

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2015

Present: Councillor Mrs Ring (Chairman) and
Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Hemsley, D Mortimer,
Newton, Perry, Mrs Robertson, Webb and Webster

Also Present: Councillor Sargeant

77. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs Parvin and John Wilson.

78. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was noted that Councillor Mrs Blackmore was substituting for Councillor John Wilson and Councillor Hemsley was substituting for Councillor Mrs Parvin.

79. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

80. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

It was noted that Councillor Sargeant was present as a visiting Member and reserved his right to speak on any item.

81. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures from Members and Officers.

82. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

Councillors Mrs Ring, D Mortimer, Newton, Perry, Mrs Robertson and Webb stated that they had been lobbied on Agenda Item 11 – Reference from Licensing Committee – Taxi Licensing Policy.

83. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

84. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2015**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed.

85. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

A question had been received from Mr. Neil Cox which was as follows:-

"Given that you have the draft Taxi Policy on the agenda can you confirm that the taxi trade will be able to licence the Peugeot E7 which is more accessible to the wheelchair bound and those with other mobility problems than a TX4 and emits 22.6% less CO₂, 17.3% less CO, 29.3% less NO_x, 21.7% less HC and NO_x and is 21.2% more fuel efficient and meets the objectives laid down in the introduction to the Taxi Policy and Integrated Transport Strategy and was viewed recently by Council Officers?"

The Chairman gave the following response:-

"I understand that the suggestion to broaden the type of hackney vehicle was made by the Trade Association during the consultation period of the draft policy. As such, the Council has not formally consulted on the proposal but has included in the draft policy a mechanism to allow officers to explore this further and report back.

Officers have looked at the Peugeot E7 and the initial reaction was in favour of recommending a broadening of the type of vehicle licensed for use. However, officers need to carry out more research before a recommendation to amend the policy can be made. The research will include looking at a range of vehicles, as other manufacturers than Peugeot might be providing a similar product.

The draft policy is on the papers for tonight's meeting and should this be approved this would enable officers to explore the proposal further.

Officers would carry out the research and consultation during early 2016 and a report would go to the Licensing Committee [on 29 March 2016](#) and they will then make a recommendation to this Committee to widen the type of vehicle or not, which will come to our meeting in April.

I hope this has helped to clarify the process Mr. Cox".

87. REFERENCE FROM LICENSING COMMITTEE - TAXI LICENSING POLICY

The Committee considered the Reference from Licensing Committee in which they were asked to approve the draft Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy.

The Head of Housing and Community Services advised Members that there had been extensive consultation and that the Licensing Committee had considered this at length. He drew Members' attention to a couple of errors in the body of the text in the Policy.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee adopt the draft Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy; and
- 2) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Housing and Community Services to make minor amendments to the Policy in consultation with the Chairman.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

88. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT AND STREET SCENE - INCREASE FIXED PENALTY FINE LEVEL - LITTERING AND DOG OFFENCES**

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Head of Environment and Street Scene which detailed proposed increases to two Dog Control Orders, the Fouling of Land by Dogs (Maidstone) Order 2013 and the Dog Exclusion (Maidstone) Order 2013 and the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005 for the dropping of litter.

In response to Members questions, the following was noted:-

- There is no legislation currently in place for offenders throwing litter out of vehicles.
- The maximum penalty for dog fouling is set by legislation and cannot be increased above the maximum permissible level.
- The Council checks the authenticity of names and addresses of offenders against a robust data system which includes obtaining data from other Councils if necessary.
- Arrangements will be made to publicise these fines more widely across the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agrees the proposed increase in the penalties from 1st April 2016 as detailed in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2 of the report of the Interim Head of Environment and Street Scene.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

89. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - MAIDSTONE'S APPROACH TO THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS**

Members considered the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services which sought Committee's approval for the Council to assist Syrian Refugees, as outlined by the Prime Minister in October 2015.

Members noted that the Scheme (Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme) (VPR) had been expanded by the Government as it intends to

resettle 20,000 Syrians. The scheme would prioritise those most vulnerable.

Members also noted that there would be a very stringent vetting process before the refugees were released to the Council by the Home Office and Government offices.

In response to questions from Members, the following was noted:-

- The Head of Finance and Resources advised that it was within this Committee's remit to purchase from capital funds but as the increase in homelessness has impacted on its capital funds already, this could have an additional burden on the Committee's budgetary resources.
- The Head of Housing and Community Services advised that the reasoning behind recommending that this Council take 6 single males is due to the fact that it would be easier to place these individuals in shared accommodation. The advantages being that it would make it easier to deliver good community support as it would be targeted to one place and the accommodation could be utilised for the homeless in the future.
- The funding received from the Home Office would be provided for five years. Should the funding exceed the allocated spend then the Council would not expect to deliver any further services.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Blackmore and seconded by Councillor Newton that the report be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee providing it had no impact on any other deadlines which had to be met regarding the allocation of the individuals coming to this country.

Voting: For: 6 Against: 3 Abstentions: 0

The amendment was carried.

RESOLVED: That the report be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee providing it had no impact on any other deadlines which had to be met regarding the allocation of the individuals coming to this country.

Voting: For: 6 Against: 3 Abstentions: 0

90. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - PUBLIC HEALTH IMPROVEMENT SERVICE FOR ADULTS CONSULTATION

Members considered the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services which set out the suggested response to the Kent County Council's consultation on public health improvement.

Following concerns raised by Members, the Head of Housing and Community Services was asked to broaden the response in Section 3 as

health improvement services should not just be focussed on evidence provided from within the Kent Troubled Families Programme.

- 1) That the Committee endorses the consultation response as set out in Appendix 'C' to the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services; and
- 2) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Housing and Community Services, in consultation with the Chairman, to make amendments to the response to KCC.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

91. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - FOOD SERVICE PLAN

Members considered the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services which related to the contents of the Maidstone Food Service Plan for 2015/16.

- 1) That the Committee notes the contents of the Food Service Plan 2015/16, together with the outline of the food service demands and output for Maidstone Borough Council; and
- 2) That the Committee approves the Food Service Plan 2015/16.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

92. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.45 p.m.