than experienced in previous years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This could be partly mitigated through additional government funding and the Council had now

made its first claim under the Sales, Fees and Charges scheme. The variances were attributed in the main to the Depot, Licensing, Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation.

The capital net expenditure of £540k related mainly to the Brunswick and Union Street Housing Developments which were to be completed by the end of the year. Upon completion, the market rented properties would be under the control of Maidstone Property Holdings Ltd (MPH). The sale of properties from both developments were moving forward.

The Policy and Information Manager noted a correction to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of percentage of gas safety certificates in place on all residential properties from 97.94% to 97.33% and percentage of all electrical safety certificates on all residential properties from 98.02% to 100%. Two properties had denied the Council access to renew the gas safety certificates, due to the pandemic lockdown period. This had since been rectified.

The Policy and Information Manager informed the Committee that five of the fifteen targetable KPIS for did not reach the quarter one target, but that two of these achieved within 10% of the target. The number of households housed through the housing register missed its target by more than 10%.

The Head of Finance confirmed that £2million in government funding had been provided to the Council, with further opportunities to claim in the coming months.

The level of temporary accommodation available was discussed at length, in reference to the protections provided to tenants as part of the Coronavirus Act 2020. The Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed that the Council now possessed between 60-70 accommodation units, with capital programme funding to purchase a further 10 units. The Council had good relationships with several private sector providers that had been contacted in the past to provide temporary accommodation at short notice. There was confidence in the relevant teams to manage the situation should it arise.

The Committee were informed that the Council had not experienced a high-level of approaches regarding evictions and that this would be monitored with a predictive analytics tool that had been installed. A Member request was made to add this topic as an item to the work programme for further consideration if necessary.

The Director of Regeneration and Place would provide responses via email to queries that concerned the licensing variance within the revenue budget and social housing refusals from residents that arose from the property's unsuitability.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 1 for 2020/21, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted;
2. The Capital position at the end of Quarter 1 be noted; and
3. The Performance position as at Quarter 1 for 2020/21, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted.

70. **HEATHER HOUSE AND PAVILION BUILDING**

The Housing Delivery Manager introduced the report that included an improved scheme design for the Heather House and Pavilion building sites. A new community centre on the Heather House site and 12 new build, 3-bedroom properties on the Pavilion building site were proposed. The existing play areas were due to be upgraded in the future. A new community centre on the Pavilion building site was considered, but this would delay the housing construction and increase costs.

The Housing Delivery Manager commented that there had been positive initial planning feedback and that the shortfall envisaged was £234k, rather than the £600k estimate for the previously presented scheme. Heather House was the sole community facility owned and directly managed by the Council, with the submission of tender for management providers and works contract to be triple tracked. The local community and stakeholders would be involved in further consultation, with those organisations that had expressed interest in the centre's management to be contacted. As part of the procurement and appointment exercise, there was to be no further requests for financial support from the Council.

The Committee expressed general support for the proposal and acknowledged the reduced shortfall envisaged. The importance of the Community Centre and the positive works of with group operating from within the venue were highlighted.

A work programme request was made for an update report to be provided to the Committee in January 2021 on the progress of Heather House.

RESOLVED: That

1. The change to the original brief for the redevelopment of both the Heather House and Pavilion Building sites and the new scheme design options being recommended to pursue, along with the indicative financial returns shown at Exempt Appendix B, be noted; and
2. The a follow up report be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee to approve the submission of detailed planning applications for both sites, going out to tender for the works

contract and procurement of the management provided; subject to the inclusion of a timetable of resident and stakeholder engagement and communications to be appended, be endorsed.

71. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. – 7.58 p.m.

