

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7 FEBRUARY
2017**

Present: Councillor D Burton (Chairman), and
Councillors English, Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer, Munford,
Prendergast, Springett, de Wiggondene and Wilby

Also Present: Councillors Perry and Round

136. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

137. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

138. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman advised that he intended to take two Urgent Updates which were for Agenda Item 16 – Maidstone Bus Station Options Appraisal and Agenda Item 18 – Response to Regulation 18 Consultation on the Medway Council Local Plan (2012-2035).

139. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillors Perry and Round were in attendance as Visiting Members for Agenda Item 15 – Maidstone Borough Local Plan: Inspector's Interim Findings.

140. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures from Members and Officers.

141. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that Councillor Prendergast had been lobbied on Agenda Item 15 – Maidstone Borough Local Plan: Inspector's Interim Findings and Councillor English had been lobbied on Agenda Item 16 – Maidstone Bus Station Options Appraisal.

142. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed.

143. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

144. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

145. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

146. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman advised that the provisional date of 28 February 2017 for an additional meeting of the Committee would no longer be needed.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

147. OUTSIDE BODIES - VERBAL UPDATES

The Committee noted the Chairman's update on the projects he had been involved with on the Maidstone East redevelopment and the new gyratory system and tow path.

The Chairman also advised that he had attended a Forum on Transport Mobility (autonomous vehicles, big data and the Modern Transport Bill) and would share any information arising from it with the Committee as and when it was released.

RESOLVED: That the updates be noted.

148. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - STRATEGIC PLAN PERFORMANCE UPDATE Q3

The Policy and Information Manager presented a report on the Strategic Plan Performance Update Quarter 3 2016/17.

The Committee was asked to note that the three Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had achieved their target for quarter 3 and performance had improved compared to the same quarter last year.

In response to questions from Members, the Policy and Information Manager advised:-

- That the reason for an extension of time on some major applications was mainly due to the need to negotiate Section 106 Agreements.

- The data provided for the number of school journeys undertaken without a car was obtained from a third party and the exact timeframe was unknown.

The Committee noted that the performance indicators for each Service Committee would be reviewed in March once the Strategic Plan had been finalised by the Policy and Resources Committee.

RESOLVED: That

1. The summary of performance for Quarter 3 of 2016/17 for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and corporate strategies and plans be noted;
2. It be noted where complete data was not currently available;
3. It be noted that no additional actions needed to be taken or amendments made to the Quarter 3 report.

149. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - THIRD QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2016/17

The Chief Accountant presented the report on the Third Quarter Budget Monitoring 2016/17.

The Committee was informed that the full year forecast was expected to show a net underspend of £233,000. This was mainly due to the reduction in agency staff and consultants being employed.

During the discussion the following points were noted:-

- that the street naming and numbering budget had exceeded target and may be significant for future budget planning
- that the car parking income indicated a strong demand for parking within the town centre

RESOLVED: That the revenue position at the end of the third quarter and the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position where significant variances had been identified, were noted.

150. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN: INSPECTOR'S INTERIM FINDINGS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning and Development on the Maidstone Borough Local Plan: Inspector's Interim Findings.

During the discussion the following was noted:

- the Local Plan Inspector issued his interim findings on 22 December 2016.
- a report would be presented to the Committee in March on the proposed main Modifications and minor changes requesting approval for public consultation.
- a 6 week public consultation would commence after that. However, it was noted that this would only be for the Modifications and would not be an opportunity to reopen negotiations on other issues.
- further hearings may be necessary if the Inspector felt that the responses from the consultation required it.
- the Inspector may want to consider what impact the Government's White Paper would have on the Local Plan.
- the Inspector indicated that the Council may get the final report in late June.
- the report on adopting the Local Plan would be presented to the Committee and then go to Council for final approval.

In response to questions from Members, the Officer advised:-

- that the Council's formal position is that it has a 5.12 years land supply.
- any landowner could withdraw their land at any time, there would always be a risk of that happening.
- the bus providers have been very supportive on the delivery of sustainable transport and are keen to progress this.

The Committee expressed their appreciation of Officers having brought the Local Plan to this stage.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

151. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - MAIDSTONE BUS STATION OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The Planning Policy Manager presented a report on the Maidstone Bus Station Options Appraisal together with an urgent update.

