

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES (PART I) OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
16 DECEMBER 2015

Present: Councillor Mrs Wilson (Chairman) and
Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Brice, Cox, Garland,
Mrs Gooch, Mrs Joy, McKay, D Mortimer, Naghi, Perry,
Mrs Ring, Ross, Round and Sargeant

115. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Chittenden, McLoughlin, Munford and Mrs Stockell.

116. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor D Mortimer was substituting for Councillor Chittenden, Councillor Mrs Gooch was substituting for Councillor Munford, Councillor Mrs Ring was substituting for Councillor McLoughlin and Councillor Perry was substituting for Councillor Mrs Stockell.

117. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman advised that there was an urgent item which was on the Amended Agenda – Agenda Item 16 – Reference from Communities, Housing and Environment Committee 8 December 2015: Maidstone’s approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

118. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting Members.

119. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures from Members and Officers.

120. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

121. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

122. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2015

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed.

123. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

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

125. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - COUNCIL TAX - TAX BASE 2016-17

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance and Resources which appraised Members of the information available on the tax base as at 17 October 2015 for Council tax purposes.

The Head of Finance and Resources advised that the proposed tax base would be 58525.4.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authority (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, that the amount calculated by this Authority as its Council Tax Base for the year 2016/17 will be 58525.4; and
- 2) In accordance with the Local Authority (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, that the amount calculated by this Authority as the Council Tax Base for each parish area for the year 2016/17 will be as identified in Appendix B to the report of the Head of Finance and Resources.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

126. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - PROJECTED COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT ACCOUNT 2015/16

Members considered the report of the Head of Finance and Resources which detailed the projected balance on the Collection Fund as at 31 March 2016 from Council Tax Collection and Business Rate Retention.

Members noted that there was a predicted surplus of £300,272 on income anticipated for the end of 2015/16 financial year. It was also estimated that there would be a net surplus on the Collection Fund of £1,016,915.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) The Committee agrees the Council Tax projection of £1.017m (Maidstone's share £0.169m) as detailed in the report of the Head of Finance and Resources and as a result agree the distribution of the surplus set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report; and
- 2) The Committee also agrees the Business Rate projection of £0.681m (Maidstone's share £0.272m) as detailed in the report of the Head of Finance and Resources and as a result agrees the distribution of the surplus set out in paragraph 3.13 of the report.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

Councillor Sargeant arrived at 6.45 p.m. during the debate of this item and therefore could not participate or vote.

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

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance and Resources which updated Members on the budget strategy.

It was noted that in previous years this report followed the publication of the provisional financial settlement figure from Central Government. However, although imminent, this had not been received at the time of the meeting.

Members were advised that each of the Service Committees would be receiving a report on their fees and charges in January and the results of which would be reported back to this Committee in February.

The Head of Finance and Resources advised Members of the pressures and options facing the Council in the short, medium and long term in terms of its future delivery of services.

In addressing the areas around additional pressures, Members noted that there had been a significant amount of capital resources put against Pay Policy Assessment. The Committee, whilst recognising that the Employment Committee would be receiving a report in January on this, prior to it going to Council for ratification in March, requested that the Employment Committee send a reference to this Committee detailing any financial implications as a result of their decision.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee agree to continue to plan on the basis of the revised SRP set out at Appendix A to the report of the Head of Finance and Resources, including the revised resource and expenditure budgets as detailed in the report;

- 2) That the allocation of funding to assist the loss of council tax income by Parish Councils as set out in Appendix B to the report of the Head of Finance and Resources be agreed;
- 3) That the savings and efficiencies of this Committee as set out in Appendix C to the report of the Head of Finance and Resources be agreed;
- 4) That the Committee accepts the proposed savings and efficiencies from all service committees as set out in Appendix D to the report of the Head of Finance and Resources; and
- 5) That the Employment Committee be requested to consider a comparative analysis of the pay policy and current levels of pay at Maidstone Borough Council in advance of this Committee's meeting in February 2016 and produce a report to Policy and Resources Committee on any financial consequences of its decision as part of the strategic budget planning process.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

128. ORAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT (IF NECESSARY)

As the Government had not released any details of the financial settlement by the time that this Committee met, this item was not required.

129. URGENT REFERENCE FROM COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE 8 DECEMBER 2015: MAIDSTONE'S APPROACH TO THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

The Committee considered the Urgent Reference from the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee which had been referred to the Committee due to the budgetary implications and potential capital spend associated with the report.

