MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 JULY 2015

Present: **Councillor Mrs Wilson (Chairman), and Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Brice, Chittenden, Cox, Garland, Mrs Gooch, McKay, McLoughlin, D Mortimer, Naghi, Mrs Ring, Round, Sargeant and Mrs Stockell**

Also Present: **Councillors Perry**

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs Joy, Munford and Ross.

23. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Derek Mortimer was substituting for Councillor Mrs Joy. Councillor Mrs Ring was substituting for Councillor Ross and Councillor Mrs Gooch was substituting for Councillor Munford.

24. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman indicated that she intended to take the following agenda items as urgent items -

Revised Appendix to Agenda Item 16 – Maidstone Borough Council Annual Report 2014/15

Agenda Item 18 - Report of the Head of Finance and Resources – Revenue and Capital Outturn 2014/15

Agenda Item 19 - Report of the Head of Finance and Resources – Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 Onwards

Revised Appendix to Agenda Item 25 – Proposed Senior Officer Leadership Arrangements

25. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Perry indicated that he was just observing but reserved his right to speak on any item on the agenda.

26. DATE OF ADJOURNED MEETING - 5 AUGUST 2015

The Chairman indicated that the adjourned meeting date had been

reserved in the event that the business on the agenda could not be concluded.

27. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

The Chief Executive and both Directors disclosed an interest in Agenda Item 24 – Proposed Senior Officer Leadership Arrangements.

28. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

29. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on Part II of the agenda be taken in private as proposed.

30. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 JUNE 2015

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2015 be approved subject to the insertion of the word 'some' before the fourth paragraph of the minute under Annual Performance Report 2014/15.

31. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

32. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

It was noted that no questions had been received from members of the public.

33. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2014/15 AND LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Head of Policy and Communications presented her report on the Annual Governance Statement for 2014-15 and the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

Members noted that the report had been presented to the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at its meeting on 20 July 2015 and their changes had been incorporated within this report.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Governance Statement and Local Code of Corporate Governance be reviewed and approved prior to signing by the Leader and Chief Executive.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

34. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORT- QUARTER 4 AND END OF YEAR 2014/2015

The Policy and Information Manager presented her report on Customer Feedback – Quarter 4 of 2014/15 and End of Year 2014/15.

Members noted that although quarter 4 was extremely positive, the overall annual performance was down on the previous year. As a result the Policy and Communications Team indicated that a review of complaints would be undertaken. Part of that review would include looking at processes, a comparison of other Authorities' complaints processes and how the Council categorises a complaint. It was hoped that the findings would be available by the end of August.

RESOLVED:

1) That the Quarter 4 Customer Feedback Briefing as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Head of Policy and Communications be noted; and

2) That the 2014/15 Customer Feedback Briefing as set out in Appendix B to the report of the Head of Policy and Communications be noted.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

35. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

The Policy and Information Manager presented her report on Equality Objectives for the period 2015 to 2019.

RESOLVED:

1) That the progress made on the Equalities Objectives (set in 2012) as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Head of Policy and Communications be noted;

2) That the new Equality Objectives and actions as set out in Appendix B to the report of the Head of Policy and Communications, together with evidence set out in Appendix C to the report, be approved; and

3) That an annual report on the objectives be reported to this Committee in April 2016.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

36. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF REVENUES AND BENEFITS - IRRECOVERABLE BUSINESS RATES

The Head of Revenues and Benefits presented his report on the business rates debt accrued where the council had exhausted all options to collect

the debt and has no prospect of recovery.

It was noted that there was not a mechanism currently in place for the Council to recover costs associated with companies that had gone into liquidation. It was therefore agreed that Officers raised this with the LGA to see if there would be widespread support amongst other Authorities to lobby Government on this.

RESOLVED: That the unpaid business rates debt as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits be approved for write off.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

37. REPORT OF THE COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Policy and Communications presented the report on the Maidstone Borough Council – Annual Report 2014-15.

Members identified some additional changes that they wished to be made.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Blackmore and seconded by Councillor Cox that the last bullet point on page 5 of the Appendix, be amended to 'provided advice on the preparation of neighbourhood plans designating 12 neighbourhood plan areas'

Voting: For: 14 Against: 1 Abstentions: 0

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Blackmore and seconded by Councillor Brice that the last two paragraphs of the introduction as set out on page 3 of the Appendix be taken out.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 5 Abstentions: 1

RESOLVED:

1) That the Council's Annual Report 2014-15, as set out in the revised Appendix circulated as an Urgent Update to the report of the Communications Manager, be approved for publication on the Council's website subject to some amendments made at the meeting being incorporated;

2) That the report be advertised in the Borough Update, on the Council's social media accounts and through the Council's internal communication channels; and

3) That the report be made available on request and for collection at the Council's receptions.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

38. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE & RESOURCES - REVENUE & CAPITAL OUTTURN 2014/15

The Director of Regeneration and Communities presented the report relating to Revenue and Capital Outturn 2014/15.

