

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER
2017**

Present: Councillor D Burton (Chairman) and Councillors Cox, English, Munford, Prendergast, Springett, de Wiggondene-Sheppard and Willis

94. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies were received from Councillor Wilby.

It was noted that apologies for lateness were received from Councillor de Wiggondene-Sheppard.

95. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

96. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

97. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

98. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

99. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that Councillor English had been lobbied on Agenda Item 13 – Review of Air Quality Management Area and Low Emissions Strategy and Agenda Item 14 – Air Quality Development Plan Document (Local Plan) – Scoping.

100. EXEMPT INFORMATION

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

101. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER ADJOURNED TO 13 NOVEMBER

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November adjourned to 13 November be approved as a correct record and signed.

102. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

103. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Mrs Maureen Cleator asked the following question of the Chairman of the Committee:

With over 500 units being built on Springfield site and the Royal Engineers Road, what plans have been put in place to ensure that we don't end up with the traffic situation such as on the Hermitage Lane, which is basically chaos?

The Chairman of the Committee replied that:

The response I have for you is drawn largely from the detail in our Local Plan.

Included within Policy H1 (11), which is the Springfield allocation, there are criteria which address highways and transport matters. Access to the site will be taken from the A229 Springfield and A229 Royal Engineers roundabouts only. Improvements to and provision of pedestrian and cycle links is required to facilitate connections with the town centre. Finally, improvements are required to the eastern bank of the river towpath for pedestrian and cycle use. As part of the planning process, a transport assessment will be required to explain how impacts of the development will be mitigated. This will be assessed by Maidstone Borough Council as the local planning authority and Kent County Council as the highways authority.

Mrs Cleator then asked the following supplementary question of the Chairman of the Committee:

From the answer you have given me, are there no further improvements to the roundabout at the Barracks, because it is actually very chaotic now, never mind when 500 extra houses are built there?

The Chairman of the Committee replied that:

Any further improvements will be drawn out of the transport assessment. There is a package of highways improvements across the Borough and further improvements may feature through that as well.

Mrs Jane Darling asked the following question of the Chairman of the Committee:

I noted on the local plan it states that on this development the target rates for affordable housing provision within the Maidstone area will be

30%, with the exception of policy H1(11) Springfield, Royal Engineers Road which is set at 20%; where there will only be a provision for 20% affordable housing, what is the reason for this?

The Chairman of the Committee replied that:

When the Local Plan was submitted it was supported by a viability study (DEL 002 Revised Plan and CIL Viability Study) which determined that 30% affordable housing at H1 (11) Springfield is not feasible due to site constraints. As a result, a 30% affordable housing requirement would have resulted in limited capacity to provide for necessary supporting infrastructure. The lower requirement of 20% would allow for an appropriate balance of affordable housing with the need to provide infrastructure.

Mrs Darling then asked the following supplementary question of the Chairman of the Committee:

I have actually read what you have just read to me and I simply don't understand what it means. What does the viable bit mean? Why is it that 20% affordable housing is more manageable? What are the site constraints?

The Chairman of the Committee replied that:

In simple terms, the viability study looks at: the cost of the site, the cost of construction, the cost of providing affordable housing and the other associated infrastructure. It then comes to a conclusion of whether it is commercially viable to deliver the site or not. If there wasn't enough margin in the project then the site would lay dormant and no developer would bring it forwards. I think that that is a major issue across the whole of the country as developers are sitting on sites and not developing and we did not wish that to be the case for this site based upon a very thin viability assessment.

104. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme for 2017/18.

It was noted that the Committee were content that the report setting out the new Key Performance Indicators need not be presented to them in February.

It was noted that Kent County Council were consulting on bus services and that an item be added to the work programme to enable the Committee to submit a formal response.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

105. OUTSIDE BODIES - VERBAL UPDATES FROM MEMBERS

There were no verbal updates from Members.

106. REVIEW OF AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA AND LOW EMISSIONS STRATEGY

The Mid-Kent Environmental Protection Team Leader presented the review of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and the Low Emissions Strategy to the Committee.

It was noted that:

- The Low Emissions Strategy demonstrated that Maidstone Borough Council was committed to improving air quality with the Borough.
- The changes to the AQMA would enable the Council to focus resources on the areas with genuinely poor air quality.
- There were 32 individual actions in the Action Plan that accompanied the Low Emissions Strategy and were categorised into the following themes: transport, planning, procurement, property and carbon management, and public health. The actions were numbered under each theme according to the greatest potential impact on air quality, with the first number having the greatest impact.
- The proposed Low Emissions Strategy, its associated Action Plan and the revision of the AQMA were all subject to specific consultation. The public consultation ran for 8 weeks and included direct contact with Councillors and Parish Councillors, as well as with statutory consultees and special interest groups.
- Progress on the Action Plan would be reviewed and reported to the Committee annually.

In response to questions from the Committee the Mid-Kent Environmental Protection Team Leader replied that:

- The Council could only impose conditions on taxi licenses that were registered in the Borough. However, Officers could look into the introduction of a low emission zone or a clean air zone in the town centre. The Committee then suggested that One Maidstone could be approached to explore opportunities such as their Business Improvement District bid to promote clean air in the Borough and to investigate possible funding for the aforementioned zones.
- The NOx tubes were reviewed regularly and an annual screening report had been sent to DEFRA which complimented the Council on the movement of the tubes.
- Officers would add an action into the Action Plan to inform parents not to leave their cars idle outside schools through the use of a banner campaign.

