

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 28 MARCH
2018**

Present: Councillor Mrs Wilson (Chairman) and Councillors Barned, Mrs Blackmore, Brice, Cox, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Harvey, Hastie, Joy, McLoughlin, B Mortimer, Perry and Mrs Ring

178. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies were received from Councillors Boughton, Fermor, Garland and Harwood.

179. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that the following Members were present as Substitute Members:

- Councillor B Mortimer for Councillor Fermor;
- Councillor Mrs Ring for Councillor Garland; and
- Councillor Mrs Joy for Councillor Harwood.

180. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

181. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

182. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

183. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

184. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

185. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

186. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 MARCH 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

187. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

Ms Yolande Kenward asked the following question of the Chairman of the Committee:

Was there any particular reason that Kent County Council's application for a Government Grant re the Kent Medical Campus, supported by Maidstone BC with £500,000 of council tax money and letters, was not submitted until after the KCC and the Maidstone General Elections in 2017?

The Chairman of the Committee replied that:

Thank you for your question. On 6th April 2017 the Department for Transport announced that county councils could bid for money from the National Productivity Investment Fund – a £490 million pot was designed to tackle congestion and provide upgrades to local roads to improve journey times.

The bid which can be viewed online (available at https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/72538/Kent-Medical-Campus-road-transport-bid.pdf) required the development of a comprehensive business case in accordance with Department for Transport guidelines, detailing information such as transport modelling outputs, scheme Value for Money and the identification of financial contributions.

The development of this work is lengthy, requiring the input of specialist consultants, and was completed in the three months between the funding announcement and the deadline submission. The financial commitment of £500,000 by Maidstone Borough Council – which will be recouped through a bilateral agreement with the landowner of Kent Medical Campus – was subject to Committee decision and approved at Policy and Resources Committee on 28 June 2017.

The bid was submitted to Government on 30 June 2017 on the day of the deadline. In other words the process from when the funding bid was announced by Government to when we put the bid in had a very tight timeline, which we followed scrupulously.

Ms Kenward then asked the following supplementary question of the Chairman of the Committee:

Please may I have a list or a copy of all the planning applications made re Kent Medical Campus?

The Chairman of the Committee replied that:

The details of planning applications related to the site are publicly available on the Maidstone Borough Council website.

The Chairman agreed to give the details of the links mentioned to Ms Kenward following the meeting.

189. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the following items on the Committee Work Programme would be reported to the Committee in the next municipal year rather than April 2018 as indicated:

- Kent Medical Campus Innovation Centre
- Commissioning and Procurement Strategy
- Housing Delivery Partnership

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

190. BUSINESS TERRACE UPDATE

Ms Abi Lewis, the Economic Development Officer, updated the Committee on the Business Terrace.

It was highlighted to the Committee that:

- This report provided an update on the performance of the Business Terrace.
- The Business Terrace continued to perform well, with 100% occupancy of the start-up and grow-on office accommodation and increased income levels over the past two years.
- The initial phase of the Business Terrace development was operated as a pilot to test the concept and demand, and to utilise the redundant space to which the Council had a long term rental commitment until 2023. The cost of conversion was £250,000. The facility had been expected to deliver a contribution to help cover the unavoidable costs only.
- The Business Terrace continued to receive significant numbers of enquiries from businesses looking for a modern, collaborative and supportive office environment in Maidstone. As the facility is at full occupancy, Officers were examining the viability of a further phase of accommodation in undeveloped space on the first floor of Maidstone House. This would be considered within the context of the Council's wider lease commitments to Maidstone House.

The Committee requested clarification of the extent to which the Business Terrace has covered the initial £250,000 capital costs for the conversion of the space. Ms Lewis agreed to circulate a table detailing this to the Committee.

It was noted that the Committee congratulated both Members and Officers who were involved with the success of the Business Terrace.

RESOLVED: That the update on the performance of the Business Terrace be noted.

191. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE 2018-19

Ms Anna Collier, the Policy and Information Manager, presented the report to the Committee.

It was highlighted to the Committee that there was an error on Page 29 of the agenda. The 2018-19 targets and notes for the 'Processing of Minor planning applications in 8 weeks' and 'Processing of Other planning applications in 8 weeks' were listed the wrong way round.

In response to a question from the Committee, Ms Collier advised that she would check whether dog fouling was included in the KPI relating to the 'Number of litter reports attended to'.

The Committee requested that an additional Key Performance Indicator be included to detail the 'Percentage of fly tips cleared within 4 working days' to provide a more effective measure of performance.

The Committee was concerned that there was not enough information, such as the current performance of the KPIs, to make a decision and therefore the decision to agree the KPIs for 2018/19 was deferred to the April meeting of this Committee. It was advised that at the April meeting a further column could be included in Appendix A to provide the current outturn of each KPI.

RESOLVED:

1. That an additional Key Performance Indicator be included to detail the 'Percentage of fly tips cleared within 4 working days'.

Voting: For – 7 Against – 2 Abstentions – 5

2. That the decision to agree the Key Performance Indicators for 2018/19 be deferred to the April meeting of this Committee.

Voting: For – 13 Against – 1 Abstentions – 0

192. BUSINESS RATES RETENTION PILOT 2018/19

Mr Mark Green, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement, presented a report on the Business Rates Retention Pilot 2018/19 to the Committee.

It was highlighted to the Committee that:

- The Committee agreed the parameters for allocation of the funding at its meeting on 24 January 2018 and this report described the individual projects that it was proposed to fund.
- It was possible that the Business Rates Retention Pilot would be extended to 2019/20 but the Government had made no commitment to doing this. If it was proposed in 2019/20 then it was likely the Council would have to bid again to form a Pilot. By setting out the proposals in Appendix A and delivering those projects it put the Council in a good position to be selected to form a Pilot again in 2019/20.
- The projects had been divided into three tranches. The projects in Tranche 1 could be implemented from the beginning of April 2018.
- In order not to delay projects unnecessarily, funding would be released as soon as it was considered prudent to do so. Therefore it was recommended that delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance and Business Improvement, in consultation with the Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee, to release funding as appropriate during the course of the year.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Green replied that:

- The Maidstone Business Capital of Kent marketing strategy was an ambitious project that would target businesses further afield and create inward investment for the Borough.
- The Property Asset Review would look at all individual sites, both for redevelopment or disposal.
- There would be guidance produced for the Members' Community Grant to ensure that money was spent in accordance with the rules.
- It was proposed that update reports would be brought back to this Committee quarterly.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr William Cornall, the Director of Regeneration and Place replied that the Regeneration Opportunity Areas had been presented to Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee in January 2018. The Council had since written to the site owners affected. The sites/areas were:

- Mote Road island site;
- Land around Gala Bingo Hall;
- Len House;

- Land around Maidstone West Station; and
- Land around the west of the River Medway.

The Committee requested that review reports were brought back to this Committee on the projects as they progressed, to ensure that Members were kept up to date.

RESOLVED:

1. That the projects to be funded from proceeds of the Business Rates Retention Pilot set out in Appendix A be agreed.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance and Business Improvement, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, to release funds for the individual projects.
3. That review reports are brought back to this Committee on the projects as they unfold.

Voting: For – 13 Against – 1 Abstentions – 0

193. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.03 p.m.