2020/21 WORK PROGRAMME

	Committee	Month	Origin	CLT to clear	Lead	Report Author
Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22-2025/26	CHE	01-Dec-20	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Q2 Budget and Performance Monitoring 2020/21	CHE	01-Dec-20	Officer Update	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
MBC Provided Gypsy and Traveller Sites	CHE	01-Dec-20	Cllr Request	No	William Cornall	John Littlemore
Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Proposals 2021/22	CHE	05-Jan-21	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Homelessness Horizon Scanning - Possession Proceedings	CHE	05-Jan-21	Officer Update	No	John Littlemore	John Littlemore
Q3 Budget and Performance Monitoring 2020/21	CHE	02-Feb-21	Officer Update	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
GP Provision - Briefing Note	CHE	TBC	Cllr Request	No	Alison Broom	Alison Broom
Parks Delivery Plan for Biodiversity	CHE	TBC	Officer Update	No	Jennifer Shepherd	Andrew Williams

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Agenda Item 12

Community Resilience working with the Voluntary and Community Sector and Parish Councils

Final Decision-Maker	Communities Housing and the Environment
Lead Director	Mark Green Head of Finance and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy Communications and Governance, Anna Collier Policy and Information Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

The Coronavirus Pandemic and resulting lockdown which started in March 2020, has demonstrated just how invaluable local community groups and Parish Councils are to both to the residents of Maidstone and to the Council. The Policy and Resources Committee agreed on the 16 September 2020 that there were issues which need to be addressed concerning the council's role in community resilience and agreed that a report concerning a protocol is progressed initially via the Communities Housing and Environment Committee.

Purpose of Report
Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That local partners are consulted with the intention to develop a local compact for Maidstone which will include respective roles and mutual support in emergencies.
2. That the Access to Services Review expand its remit to include building a repository of community organisations across the Borough.
3. Amend the Parish Charter subject to the agreement of Parish Council's to reflect their important role in emergencies.
4. Note the provision of Parish Council newsletters and joint webinars with KALC to ensure regular communication and feedback.
5. Create a single point of contact and advertise this for Parish Councils and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Maidstone.
6. That officers bring back a progress update in April 2021

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	20 October 2020
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	3 November 2020

Community Resilience working with the Voluntary and Community Sector and Parish Councils

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p><i>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</i> • <i>Safe, Clean and Green</i> • <i>Homes and Communities</i> • <i>A Thriving Place</i> <p>The recommended actions will further the council's progress for all its objectives and for the Homes and Communities priority in particular.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p><i>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Heritage is Respected</i> • <i>Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</i> • <i>Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</i> • <i>Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</i> <p>An improved relationship with the voluntary and community sector will facilitate progress for all the cross-cutting objectives.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	There will be Staffing implications and these are set out in section 2	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Legal	Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended) a best value authority has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its	Team Leader (Corporate Governance, MKLS)

	<p>functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The proposals within the report assist in demonstrate compliance with the statutory duty.</p> <p>Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities in England a general power of competence to do anything that individuals may do. The general power applies to things that an individual may do even though they are in nature, extent or otherwise unlike anything the Council may do apart from Section 1.</p> <p>Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council has the power to do anything (whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.</p> <p>The proposals are within the powers shown above.</p>	
Privacy and Data Protection	Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules and a data privacy impact assessment will be undertaken if required.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	Building community resilience using an asset-based approach to empower communities will impact positively on the health of those communities. However further consideration needs to be undertaken to consider how the most deprived communities in Maidstone will be supported where health inequalities are most stark as these are generally areas without a Parish Council. In addition the role of the NHS and GP surgeries as anchor institutions in both large and small communities should be considered in any	Public Health Officer

	plan around community resilience.	
Crime and Disorder	Not applicable	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Procurement	<i>Not applicable</i>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Coronavirus Pandemic and resulting lockdown which started in March, has demonstrated just how invaluable local community groups and agencies, including Parishes, are to the residents of Maidstone and as essential partners of the Council. The help and support of these groups during lockdown ensured many residents had their basic needs such as food, medicine and conversation met.
- 2.2 The Council alone would have struggled to provide all this additional support across the Borough, in addition to what it was providing as the Community Hub as well as its statutory services.
- 2.3 The Policy and Resources Committee agreed on the 16 September 2020 that there were issues which need to be addressed concerning the Council's role in community resilience and agreed that a report concerning a protocol be progressed initially via the Communities Housing and Environment Committee.
- 2.4 Reflection and learning undertaken by Members and Officers has identified several benefits that can be made from changing the way in which the Council, Community Groups and Parishes work together.
- Building resilience
 - Avoiding duplication
 - Improved communication and identification of common goals
 - Making best use of our community infrastructure
 - Identifying and accessing community infrastructure to empower our communities to help themselves
 - Identify missing services in communities
 - Ensuring knowledge of who is best placed to respond in an emergency
- 2.5 These have been distilled into three objectives
- A. To ensure that we are best placed along with our partners to respond whatever the emergency in the borough
 - B. To build on increased trust and communication with our partners to work on issues of joint interest and priority.
 - C. Ensuring that we build on our existing relationship with Parish Councils and provide mutual support for the benefit of our residents