In response to Members questions, the Head of Housing and Community Services advised that:-

- the commitment from the Council to take in six Syrian refugees could be reviewed in the future, if it was considered that the scheme has been an initial success.
- After five years if the refugees are granted leave to remain, they would have the same rights as anyone else and the Council would assist them to find their own accommodation if required.

RESOLVED:

That:

- 1) Maidstone Borough Council commits to take part in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme;

Voting: For: 13 Against: 1 Abstentions: 1

- 2) That, as per paragraph 4.1 of the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services, the Council's offer is 6 single males over the five year period, to be reviewed annually with an aim of increasing this through the lifetime of the scheme if viable;

Voting: For: 12 Against: 1 Abstentions: 2

- 3) The Council investigate options for the provision of housing, including the purchase of property from capital funds; and

Voting: For: 12 Against: 2 Abstentions: 1

- 4) Syrian refugees should be accepted as soon as suitable housing is available.

Voting: For: 12 Against: 1 Abstentions: 2

Councillor Mrs Blackmore proposed and Councillor Mrs Wilson seconded that the final recommendation as stated in the Reference be removed.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1

RESOLVED: That the final recommendation as stated in the Reference be removed.

130. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015-2020

Members considered the report of the Director of Planning and Development which set out a vision, plan and programme of projects to develop, improve and enhance Maidstone Town Centre in line with the Council's approved policies and emerging aspirations.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Commercial and Economic Development responded as follows:-

- the town centre was just one of four key themes of the Economic Development Strategy, there were many elements within the action plan that related to rural areas and these would be picked up at a later stage

- the digital information points would be implemented, in both the town centre and the rural areas

The Head of Commercial and Economic Development was asked to send a list of the documents that feed into this report by email to all Members of this Committee for information.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The priority areas set out in Section 6 of the report of the Director of Planning and Development be approved;
- 2) The draft 5 year investment and action plan be approved;
- 3) The formation of a Town Centre Strategic Advisory Board be approved; and
- 4) The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee be nominated as members of the Town Centre Strategic Advisory Board.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

131. 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**

Report of the Director of Planning and Development – Business Plan for land and property following its acquisition	3 – Financial/Business Affairs
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Report of the Director of Planning and Development – Development of the Mall	3 – Financial/Business Affairs
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132. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - BUSINESS PLAN FOR LAND AND PROPERTY FOLLOWING ITS ACQUISITION

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Director of Planning and Development which set out the draft Business Plan following the Council’s acquisition of a site in partnership with Kent County Council.

Members noted the progress made to date in regard to the Business Plan, Collaboration Agreement and negotiations with third parties.

RESOLVED:

That:

- 1) The draft Business Plan at Appendix 1 to the exempt report of the Interim Director of Planning and Development be approved;
- 2) Delegated authority be given to the Interim Director of Planning and Development or Chief Executive to finalise the Business Plan in consultation with the Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee;
- 3) The short term holding strategy and capital expenditure is approved as set out in paragraph 2.10 of the exempt report of the Interim Director of Planning and Development;
- 4) Delegated authority be given to the Interim Director of Planning and Development or Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee to agree, and enter into, a Management Agreement/or lease with Kent County Council for its use of the car park; and
- 5) Approval is given for decisions relating to the project which must be taken by each Council to be made in co-located meetings of this Committee and the relevant KCC committee advising the Cabinet Member, subject to KCC's agreement.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

133. **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - DEVELOPMENT OF THE MALL**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Director of Planning and Development which set out details of the proposed scheme and how it would deliver these objectives and contribute to the Town Centre Development Plan.

Members noted the progress made to date in regard to the Council's 5 year Town Centre Development Plan.

RESOLVED:

That:

- 1) The Committee notes progress made with the significant project towards the comprehensive refurbishment and development of the Mall as part of the Council's 5 year Town Centre Development Plan;
- 2) Subject to a detailed business case and an appropriate commercial agreement, Committee endorsed the principle of the Council investing in this project, as detailed in the exempt report of the

Interim Director of Planning and Development;

- 3) The Committee agree that officers progress the specific business case for the acquisition of a building detailed in the exempt report of the Interim Director of Planning and Development as part of this proposed investment;
- 4) The Committee agrees that officers work closely with the respective stakeholders to develop the specification for a transport facility as detailed in the exempt report and report back on options for its delivery; and
- 5) The Committee requests that officers report back with further proposals and the business case to support capital investment to deliver the major scheme.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

134. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 10.25 p.m.