

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 26 JULY 2016

Present: Councillor Mrs Wilson (Chairman), and
Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Boughton, Cox, Fermor,
Garland, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Harvey, Harwood,
McLoughlin, Pickett, Powell, Mrs Ring, Round and
Mrs Wilson

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Brice.

It was also noted that Councillors Garland and Harwood would be late.

40. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Mrs Ring was substituting for Councillor Brice.

41. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

42. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

43. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members and Officers.

44. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

45. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

46. MINUTES (PART I) OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2016

RESOLVED: That the Minutes (Part I) of the meeting held on 29 June 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

47. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 JULY 2016

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed with an additional sentence at the end of the minutes which states:-

"At the end of the meeting Officers were asked to look at options for teleconferencing of co-located meetings in the future".

48. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

50. COMMITTEE SERVICE WORK PROGRAMME - JULY 2016 ONWARDS

Members considered the Committee Service Work Programme and noted that the Devolution Report that had been requested did not appear on the schedule.

RESOLVED: That it was noted that a report on Devolution would be added to this Committee's agenda for 28th September 2016.

51. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - REVENUE & CAPITAL OUTTURN 2015/16

Members considered the report of the Head of Finance and Resources which provided the outturn for revenue and capital expenditure for the year to 2016.

The Head of Finance and Resources explained that there was a minor underspend on revenue for the year of £0.1m.

It was noted, however, that there were a number of services which ended the year with more significant variances and the Head of Finance and Resources highlighted a few areas, for example:-

- There was a major adverse variance against the temporary accommodation budget, this had been partially offset by new initiatives put in place by Officers to ultimately reduce the cost to the Council of providing temporary accommodation.
- An overspend of £0.2m within the street cleansing budget was due to temporary costs arising from operational changes.
- The contract cost for CCTV was higher than budgeted for, which resulted in an overspend of £0.1m but it was hoped that some commissioning work to be carried out in 2016/17 would resolve

this.

- An overspend of £0.1m against the Mote Park budget was due to unbudgeted costs for equipment and repairs and lower than anticipated car parking income.
- Unexpected changes to the service charges for the Market (due to a change in landlord at Lockmeadow) and an income shortfall gave rise to an overspend of £0.1m against budget.

The list of grants that were not spent during 2015-16 and have been consequently carried forward into 2016-17 were noted.

Members were appraised of the capital spend against the revised estimate. It was emphasised that the total capital spend for the year was £4.186m. This total excluded £0.350m spent on schemes funded from external sources such as Section 106 monies.

Councillor Harper asked that a vote of thanks be given to Officers for bringing in the budget so close to estimate.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Finance and Resources advised that:-

- Council set a threshold of £2m for minimum balances, if the Committee wanted to spend balances above the minimum, it can do so without Council approval.
- Another £160k had been given to housing for temporary accommodation but as stated previously, Officers were working hard to come up with initiatives which would help reduce the expenditure.
- The Council has a strategy to secure investments and follows advice from our External Auditors on short term investment opportunities.
- There are a number of reasons why grants are not spent, for example in terms of land charges survey claims, the money is not spent until a decision is reached by the courts.
- The Head of Finance and Resources would feedback to Members on the income target for Street Cleansing.
- The reason why there was a lot of appeals against rateable values on business properties was due to the fact that the Government changed the rules at the end of last year which resulted in more businesses than usual appealing their valuations. However, due to a time bar, appeals could only go back to the point in time of the appeal, not to the point of valuation. The effect of this has meant that there was a deficit on the Collection Fund Account in 2015/16 but a reduced risk of such significant changes in future years.

- Property Services have a generic budget for responsive maintenance but there are some occasions where the resources are not enough when unprepared for repairs need to be carried out.
- The Council Tax team are very good at following up on bad debtors and ultimately collect between 98/99% of Council tax, although it may take a number of years to recover.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the provisional outturn for revenue and capital for the 2015-16 financial year be noted;
- 2) That the carry forward of grant funding from 2015-16 to 2016-17, as detailed in Appendix II of the report of the Head of Finance and Resources be noted;
- 3) That the provisional funding of capital expenditure in 2015-16 as set out in paragraph 4.4.5 of the report of the Head of Finance and Resources be agreed and that the carry forward of revenue resources set aside to finance the capital programme in future years, as detailed in paragraph 4.4.9, be noted; and
- 4) That a vote of thanks be given to Officers for their hard work in bringing in this budget so closely.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

52. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2015-16 AND LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Members considered the report of the Head of Policy and Communications which related to the Annual Governance Statement and Local Code of Conduct.

The Statement includes an update on the actions the Council took in 2015/16 as well as proposed actions for next year.

It was noted that these documents had been reviewed by Audit, Governance and Standards Committee prior to submission to this Committee and that they had made minor amendments which had been incorporated.