A) To ensure that we are best placed along with our partners to respond whatever the emergency in the borough

- 2.6 Beyond the Pandemic Maidstone Council has responded to a range of emergency situations. We know that responses work best when the right people are involved, with the greatest expertise.
- 2.7 Experience from the recent pandemic has shown that there would be value in identifying strategic organisations across the borough who could help and support both the council and residents in an emergency.
- 2.8 A framework to develop this type of arrangement already exists between the public sector and the third sector. A Local Compact is a voluntary agreement that aims to foster strong, effective partnerships between public bodies and voluntary organisations. The Compact outlines five principles for partners to follow. Within each principle, there are undertakings for partners to commit to. The National Compact principles are:
- A strong, diverse and independent civil society
 - Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services
 - Responsive and high-quality programmes and services
 - Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services
 - An equal and fair society
- 2.9 A compact would establish a framework for good partnership working with our key partners and allows for the principles to be interpreted to reflect local circumstances.
- 2.10 The strength of this approach is it is an existing formal structure. Best practice examples and other resources are available to access, so it won't mean starting from scratch.
- 2.11 Also, in its favour a compact requires substantial engagement with partners, and arrangements will be well documented.
- 2.12 The formality, however, means that it will be resource intensive initially and likely require ongoing administrative support, and a digital presence.
- 2.13 The Compact also provides a solution for objective two as it sets out how we will engage and communicate with each other.
- 2.14 With regard to Parishes the Council already has in place a Parish Charter which provides a framework within which the Borough Council and Parish Councils have made a formal commitment to closer partnership working. Seven key principles are identified in the Charter, the role of both organisations in relation to an Emergency response could be added as an additional principle or built into the first principle - Leadership.

B) To build on increased trust and communication with our partners to work on issues of joint interest and priority.

- 2.15 Currently it is challenging for us to know and build relationships with community groups working across the borough. This is not unusual for Council's and other public services. However, this does not mean that Maidstone shouldn't strive to have as broad as possible knowledge of community groups operating in the Maidstone Borough area.
- 2.16 This knowledge should translate itself into:
- A central repository of key contacts held by the Council and made publicly available for use of residents
 - A well-publicised point of contact within the authority for groups to reach out too
 - Methods by which the Council can ensure that it engages with these community groups both at a strategic level and at an operational service design level, when appropriate.
- 2.17 Members may want to be involved in the development of this repository, drawing on their own knowledge and networks, and expanding them. Currently Members are undertaking with the support of the Policy and Information team an Access to Services Review. Members may want to add the development of the repository to the programme of work, as providing residents with access to services beyond the Council's remit.
- 2.18 Currently Involve are asked to create and maintain a list of voluntary organisations across the Borough as part of the SLA they have with the Council. A list is available upon request, however, it isn't as broad as the Council needs and has a focus on social prescribing. This list could be added to the information we now have created on the voluntary and community organisations in the Borough in response to the pandemic.
- 2.19 Officers are currently in dialogue with Involve to establish future working arrangements in relation to the SLA. This may have an impact on this piece of work and ongoing funding arrangements.
- 2.20 In the Strategic Plan areas of focus for 2019-24 within the Homes and Community Objective we did not give high priority to developing community capacity/resilience. Although we were able to respond quickly to establish the Community Hub, the experience of COVID-19 has exposed weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for community support and working with others to enable resilience. This suggests the need to strengthen our strategic relationship with the voluntary and community sector, housing providers, KCC and parish councils.
- 2.21 A stronger relationship will create clarity, common understanding and expand resources, so that our most vulnerable residents are always appropriately supported and especially at times of crisis. The suggestion going forward is that our website is further developed to build on the information we collected regarding voluntary and community groups during

the pandemic and a single point of contact is created through one email address and inbox for voluntary and community organisations. The inbox would be managed by the Policy and Information team. The team would use their knowledge of the council to ensure enquiries are managed and responded to. This will have resource implications for the team.