RESOLVED:

1) That the provisional outturn for revenue and capital for the 2014-15 financial year be noted;

2) That the carry forward of grant funding from 2014-15 to 2015-16, as set out in Appendix II to the report of the Head of Finance and Resources be noted; and

3) That the provisional funding of capital expenditure in 2014-15 as set out in paragraph 4.3.3 of the report be approved.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

39. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016/17 ONWARDS

The Director of Regeneration and Communities presented the report on Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 Onwards.

RESOLVED:

1) That, for planning purposes, a council tax increase of 1.99% be agreed for the development of the medium term financial strategy;

2) That the officer recommended strategic revenue projection as set out in Appendix C to the report of the Head of Revenues and Resources be agreed for submission to all Service Committees for their consideration and respond back to this Committee on the factors outlined;

3) That the current capital programme be advanced by one year as set out in Appendix D to the report and agreed for planning purposes; and

4) That all Service Committees be requested to consider possible submission for the future capital programme.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

40. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified having applied the Public Interest Test:

	Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description
Exempt Report of the Property & Procurement Manager – Bus Shelters	Para 3 – Info re financial/business affairs
Exempt Report of the Property & Procurement Manager – Maidstone Gateway	Para 3 – Info re financial/business affairs
Exempt Report of the Property & Procurement Manager – Office Accommodation Strategy	Para 3 – Info re financial/business affairs
Exempt Report of the Chief Executive – Proposed Senior Officer Leadership Arrangements	Para 1 – Info re an individual

41. EXEMPT REPORT OF THE PROPERTY AND PROCUREMENT MANAGER - BUS SHELTERS

The Property and Procurement Manager presented his exempt report on Bus Shelters.

It was noted that the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the options for designs of the bus shelters in April 2015.

RESOLVED:

1) That the Committee approves the purchase and installation of the specified range of bus shelters as set out in the exempt report of the Property and Procurement Manager;

2) That the Committee approves the purchase and installation of specified bus shelters in the town centre as set out in the exempt report of the Property and Procurement Manager;

3) That the Committee approves the arrangements for selling of advertising, and maintaining and cleaning shelters as set out in the exempt report of the Property and Procurement Manager;

4) That the Committee approves the inclusion of a profit share option in the contract as set out in the exempt report of the Property and

Procurement Manager; and

5) Consider a policy for advertising which reflects the Council's objectives with respect to health and wellbeing and the consequences for revenue and payback for our capital investment.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

42. EXEMPT REPORT OF THE PROPERTY & PROCUREMENT MANAGER - MAIDSTONE GATEWAY

The Director of Regeneration and Communities presented her exempt report on the Gateway Project.

RESOLVED:

1) That the plans for the Gateway contained in the exempt report of the Property and Procurement Manager be noted and approved; and

2) That the allocation of £25,000 for the next stage of the Gateway project be approved.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

43. EXEMPT REPORT OF THE PROPERTY & PROCUREMENT MANAGER - OFFICE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

The Property and Procurement Manager presented his exempt report on the Office Accommodation Strategy.

RESOLVED:

1) That the Committee approves the recommendations of the Montagu Evans report;

2) That the Committee approves a budget of £50,000 to investigate in more detail the three options identified by Montagu Evans;

3) That further reports are brought to the Committee at the appropriate time; and

4) That the informal Member working group continue to meet as and when required.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 0 Abstention: 1

44. EXEMPT REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE - PROPOSED SENIOR OFFICER LEADERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Executive presented her exempt report on the proposals for future senior leadership arrangements.

Members noted comments and observations made by the Consultant who had been brought in to assist the Chief Executive in formulating her proposals.

Following an enquiry from a Member about redesignating the Director of Regeneration and Place to Deputy Chief Executive, the Consultant stated that a lot of authorities in her experience had moved away from having a Deputy Chief Executive as not only did this create an expectation of a higher salary, it could lead to difficulties with Heads of Service being confused over authority.

Councillor McLoughlin proposed and Councillor Mrs Blackmore seconded to change the designation of Director of Regeneration and Place to Deputy Chief Executive.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 10 Abstentions: 0

RESOLVED:

1) That the option for future senior leadership arrangements set out in section 4 and Appendix 4 of the exempt report of the Chief Executive be agreed for the purpose of formal consultation with staff affected; and

2) That subsequent to the consultation in 1) above, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee be authorised to consider the consultation responses and finalise the future senior leadership arrangements for implementation in accordance with the Council's policies for organisational change and appointment of directors.

Voting: For: 10 Against: 1 Abstentions: 4

45. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.