

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Policy and Resources Committee**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 APRIL  
2018**

**Present:** Councillors Barned, Mrs Blackmore, Boughton, Cox, Garland, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Harvey, Harwood, Hastie, Joy, Perry, Mrs Ring and Mrs Wilson

**Also Present:** Councillors Daley and Lewins

194. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies were received by Councillors Fermor and McLoughlin.

195. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that the following members were present as substitute members:

- Councillor Joy for Councillor Fermor; and
- Councillor Ring for Councillor Brice.

196. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

197. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that:

- Councillor Daley was present as a visiting member for item 16 Acquisition of Woodland – Hermitage Lane; and
- Councillor Lewins was present as a visiting member for item 16 Acquisition of Woodland – Hermitage Lane.

198. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Mrs Dawn Hudd, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development, declared that she had an interest in relation to item 14. Maidstone Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID). Mrs Hudd explained that she was a board member on One Maidstone CIC, which was the organisation that had proposed the BID.

Councillor Harwood disclosed that in his employment he had a safety and regulatory duty in relation to reservoirs and would therefore leave the room during consideration of item 15. Mote Park Lake Dam.

199. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors Cox, Harwood and Mrs Wilson disclosed that they had been lobbied on item 16 Acquisition of Woodland – Hermitage Lane.

200. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

201. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 MARCH 2018

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed.

202. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

204. AMENDMENT TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

**RESOLVED:** That item 16. Acquisition of Woodland – Hermitage Lane is considered following item 11. Digital Strategy.

205. DIGITAL STRATEGY

Mr Gary Hunter, the Transformation Manager, presented the Council's Digital Strategy to the Committee.

Mr Hunter conveyed the following to the Committee:

- The strategy outlined the Council's approach to digital technology up until 2021. The policy was a continuation of the Council's Customer Services Improvement Strategy.
- The Digital Strategy was split into two themes – Digital Council and Digital Community.
- The theme of Digital Council focussed on how the Council used IT to achieve its objectives, and how the Council enabled its staff to provide an excellent service to residents and businesses in Maidstone.

- The theme of Digital Community focussed on how the Council ensured that services were designed for customers to access in the most convenient way. However this did not exclude those who could not engage with the council digitally.

Mr Mark Green, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement, confirmed that there was provision in the capital programme for spend on IT projects. Any new initiatives identified through the Digital Strategy that met the Council's objectives within the Capital Programme would be eligible for funding from the capital budget.

The Committee identified that there were areas of the borough that had poor mobile phone reception, and it was noted that the Digital Strategy did not mention this problem that some residents faced. The Committee requested that reference to this issue was made in the policy.

In response to a question from a member of the Committee Mrs Georgia Hawkes, the Head of Commissioning and Business Improvement, confirmed that further work was required once the strategy had been agreed and implemented to identify those that were digitally excluded. This work would also include identifying what support was available for those who were digitally excluded.

Mrs Hawkes confirmed that she would bring an update to the Committee next year on the progress of implementing the strategy which would include an update on the progress of work carried out on digital exclusion.

**RESOLVED:**

That, subject to the addition of 'Work with mobile phone providers to ensure that mobile phone signal remains strong and improves in areas where coverage is poor' to the bullet points under 'We Will' on page 20 of the Strategy, the Digital Strategy is adopted.

Voting: Unanimous

206. ACQUISITION OF WOODLAND - HERMITAGE LANE

Mr Andrew Williams, Parks and Open Spaces Manager, introduced his report outlining an acquisition of woodland at Hermitage Lane, known locally as Bluebell Wood.

Mr Williams explained that the developer of adjacent housing sites had offered this piece of land free of charge to the Council, along with a sum of money to ensure maintenance for at least a 15 year period.

Councillors Daley and Lewins spoke as visiting members in support of the Officer recommendations.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr Williams confirmed that the proposed maintenance over a 15 year period would ensure the

woodland was managed properly while the woodland adjusted to the new development around it, including a potential increase in footfall.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the acquisition of almost 4.5 hectares (12 acres) of woodland shown outlined in red on the attached map (Appendix 1) is agreed.
2. The Director of Finance and Business Improvement is supported in using his delegated authority to conclude negotiations with the freeholder for transfer of land conditional on receiving an appropriate commuted sum or endowment fund to pay for a minimum of 15 years future direct management.
3. That the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services is authorised to complete the transfer of land on the terms as agreed by the Director of Finance & Business Improvement.

Voting: Unanimous

Note: Councillor Blackmore arrived during consideration of this item at 7.15 and chose not to vote on this item as she was not present during the debate.

207. CORPORATE RISK UPDATE

Mr Russell Heppleston, Deputy Head of Audit Partnership, and Mrs Alison Blake, Audit Manager, updated the Committee on Corporate Risk.

Mr Heppleston explained that this was the first time the Committee had considered the Risk Update since the Council had adopted the Risk Appetite Statement. Therefore the risks contained in the risk register had been updated to reflect the Council's agreed risk appetite. A further change to the report was a section outlining the risks identified by key partners. This allowed the Council to anticipate any risks to key partners, and allowed shared insight on risks and the measures that could be taken to control them.

Mr Green confirmed that the financial risk to the Council as a consequence of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union was covered in the regular financial risk update reports that were considered by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee. However if any Corporate Risks were identified around this issue they would be added to the Corporate Risk Register.