2.22 The Local Compact once established could be further developed to tackle strategic projects or one-off pieces of work with key partners on a task and finish basis. This would build on the success of already established work being undertaken with the voluntary sector for example to work with the Citizen's Advice Bureau on social inclusion.

C) Ensuring that we build on our existing relationship with Parish Councils and provide mutual support for the benefit of our residents

2.23 In response to the pandemic and in order to maintain an ongoing dialogue with Parishes a weekly Parish newsletter was started, this has now transitioned to a monthly bulletin. Feedback has been received from Parishes that this regular contact was welcomed.

2.24 Officers would like to build on this communication and following conversations with Councillors and Parish Councils propose:

- A parish webinar with the Leader and Deputy Leader held jointly with Maidstone KALC three times a year.
- A monthly newsletter
- A monitored parish inbox as a one stop shop for queries and requests
- Amending the Parish Charter to reflect the role of Parish Councils in emergencies.

2.25 Consideration has been given to the reintroduction of the Parish Liaison Officer position. However, when surveyed at the time the post existed only a third of parishes saw value in this post. In addition, the funding for this post was ceased a number of years ago. There is currently not sufficient capacity to create this post within existing resources. It is proposed that the work is managed by the Policy and Information Team; to do this alongside the additional work to increase engagement with community groups will have resource implications.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The Policy and Resources Committee in September noted issues which need to be addressed concerning the council's role in community resilience and agreed that a report concerning a protocol was progressed initially via the Communities Housing and Environment Committee. This report sets out how a protocol could be put in place via a local compact and adapting the Parish Charter alongside actions to improve communication and engagement.

- 3.2 Members could decide to recommend to Policy and Resources that no further action is required.
- 3.3 The Committee could the actions proposed to create a protocol and approve or identify new ones.
- 3.4 The Committee could identify a different approach to that set out in the papers to meet the objectives of Policy and Resources Committee
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To best support the objectives expressed by the Policy and Resources Committee it is recommended that the following activities be pursued:
- Develop and agree a local compact with voluntary and community sector
 - Add key Strategic Community Partners to the Council's emergency plan with their agreement
 - Amend the Parish Charter to reflect the role of Parish Councils' in emergencies
 - Create a single point of contact within the Policy and Information Team for the voluntary and community sector via a single email address and inbox
 - Create a single point of contact within the Policy and Information Team for Parish Councils via a single email address and inbox
 - Continue to build communication and engagement with Parish Councils through joint webinars with Maidstone KALC and regular newsletters.
- 4.2 The reasons have been set out in section 2 of the report with the purpose of these actions being to:
- Build resilience
 - Avoid duplication
 - Improve communication and identification of common goals
 - Make best use of our community infrastructure
 - Identify and access community infrastructure to empower our communities to help themselves
 - Identify missing services in communities
 - Ensuring knowledge of who is best placed to respond in an emergency
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The intention of the actions proposed in this report is to mitigate the risk to residents in emergencies through improving our knowledge of those who can respond and greater clarity on roles.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 This report is part of a series of reports and information for councillors on the revising the Council's Strategic Plan and areas of focus for 2021-26 following the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. This report follows member consideration of the Council's priorities and a report to Policy and Resources. The report to Policy and Resources Committee on 16 September 2020 can be found here:

<http://aluminum:9080/documents/s72419/Strategic%20Plan%20Review%20-%20Update%20on%20Priority%20Milestones.pdf>

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The outcome of this report and agreed actions will be reported to Policy and Resources Committee. If the actions are approved as set out in section 3 work will commence to involve and consult with key voluntary and community sector organisations and Parish Councils

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

<http://aluminum:9080/documents/s72419/Strategic%20Plan%20Review%20-%20Update%20on%20Priority%20Milestones.pdf>