

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 20 MARCH 2018

Present: Councillors Barned, M Burton, Field, Garten, Joy,
D Mortimer, Mrs Robertson and Springett

129. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies had been received from Councillor Mrs Ring.

130. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

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

131. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that he intended to take an urgent item on Temporary Accommodation Strategy Review – Amendment due to the fact that the Council was in a position to close negotiations on the acquisition of temporary accommodation and any delay in agreeing the recommendation may result in the loss of opportunity to purchase the additional units.

RESOLVED: That the report be taken as an urgent item.

132. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

133. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members and Officers.

134. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

135. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

136. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2018

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

137. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

138. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

139. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Committee Work Programme.

The Chairman advised that he had requested that an update on Heather House be presented to the April Committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

140. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS UPDATE QUARTER 3 2017/18

The Committee considered the report of Miss Anna Collier, Information Manager which set out the progress of Key Performance Indicators related to the Committee.

Miss Collier highlighted the services where performance had increased:-

- 99.7% of land and highways had acceptable levels of litter against a target of 93.5%.
- 97.8% of land and highways had acceptable levels of detritus against a target of 84%.
- 89.3% of fly-tips had been cleared within 2 working days during the quarter.
- The allocation of the disabled facilities grant had exceeded target.
- The target of 150 for the number of applicants housed had been exceeded by 30 due to an increase in the amount of available vacant and new build properties.
- A total of 107 homeless preventions were made during quarter 3.

In response to questions from Members, the Officers advised that:-

- In terms of the three prosecutions made against fly-tips, evidence had been found in the rubbish which traced it back to the

perpetrators.

- They were unable to provide accurate information at present to Members of when roads would be swept as the new system had not been properly bedded in. It was envisaged that this would take another 8/12 months.
- The Council's costs were recovered for the clear up of fly-tips where a prosecution had been made.

The Committee asked that the Cleansing Manager be congratulated for the good work that her team had carried out in cleaning up areas on the North Downs. The team should also be congratulated on the recent work in to the town centre to clear up the snow on pathways and roads.

RESOLVED: That the summary of Performance for Quarter 3 of 2017/18 for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) be noted.

141. THIRD QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING 2017/18

The Committee considered the report of Mr Mark Green, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement which provided an overview of the revenue budgets and outturn for the third quarter of 2017/18 and highlighted financial matters that might have a material impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy or the Balance Sheet.

Mr Green advised that there had been a positive variance on the budget as at 31st December 2017. However, current projections indicated that it would be significantly reduced by year end.

The Committee noted that:-

- There had been good performance on Grounds Maintenance where additional work had been generated from Section 106 agreements.
- As the Council acquired more of its own properties, the expenditure for overnight accommodation from external sources would reduce.

In response to questions from Members, the Officers advised that:-

- The savings identified for CCTV in the Medium Term Financial Strategy were over a 3 year period. There had been problems with flooding at the Town Hall which may have a bearing on the budget.

However, there had been a number of cameras that had been switched off which had resulted in the lines being disconnected and therefore some savings had been made.

It was noted that a report would be coming to the April Committee meeting to update Members.

- In regard to the staff shortages at the Depot, there had been changes to shift patterns which had meant that the team were unable to react to staff sickness as effectively as they would have wished. However, the budget had been reviewed and there was more resource available to deal with sickness positively and also the night shifts cleaning up A Roads had now stopped which had seen a reduction in the overtime budget.
- In the Housing Inclusions Section there had been a couple of vacancies, one of which had been filled and the team were in the process of recruiting to the other post.
- The additional spend on fly tipping and materials had been due to the fact that when presenting the waste to KCC it had not been put in their required bags etc. Therefore additional colour sacks had to be purchased.

In terms of the composite of the fly-tipped material, if it was asbestos, chemicals or oils, these had to be disposed of by specialist companies which would be an additional cost to the Council.

RESOLVED:

- 1) 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 have been identified be noted.
- 2) That the position with the capital programme be noted.

142. CHARGING FOOD BUSINESSES FOR FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME RESCORE INSPECTIONS

The Committee considered the report of Mrs Tracey Beattie, Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager which related to the introduction of a charge for re-inspection under the scheme for both businesses and the authority.

It was noted that the fee had been set to cover the cost of re-inspection and allowed food businesses the opportunity of reducing the current (up to) six months re-inspection period to no more than three months once the request and fee had been received.

In response to questions by Members, the Officer advised that:-

- That the public can find out from the FSA website (and via a link from the Council's website what the business Food Hygiene Rating Scores are.
- Businesses do not know the date when the re-inspection would be likely to occur.

- There was a right of appeal for businesses that disagreed with the rating given at the initial inspection, this is independent of the process of a re-inspection. The appeal process would continue and involved a review by both the Team Leaders from Sittingbourne and Tunbridge Wells offices.

RESOLVED: That the introduction of a charge for re-inspections for re-scoring be introduced from 1st April 2018.

Voting: Unanimous

143. COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of Mr John Edwards, Street Scene Operational Manager, which gave an update on the Community Toilet Scheme which enabled residents and visitors to Maidstone the use of private toilet facilities which had been provided by a number of local businesses.

Mr Edwards advised that there were now a total of 9 businesses or facilities signed up to the scheme. He emphasised that there had been improved signage of the locations, especially down by the riverside. In addition, information was provided on the Council's website and public facing applications.

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

- Should the Council provide funding to a privately owned business to accommodate a changing places area, then that establishment would be tied into a 3 to 4 year membership of the Scheme.
- The reason for the reduction in numbers of participants was that the facilities were not considered up to standard and therefore taken off the list.
- It would not make any difference to the number of participants to the scheme if more money was offered.
- If the Council were to have pods installed, following experiences of other Councils, these are open to vandalism and are a target to be robbed.
- That copies of the Monitoring Check Sheets of the current participants would be sent through to Members by email.

That CIL contributions may be able to be used for public toilet facilities. However, the Business Rates Retention Scheme only allows for investment opportunities that would generate additional income.

The following observations were made by Members:-

- That there should be public toilet facilities in the town for all to use.

- That Members had previously spoke to the landlord of the Market Buildings with a view to re-opening the toilet facilities in that location but nothing had come of it.
- That many of the towns in Kent have a changing places facility in their towns and it was embarrassing that the County Town of Kent does not and we should be working with our partners to take it forward.
- Perhaps One Maidstone could do more to encourage establishments within the town centre to take up membership of the scheme.
- That if there was a flavour for the Council to have public toilets in the town centre then this should be looked at and put into the budget for next year.

RESOLVED: That Officers come back to the Committee with a set of properly costed proposals (to include options for grant funding, public funding and/or partnership funding) for a 21st century facility in the town centre.

Voting: Unanimous

144. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY REVIEW - AMENDMENT

The Committee considered the urgent report of the Head of Housing and Community Services which requested a change to the delegated authority to the Director of Finance and Business Improvement to enable him to determine the number, size and type of temporary accommodation to be acquired in accordance with the decision made by the Committee in December 2017.

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

- It would over-complicate the matter to specify the size of property.
- The previously agreed budget of £4.5m would not change.
- That Officers would provide an update report in June which would list the type of properties purchased and their general location.

RESOLVED: That the Committee gives delegated authority to the Director of Finance and Business Improvement to determine the number, size and type of temporary accommodation to be acquired in accordance with the decision made by the Committee on 12 December 2017, within the previously agreed budget of £4.5m.

Voting: Unanimous

145. DURATION OF MEETING

6.45 p.m. to 8 p.m.