The Head of Policy and Communications advised that the Section relating to Scrutiny had proved challenging following the change to the Council's governance arrangements in terms of what information should be included. It was suggested that a paragraph be inserted in relation to performance management and policy development. The Service Committees would be able to hold Officers to account on the performance of their individual service areas.

In response to Members questions, the Head of Policy and Communications advised that:-

- The Members Handbook would be circulated to all Members.
- There have been various exercises carried out over the years to engage with the community on budget consultation etc, for instance a Budget Roadshow was held in 2014 where Members of the Cabinet went out to various locations such as Supermarkets etc to engage with members of the public to ask them to prioritise eight action areas. Last year the Council undertook a Residents Survey which was carried out online and face to face, this had 1,800 responses.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Governance Statement 2015-16 and the Local Code of Corporate Governance be approved, subject to additional narrative being inserted into Appendix 1 of the report of the Head of Policy and Communications regarding the scrutiny function as carried out by the Service Committees, prior to signing by the Leader and Chief Executive.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 5 Abstentions: 1

53. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - STRATEGIC PLAN PERFORMANCE UPDATE QUARTER 1

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Policy and Communications which reviewed the progress of key strategies, plans and performance indicators that support the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

Members noted that there were 33 key performance indicators (KPIs). 57% had met their target, 36% had improved their performance compared to the same quarter last year.

The Head of Policy and Communications highlighted performance categorised under the Council's priorities.

In response to Members comments, the Head of Policy and Communications confirmed that:-

- **Flytipping** - A report would be brought before the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee at its September meeting for further discussion. That future data be presented in total tonnage and the number of incidences.
- **Recycling** - Actual data for the amount of recycling achieved by users was not available for households and homes of multiple occupation/flats. However a recent campaign had targeted social landlords to educate those in multiple occupation dwellings and flats

to recycle more.

- **Number of Safeguarding Practitioners trained** - The green line depicted the target, although at present there was no data to show as no training had been undertaken.
- **User Satisfaction with the Leisure Centre** – A further report on the performance of the Leisure Centre would be brought before the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee at its September meeting for further discussion. In the meantime the Director of Regeneration and Place would attend the next Contractors Meeting to discuss maintenance issues and performance.
- **Economic Development Strategy Update** – The words ‘unless the applicant appeals’ would be deleted from the start of the last sentence in the comments section.

Councillor Harwood proposed and Councillor Fermor seconded.

Voting: For: 12 Against: 2 Abstentions: 1

- **Processing of major planning applications in 13 weeks** – The last sentence of the Performance Comment for this KPI will be amended to ‘This will create or should create a more focused customer experience and delivery of much needed planning permissions’. This will be taken back to the Service Manager to decide.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the summary of performance for Quarter 1 of 2016/17 for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and corporate strategies and plans as amended be noted;
- 2) That where complete data was not currently available, this was noted;
- 3) That the performance of Key Performance Indicators from Quarter 4 of 2015/16 for which indicators were not available at Policy and Resources Committee on 27 April 2016 be noted; and
- 4) That the Head of Policy and Communications ask Chairmen of the Service Committees about their preference for seeing and commenting on future performance updates before they come to Policy and Resources Committee.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

54. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement which set out the progress to date with development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the five years 2017/18 to 2021/22 and an Efficiency Plan in response to the government's four year local governance finance settlement covering the years 2016/17 to 2019/20.

It was noted that there was still some uncertainty following the EU referendum and having a new Prime Minister. However, it was felt that it was still appropriate for the Council to put forward an Efficiency Plan.

Members were advised that Heads of Service and Section Heads would come up with options for Members to consider and these would need to be prioritised.

It was felt that the first step should be for all Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen (and Group Leaders) to discuss the options. All services should be looked at and an impact assessment put against each in the event of a 100% reduction in order that proper consideration could be given.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the progress with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Efficiency Plan be noted;
- 2) That it be proposed that further areas be explored and all suggestions and proposals put forward by all Members be considered; and
- 3) That Members will be consulted on prioritisation of savings ideas.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

55. VOTE OF THANKS

The Chairman advised the Committee that it would be Paul Riley's last Committee meeting before leaving the Council in September.

She wanted to thank him for all his hard work and wished him well for the future. This was agreed by the Committee.

56. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING

Minutes (Part II) of the Meeting
held on 29 June 2016

Paragraph 3 – Information re
financial/business affairs

57. MINUTES (PART II) OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2016

RESOLVED: That the Minutes (Part II) of the meeting held on 26 July 2016 be approved subject to additional wording to the minute relating to the exempt report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development – The Acquisition of Land and Property.

By way of the minutes, the Head of Finance and Resources gave an update to the exempt report relating to Rivers Medway, Teise and Beult Flood Alleviation – Project Funding.

58. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.45 p.m.