

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 17 JULY 2018

Present: Councillors M Burton, Joy, D Mortimer (Chairman),
Purle, Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, Rose and Webb

23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence was received by Councillor Powell.

24. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

25. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

26. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting Members.

27. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members and Officers.

28. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

29. EXEMPT ITEMS

In response to a request by a Member to take Agenda Item 16 – Provision of a Replacement CCTV System in public, the Director of Regeneration and Place advised that the Proper Officer had agreed that the report should be taken in private as the information contained within it, if made public, could prejudice the future tendering process.

RESOLVED: That Agenda Item 16 – Provision of a Replacement CCTV System be taken in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information.

30. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 JUNE 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed.

31. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

32. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

33. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme.

It was noted that the Update on Heather House would come back in October.

Members requested that the results of the structural survey should be circulated to the Committee as soon as they are received rather than waiting for it to be included in the report for October.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

34. REVENUE OUTTURN 2017/18 – ALLOCATION OF UNDERSPEND

Mr Mark Green, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced his report on the Revenue Outturn 2017/18 – Allocation of Underspend in which he advised that Policy and Resources Committee had invited all the Service Committees to submit a proposal as to the allocation of the underspend to be spent on specific projects.

Mr Duncan Haynes, the Mid-Kent Environmental Protect Team Leader was invited by the Chairman to inform the Committee of a potential use for the underspend to carry out a feasibility study into a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) or Low Emission Zone (LEZ) in Maidstone.

The Committee was advised that the actions in the Council's Air Quality Action Plan/Low Emission Strategy had been divided into a number of themes, the most important being Transport. One of the actions was to undertake a feasibility study into a Clean Air Zone or Low Emission Zone in Maidstone and focus on the areas around the High Street. However, since that action was formulated, Officers had obtained data that showed pollution levels around Upper Stone Street were much higher so this would be the area concentrated on should a feasibility study be funded.

Therefore the scope of the study would focus on Stone Street but any measures implemented would include the route to and from the town centre via Loose Road (including the Wheafsheaf junction).

It was noted that the action plan was clear in that it stated that the feasibility study could only be carried out if the required funding was found. A quotation was obtained and an application to Defra for funding had been made but proved unsuccessful.

In the absence of any funding, it was proposed that £30k be requested from the underspend to enable Officers to commission the feasibility study.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Haynes responded that:-

- He would circulate to Members the data regarding air quality which related to Stone Street and the Wheatsheaf junction.
- The low emissions zone would focus firstly on vehicles that emitted the highest emissions, for example buses and then move onto the next most polluting sector.
- That it was mainly Metropolitan Borough Councils that were successful in their bid for funding from Defra and the fact that they had success was probably due to the fact that the low emissions sanctions had been forced upon them.
- That the feasibility study would take in all the one way system, not just Stone Street.

In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Housing and Community Services confirmed that the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee looks at the policy for low emissions but the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee looked after the monitoring and implementation.

The Committee made the following comments:-

- That the health of residents in the borough was their first concern and the underspend should be used to ensure the health of residents was protected
- That a decision on the underspend should be dealt with by full Council, not just Policy and Resources Committee
- That the planting of trees up Stone Street would help to absorb some of the pollution in the area
- Re-routing buses away from Stone Street would cause further congestion on unsuitable roads
- That the underspend should be put in reserves for the homeless
- That the action plan gives the Council the right to take the work forward, it is not something that KCC can do.
- That the bus companies should be required to use low emission vehicles

RESOLVED: That this Committee recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that £30,000 be used from the underspend to commission a low emissions feasibility study.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 4 Abstentions: 0

The Chairman used his casting vote in favour of Option 1.

35. PETS WITHIN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Mr John Littlemore, the Head of Housing and Community Services presented a report which outlined a proposal to create a policy that allowed (where possible) pets to reside with families whilst in temporary accommodation supplied by the Council.

Mr Littlemore drew Members' attention to a small typo in the report on Page 14 under 'Crime and Disorder', would should have read that the recommendation would have **nil** impact on crime and disorder.

It was noted that it was not previously in the Council's gift to allow pets in temporary accommodation. However now that the Council had acquired their own temporary accommodation; it could adopt a more considerate approach to the issue.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Littlemore responded that:-

- the tenant would be given a copy of both documents, i.e. the Pet Policy and the Agreement.
- the agreement could not be transferred to another social housing provider should the tenant move out. However, it was hoped that other providers would adopt a similar policy in the future.

Members of the Committee made the following comments:-

- That keeping a cat indoors who was used to going out may cause its own issues such as behavioural or pet smells.
- That the list of pets were unnecessary and should be taken out.
- That should a person have a job that means they are away from home for long periods of time, could some discretion be given in these circumstances.