The Committee requested some changes to the report for the next time it was considered, including:

- Further information about external risks that may affect the Council.

- Some wording included on the effects on our residents and businesses if the risk to the Town Centre materialised.
- Reference to other Housing Associations, not just Golding Homes, as there were a variety of different providers of social housing in the borough.

Mr Heppleston confirmed that he would ensure that he would include members in training and induction sessions around the risk register in the new municipal year.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Corporate risks (as set out in Appendix 1) are noted.

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

Miss Anna Collier, the Policy and Information Manager, introduced the Committee's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2018-19.

Miss Collier explained that the KPIs were being considered at this meeting as the Committee had requested that the KPIs and their targets be considered at the same meeting as the performance out turns. This would allow target setting to be undertaken with the most recent data on performance.

Regarding the proposed KPIs – these had not changed significant from 2017-18 as the priority areas in the Strategic Plan had stayed the same.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr William Cornall, Director of Regeneration & Place, confirmed that despite performance showing a decline in Quarter 3 for processing Major, Minor and Other Planning applications, performance had improved in Quarter 4 and was well above target. The Committee was satisfied that the targets set for these indicators were not ambitious.

The Committee highlighted that at its March meeting, it had agreed to include a KPI on flytips removed within 4 working days however this KPI did not appear in the list of KPIs. Miss Collier confirmed that this KPI would appear in the final list.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Key Performance Indicators, contained in Appendix 1, are agreed.

Voting: Unanimous

209. MAIDSTONE TOWN CENTRE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

Mr William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place, presented a report to the Committee which outlined the progress of the proposed Business Improvement District (BID) for Maidstone Town Centre.

Mr Cornall outlined the following to the Committee:

- The BID process was being progressed by One Maidstone CIC, and the Business Plan and proposed BID area were in the final stages of development.
- One Maidstone CIC was a separate organisation to the Council, although the Council held two seats on One Maidstone CIC's board.
- One Maidstone CIC's board had a broad membership from across interested parties in the town centre. There were 14 members of the board representing a range of different types and sizes of businesses.
- If successful, the BID would levy an additional 1.5% on top of business rates for businesses in a defined area of the town centre. The money raised from the levy would be spent on the items listed in the BID's business plan. These items would be in addition to the services that Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council already provided in the Town Centre.
- Businesses located in Fremlin Walk, Royal Star Arcade and The Mall would pay a reduced levy of 1% due to having to pay a service charge to their landlord.
- Businesses that were located in premises that had a rateable value of £15,000 or less would be exempt from paying the levy.
- If successful, Maidstone Borough Council would be responsible for collecting the BID levy alongside Business Rates.
- The BID would be successful if 51% of businesses by number of properties, and 51% of businesses by rateable value, voted in favour of the BID.
- One Maidstone CIC had been canvassing businesses who were likely to be in the BID area, and were confident that they would cross this threshold. However this was dependent on Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council voting in favour of the BID.
- There was not an active 'No' campaign against the BID, and many of the businesses that previously voted against the BID had stated that they were now in favour of the BID.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Cornall confirmed:

- One Maidstone CIC would fold if the BID vote was not successful, therefore it was crucial to the future of the Town Centre for the

Council to cast its votes in favour of the BID.

- The cost of collection of the levy would be billed back to the BID organisation, so there was no financial risk to the council of taking on the collection of the levy on behalf of the BID.
- The Council would be paying a net additional £5,000 p.a. if the BID vote was successful, however it would leverage in an additional £2.15 million of investment in the Town Centre over the 5 year period of the BID.
- Those organisations exempt from paying the BID levy would still have a voice in the BID.

**RESOLVED:**

1. The ballot for a BID, as proposed by the BID organisation, is supported.

Voting: Unanimous

2. Delegated authority is granted to the Director of Regeneration and Place to cast the Council's 15 votes in favour of a BID in the ballot.

Voting: For - 12 Against - 0 Abstentions - 2

3. The Council will carry out the ballot on behalf of the BID organisation.

Voting: Unanimous

4. If the BID is successful, to enter into an operating agreement and a baseline agreement with the BID organisation.

Voting: Unanimous

210. MOTE PARK LAKE DAM

Mr Mark Green, Director of Finance and Business Improvement, gave a presentation to the Committee outlining the works that were required to be carried out to the Dam in the lake at Mote Park.

Mr Green explained that the Council was legally obliged to carry this work out, in order to ensure that the reservoir was safe for nearby residents and businesses.

In response to a question from a member of the Committee, Mr Green confirmed that detailed ecological surveys were being carried out and there was sufficient budget in the project to replace lost trees. The Committee noted that there was a year of replanting scheduled in to the project plan to ensure replanting was undertaken properly.

Councillor Ring expressed her support for this project as the Ward Member for the area and requested that this was noted in the minutes.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the contents and conclusions of the Mote Park Lake Reservoir Engineering Services Options Appraisal Report April 2018 are noted.
2. That Option C1 works to the Mote Park Lake spillway, as outlined in the report, are approved in order to reduce the risk of failure of the dam due to overtopping as low as reasonably practicable.
3. That the Director of Finance & Business Improvement is given delegated authority to seek planning approval for the recommended works and to enter into contracts for the supply, design and construction work to both the dam and sluice gates.

Voting: Unanimous

Note: Councillor Harwood left the room during consideration of this item and did not participate in the vote.

211. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 pm to 8.57 pm