

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY**  
**19 JANUARY 2016**

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Ring (Chairman), and  
Councillors D Mortimer, Newton, Mrs Parvin, Perry,  
Mrs Robertson and Webb

**Also Present:** Councillor Sargeant

93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor J Wilson.

94. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members.

95. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman indicated that she would take the revised Appendix to the Report of the Head of Policy and Communications – Strategic Plan 2015-20 Refresh as an Urgent Update.

96. 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.

97. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures from Members and Officers.

98. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

99. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

100. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2015

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed.

101. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

103. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-20 REFRESH

Members considered the report of the Head of Policy and Communications relating to the Strategic Plan 2015-20 Refresh.

In response to questions from Members:-

- (i) the Head of Policy and Communications advised that there would be links to the emerging Local Plan in terms of affordable housing in the final document;
- (ii) the Head of Housing and Community Services advised that there was a definition within the national framework for affordable housing. However, Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting in March could choose to break down the affordable housing category further to make it clearer; and
- (iii) the Head of Housing and Community Services agreed that the definition of a 'homeless person' is unclear. This term is used to cover a lot of scenarios, however efforts would be made to make this clearer for the future.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the projects under the priority action areas be noted; and
- 2) That the action plan, milestones and outcomes be agreed.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

104. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - MAIDSTONE HOUSING STRATEGY 2016-2020

Members considered the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services which gave an update following the consultation process that had been undertaken with relevant stakeholders through two workshops held in December 2015.

In response to Members' questions:-

- i) The Head of Housing and Community Services advised that the NHS were not among those consulted. However, KCC's Health

Commissioning Services and the West Kent Health and Wellbeing Board were consulted;

- ii) It was noted that 102 people responded on line to the consultation; and
- iii) The onus is on Developers to determine what would be categorised as a starter home.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) The Committee noted that a consultation process had been undertaken with relevant stakeholders. A summary of these consultations and responses were included in the report and Appendix B to the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services. The Government changes to National Policy in the Housing and Planning Bill were also noted;
- 2) The Committee agreed that following extensive research, analysis and consultation, the Key Priority Themes and stated outcomes identified for the new Maidstone Housing Strategy 2016-2020 be approved;
- 3) The Committee gives delegated authority to the Head of Housing and Community Services to develop the Action Plan (as attached at Appendix A to the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services) and final Maidstone Housing Strategy document, before it is presented to Policy and Resources Committee and full Council for adoption; and
- 4) The Committee endorses the first phase of actions that the Council can commence in order to address the current housing situation in the first year of the new Maidstone Housing Strategy.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

105. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016-17 ONWARDS - FEES AND CHARGES

Members considered the report of the Head of Finance and Resources which set out proposals for the level of fees and charges for 2016/17 for services under the responsibility of this Committee.

Members were reminded that the Licensing Committee would be considering the fees and charges relating to Licences.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) The proposed fees and charges for 2016/17, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Head of Finance and Resources, be approved; and

- 2) The budget increase, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Head of Finance and Resources and summarised in Table 1, paragraph 2.6 in the report be approved.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

106. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016-17 ONWARDS - FINAL UPDATE

Members considered the report of the Head of Finance and Resources on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 Onwards – Final Review which gave a final opportunity for the Committee to consider resources available to provide the services that are under its responsibility and comment to Policy and Resources Committee on any matters for their consideration before a recommendation would be made to Council in March 2016.

The Head of Finance and Resources advised Members on the current financial position that the Council faces, with some £627,000 savings to be delivered immediately.

He also advised that since the papers had been published there was an additional proposal to be put forward for this Committee in terms of capital. However, Members were concerned that they should not approve additional capital to be put forward without more detail being given to them.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Perry and seconded by Councillor Webb that the Committee expresses its concerns to Policy and Resources Committee that it cannot agree the capital programme 2016/17 to 2020/21 relating to this Committee until it is given more information.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

Recommendation Carried.

Members also expressed concerns that should the freighter service be withdrawn, that an alternative arrangement should be put in place to ensure that residents are not disadvantaged.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Perry and seconded by Councillor D Mortimer that Officers bring a report back to the next meeting on proposals to mitigate the loss of the freighter service.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) The additional savings and efficiencies set out in Appendix B to the report of the Head of Finance and Resources be approved;

Voting: For: 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2

- 2) The budget proposed for 2016/17 as set out in Appendix C to the report of the Head of Finance and Resources be approved and confirms the decision to Policy and Resources Committee;

Voting: For: 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2

- 3) The Committee expresses its concerns to Policy and Resources Committee that it cannot agree the capital programme 2016/17 to 2020/21 relating to this Committee until it is given more information; and

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

- 4) The Committee requests that Officers bring a report back to the next meeting on proposals to mitigate the loss of the freighter service.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

107. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING

**RESOLVED:** That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item 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 Head of Housing and Community Services - Property Acquisitions - Temporary Accommodation

Paragraph 3 - Info re business/financial affairs

108. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS - TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Members considered the exempt report of the Head of Housing and Community Services.

It was noted that the proposed acquisition of two properties for the provision of accommodation for homeless households would increase the number of properties already designated for this use and reduce the reliance and cost of bed and breakfast accommodation.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Ring and seconded by Councillor Webb that Officers regularly update the Committee on progress of these purchases.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

Recommended Carried.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) The purchase of two properties subject to contract, valuation and survey, for use as accommodation for homeless households be approved as set out in the exempt report of the Head of Housing and Community Services;
- 2) The Housing Capital (Support for Social Housing) Programme funds for 2015/16 (£1,664,500) are carried forward into 2016/17, in order to adequately fund these property acquisitions and also leave sufficient capital resources for the Council to consider buying additional properties should further opportunities arise in the market place;
- 3) The Head of Legal Services be authorised to complete the purchases on the agreed terms;
- 4) The Head of Housing and Community Services commissions the appropriate management service provision as set out in the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services; and
- 5) Officers regularly update the Committee on progress of these purchases.

Voting: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

109. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.45 p.m.