In response to all the issues raised by Members, Mr Littlemore advised that his Officers would take a pragmatic view on each individual case.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approve the Pet Policy 2018 and Agreement attached as Appendices A and B to the report and gives delegated authority to the Head of Housing and Community Services to amend the Policy and Agreement as discussed.

Voting: For: Unanimous

36. WASTE AND RECYCLING STRATEGY 2018 - 2023

Mrs Jennifer Shepherd, the Head of Environment and Public Realm introduced her report on the Waste and Recycling Strategy 2018-2023.

The Committee noted that following previous consultation with the Committee and a workshop with Members, a new Waste and Recycling Strategy had been drafted.

Mrs Shepherd also advised that the issue of recycling had recently been in the news regarding single use plastics. As a result of this central government had proposed a number of changes to policies and legislation, including putting a tax on coffee cups.

The Committee was informed that Maidstone was at the forefront of recycling and they were second in the table against other Kent authorities. A number of authorities had seen a decline in their recycling rates.

In response to questions from Members, Mrs Shepherd advised that:-

- The satisfaction target for customers on recycling was taken out as it was almost a given that the rate would be high.
- There would not be any policing of bins, just working with residents to get it right. The last resort would be to take the bin away.
- The Council had adopted a hard line with housing providers and management companies on their communal areas which had been successful.
- Roadshows and face to face engagement are targeted to areas where recycling rates are low.

RESOLVED: That the draft Waste and Recycling Strategy 2018-2023 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be adopted and the actions contained within it are implemented.

Voting: For: unanimous

37. TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE PROVISION

The Committee considered the report of Mrs Shepherd which related to town centre public convenience provision.

It was noted that the Committee received an update report earlier in the year on the toilet community scheme and it was recommended that fully costed options be brought back to enable an informed decision on the provision of town centre public conveniences.

The Committee noted that there were some key considerations which needed to be taken into account when designing a new Town Centre public convenience, which were:-

Location – the location needed to consider footfall, impact on local businesses, utilities, visual appearance and security.

Usage – the likely usage would impact on the size of the facility needed, the cleaning and maintenance regime.

Cost – the split between capital and revenue costs for providing the facility needed to be considered.

Mrs Shepherd detailed the various options available and the likely costs.

In response to questions from Members, Mr John Edwards, the Street Scene Operations Manager advised that:-

- the public conveniences in the Market Buildings were in a very bad state and it would take a lot of investment to get them open again.
- to put in a public convenience facility in Palace Avenue would create a loss of income for the car park and would incur additional resources to maintain the facility.

Members made the following comments:-

- That the costs were prohibitive and should not be progressed.
- That the Council should wait and see what happened with the developments at Maidstone East, the Mall and the Bus Station.
- That the Community Toilet Scheme should be continued and Officers should try to get more businesses on board.
- That it seemed a lot of money for a facility to be built and then vandalised.
- That the Council spent millions on the granite all the way through the town centre to improve the environment so there should be toilet facilities to help boost the town centre.
- That a changing places facility was still needed in the town.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to deliver and improve the Community Toilet Scheme and in future consider the possibility of public conveniences in any further town centre development.

Voting: For: unanimous 7 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1

Councillor Mrs Ring left the meeting at 8.30 p.m. at the conclusion of this item.

38. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information.

39. PROVISION OF A REPLACEMENT CCTV SYSTEM

The Committee considered the exempt report of Mr Matt Roberts, the Community Partnerships and Resilience Manager which detailed the need to relocate the CCTV system out of the Town Hall to a new location in order to protect the system from further flood damage and enable the repairs to the basement to take place.

Mr Roberts outlined the options available and emphasised that Option 3 would provide cameras which would improve the quality of evidence gathered but Option 2 provided a balance of cost and system improvement and was therefore the recommended option.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Roberts responded that:-

- CCTV was used by the Police in their evidence gathering and to respond to situations identified via CCTV. However, it was also used by other agencies, such as Mailsafe and door staff.
- That there was potential to improve the quality of the images from obtaining new or upgraded video over IP cameras.
- That the Police do not make a contribution towards the CCTV equipment but neither do they make a contribution towards any other Authority's equipment.
- That he would supply any new Members to the Committee with a copy of the review of CCTV provision that came to the Committee last year.
- That it was impossible to establish the amount of crime prevented by CCTV.
- That by using the Wi-fi network proposed cameras could be deployed in areas in the town centre not currently covered by CCTV where there had been high rates of crime which was much more cost effective than installing a camera using fibre link.

RESOLVED: That the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee recommends to the Policy and Resources Committee that funds are made available to enable Option 2 at paragraph 3.2 of the report be implemented.

Voting: For: unanimous

40. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.50 p.m.