The Committee was informed that Officers had undertaken a high level options appraisal of future improvements to bus interchange facilities in the borough, which would include improvements to air quality and the quality of bus services in Maidstone.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- The town's railway stations should also be included in the study.
- There was a need to make the infrastructure more accessible so there could be an efficient way of getting from the bus to the train.
- The Council was required to deliver on mitigation with regard to poor air quality.
- The document needed to be a borough document with reference to all modes of transport.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The initial findings of the high level options appraisal were considered and noted;
2. Officers be instructed to undertake a study to investigate preferred options to improve bus interchange facilities within the borough with a view to incorporating future work on the Maidstone Town Centre Parking Strategy and Park and Ride Study with consideration of multi-module journey planning at a borough wide level;
3. A future report be brought to the Committee once an options appraisal has been undertaken and preferred options identified.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

152. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - KENT MINERALS AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN 2013 - 2030: SAFEGUARDING SPD DRAFT

The Head of Planning and Development presented a report on Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-2030: Draft Safeguarding Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) consultation response.

The Committee noted that Kent County Council (KCC) adopted the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (KMWLP) 2013-2030 in July 2016 and it formed part of the "development plan" for Maidstone Borough. KCC had undertaken a consultation on its draft Safeguarding Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) during December and January. A response was submitted by this Council which was generally supportive of the draft SCI and provided some comments on the draft SPD. However, it did seek further clarification regarding the approach to assessing the mineral safeguarding implications of proposed development allocations in emerging Borough or District Local Plans and advocated that the process should be undertaken at a strategic level which would minimise cost and time implications for authorities producing Local Plans.

RESOLVED: That the consultation response sent to the Kent County Council Minerals and Waste Policy Team on 19 January 2017 be noted.

153. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - RESPONSE TO REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION ON THE MEDWAY COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN (2012-2035)

The Head of Planning and Development presented a report on the Response to Regulation 18 Consultation on Medway Council Local Plan.

The Committee was informed that in January 2016 Medway Council published the first stage of the draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Issues and Options for public consultation. This further consultation represented the next formal stage in the preparation of the draft Medway Local Plan.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- that it was important that Officers fully engage with Medway to improve the transport links.
- in view of the Local Plan Inspector's comments on employment opportunities for Maidstone, discussions should be held with Medway Council.

RESOLVED: That Officers be instructed to send the formal response to Medway Council's Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation with an additional paragraph highlighting the Inspector's comments in relation to employment need.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

154. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - E-PLANNING: PARISH COPIES OF APPLICATIONS

The Head of Planning and Development presented a report on E-Planning – Parish copies of applications.

The Committee was asked to note the next steps in the introduction of E-Planning which specifically relate to how information is provided to Parish Councils.

It was noted that the Planning Support Shared Service was in the process of delivering its electronic planning project, which was part of the original vision for the shared service agreed by the council and was driving changes to achieve an efficient and modern planning service.

The Committee was informed that:

- the most efficient way for applicants to submit, and MKPS to receive applications was via the planning portal (i.e. electronically) as they were instantly available for all interested parties
- the Council received 70-75% of applications through the planning portal.

- to maximise efficiency it was crucial that printing requirements in MKPS were reduced as they cost an estimated £60-75k a year for MKPS which was made up of printing of documents during validation, printing of letters, printing of applications for planning officers and printing of applications for parish councils.
- that the production of hardcopies of planning applications for parish councils was a significant proportion of the printing requirements of MKPS
- a number of options were proposed when the pilot project for paperless applications was started with parish councils in 2014. This was put on hold due to performance issues at that time. Those options had been revisited to test they are still viable
- the main barrier identified by parishes was poor quality broadband in some areas

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- That a consultation was carried out in 2014 but the results were not communicated to Parish Councils.
- That the results of the trials with some Parish Councils were also not communicated to Parish Councils.
- That it was impossible to look at planning application material on a laptop.
- Concern was expressed about the timeline of implementation. It was believed that the 1st April was unworkable.
- That this change had not been budgeted for amongst the Parish Councils and had come just after the precepts had been communicated.

In response to the comments raised, the Mid Kent Planning Support Manager advised that:-

- There was nothing in the Parish Charter about printing of planning applications.
- The decision to make changes was an operational one and had been delegated to the Head of Planning and Development in the Constitution.
- It was agreed when the Planning Support Service became a Shared Service that a review would take place to look at modernising the planning system with a view to being paperless which would produce savings.

- The trials carried out were for a number of different elements of the process.
- That in some cases a compromise could be worked out with Parishes that had particular difficulties.

RESOLVED: That the Committee formally withdraws delegated powers of the Officer's decision to cease hard copies of planning applications for Parish Councils and requests a further detailed options report so that the Committee can consider a decision at a later date.

Voting: For: 9 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

However, before the decision was published the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chief Executive, discussed with the Chairman of the Committee that the withdrawal of delegated power from the Head of Planning and Development was not within the Committee's power. Therefore, the delegated power remains with the Head of Planning and Development.

155. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.15 p.m.