The Strategic Planning Manager informed the Committee that he did not anticipate the action in the 'Planning 1' theme taking 3-5 years, but instead two years.

The Committee discussed the continuous monitoring station which used to be located on the gyratory system. It was noted that there had been difficulty in finding a suitable location for the continuous monitoring station since the gyratory system had been improved. Therefore, the Committee requested that a report be brought back at the earliest opportunity to set out an appropriate alternative to monitor air quality in the Borough.

It was noted that Councillor de Wiggondene-Sheppard arrived at 6.53 p.m. during consideration of this item.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Low Emissions Strategy be adopted.
2. That the associated Action Plan be adopted, subject to the following amendments being made:
 - a. An addition of an action to inform parents not to leave their cars idle outside schools using a banner campaign;
 - b. To cooperate with One Maidstone to explore opportunities such as their Business Improvement District bid to promote clean air in the Borough; and
 - c. An amendment to the timescale of the 'Planning 1' theme to 2 years (found on page 50 of the agenda).
3. That the revised Air Quality Management Area included at Appendix 2 be approved.

Voting: Unanimous

Note: Councillor English left the meeting at 7.25 p.m. before the voting on this item, but returned before consideration of the next item. Therefore, Councillor English did not vote on this item.

107. AIR QUALITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (LOCAL PLAN) - SCOPING

The Principal Planning Officer (Strategic Planning) presented this item and highlighted to the Committee that:

- The second recommendation on the papers should refer to paragraphs 1.7 to 1.12 instead of paragraphs 1.6 to 1.11.
- The Planning Department could play a significant role in the objectives of the Low Emissions Strategy in securing mitigation measures in conjunction with development. This included

encouraging the use of sustainable transport modes, as well as the adoption of new technologies such as electric vehicle charging points which had the potential to reduce emissions.

- The Local Plan Inspector considered air quality in depth during the Local Plan process. The Inspector considered that there was a need for more robust mitigation measures centred on modal shift for purposes of both the transport strategy and for improving air quality.
- Policy DM6 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan set out a sequential approach for assessing and addressing the air quality impacts of new development and that Policy DM6 would continue to have full weight whilst the new Local Plan was being prepared.
- The Inspector had signalled that there was a changing local and national context and that more urgent work needed to be done to improve air quality. This was the reason why the Council could not wait until the Local Plan was reviewed to carry out this work.

The Committee requested that the following items be included in the scoping of the Air Quality Development Plan Document:

- Agricultural and horticultural practices, as these can have large impacts on air quality;
- The use of emerging technologies in mitigating the effects of poor air quality;
- The consideration of renewable energy; and
- The accessibility of electric vehicle charging infrastructure for all residents.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Head of Planning & Development be instructed to prepare the Air Quality Local Plan.
2. That the scope of the Air Quality Development Plan Document, described in paragraphs 1.7 to 1.12, be agreed as the basis for progressing the preparation of the plan, but that it also include: consideration of agricultural and horticultural practices, emerging technologies and renewable energy options, with the further addition of accessibility to charging infrastructure.

Voting: Unanimous

108. FEES & CHARGES 2018/19

The Head of Finance presented a report which set out the proposed fees and charges for services within this Committee's remit for 2018/19.

It was highlighted to the Committee that:

- Charges which were determined centrally had been included in Appendix 1 for information.
- The fees for Local Land Charges would increase to align across the shared service, which would result in more efficient administration. If agreed, the new fees would be effective from 6 December 2017.
- No changes were proposed to parking charges for 2018/19.

It was noted that Members requested future budget monitoring reports be presented to this Committee in a different format, displaying the different services in separate tables. This would enable the Committee to monitor each service individually.

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposed discretionary fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 to this report be agreed.
2. That the centrally determined fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 to this report be noted.
3. That the introduction of increases to Local Land Charges be effective from 6 December 2017.

Voting: Unanimous

109. GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE ACTION PLAN

The Planning Projects and Delivery Manager presented the Green and Blue Infrastructure Action Plan to the Committee.

It was highlighted to the Committee that the Action Plan could only be delivered in partnership, as the planning, design and management of the Green and Blue Infrastructure resource was the responsibility of many different organisations. The stakeholders had agreed the Draft Action Plan in 2015 following a series of themed workshops.

It was noted that the Committee were encouraged by the progress that had been made on the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and thanked all Officers and Members that had been involved.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Head of Planning and Development agreed that information on how the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy could be used during the planning process would be incorporated into the planning training syllabus for Members.

RESOLVED:

That the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy action plan be adopted.

Voting: Unanimous

110. AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT 2016/17

The Planning Officer (Strategic Planning) presented the Authority Monitoring Report 2016/17 to the Committee.

It was noted that:

- This year's Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) had been structured differently to the previous year to reflect the monitoring indicators recommended in the Sustainability Appraisal 2017 and the indicators within the Local Plan 2017.
- The Local Plan Planning Inspector had revised the 2016/17 indicators and increased the number from 12 to 50. These indicators would be monitored from 2017/18 onwards.
- The AMR 2016/17 showed that good progress was being made towards the targets of the Local Plan 2017.

RESOLVED:

That the Authority Monitoring Report 2016/17 attached at Appendix 1 be noted.

Voting: Unanimous

111. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.