

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER
2019**

Present: Councillor Cox (Chairman), and
Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Brice, D Burton, M Burton,
Chappell-Tay, Clark, Cox, English, Garten, Mrs Gooch,
Harvey, McKay, Mortimer, Newton, Perry and Purle

Also Present: Councillors T Sams

74. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies had been received from Councillor Round.

75. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

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

- Councillor D Burton for Councillor Round until the arrival of Councillor Brice who then attended as a Substitute Member for Councillor Round and Councillor D Burton left the meeting.
- Councillor Garten for Councillor Springett.

76. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had decided to accept a Question from Councillor T Sams and would take it as part of item 10 – Questions and answer sessions for members of the public.

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had also decided to take the nomination form for Councillor Garten under item 14 – Nominations to Outside Bodies.

77. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor T Sams was present as a Visiting Member to ask a question for item 10 – Question and answer session for members of the public.

78. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

79. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillor Gooch stated that she had been lobbied on item 14 – Nominations to Outside Bodies.

80. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION.

RESOLVED: That item 15 – Granada House be taken in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information.

81. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2019

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2019 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed.

82. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

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

Question from Ms Joanna Burns

Ms Burns asked the following question of the Chairman of the Committee:
“It has been six months since Maidstone Borough Council declared a climate emergency. What progress has been made with regards to this such as:-

- *Introducing the City Tree and/or planting more trees;*
- *Not building houses or roads on green spaces;*
- *Building an extensive integrated cycle path system;*
- *Solar panels on new builds.*

And to this end when will policies such as these be implemented?”

Ms Burns asked the following supplementary question:

“When will the public get to see a report?”

The Chairman responded to both the question and supplementary question and invited Group Leaders or their representatives to do the same. The full response was recorded on the webcast and was made available on the Maidstone Borough Council website.

Question from Cllr Tom Sams

Councillor Tom Sams asked the following question of the Chairman of the Committee

"On Wednesday 18th September at the P&R committee, in relation to the garden community proposal at Lenham, it was written in the report that there is IRO £150K to be spent this financial year. Additionally there is a £5 million risk to this Council. The £5m was not reflected in the minutes, nor the subsequent press release, nor in response to your question asked at council the following week. Is the figure £5m as stated in the report?"

The Chairman responded to the question. The full response was recorded on the webcast and was made available on the Maidstone Borough Council website.

Note: The meeting was adjourned during the course of this item as there was a fire drill and the Town Hall was evacuated. The Committee returned and continued on this item.

84. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement updated the Committee on their work programme and informed them that items of business on 20 November 2019 would be moved to 4 December 2019 to better balance workload.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

85. BUSINESS RATES RETENTION PROJECTS - QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement gave a short update on the Business Rates Retention Projects. In particular the spend on Housing and Rough Sleepers was drawn to the Committee's attention as the £80k had been committed in year; though that did not yet show in the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the further progress with the 2018/19 BRR pilot projects (set out in paragraph 2.5 and Appendix 1) be noted; and
2. That the early progress with the 2019/20 BRR pilot projects (set out in paragraph 2.14 and Appendix 2) be noted.

Note: Councillor Brice arrived after consideration of this item (7.12pm)

86. PROPERTY ASSET REVIEW UPDATE

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement presented the report providing the regular update on the progress of the 'Next Steps' work stream of the Property Asset Review.

The Committee discussed the usage of the Carriage Museum as part of a discussion on the Archbishop's Palace. The Director confirmed that the Archbishop's Palace was the priority building as it was being vacated by KCC and the future of the building needed consideration. However, there were concerns about a wasted opportunity to look at the Carriage Museum (the Archbishop's stables). It was therefore agreed to remove the word spatial from the report in order to suggest a wider look at the context of the two buildings.

RESOLVED: That, with the word spatial removed from paragraph 2.8, the progress made on the effective use of the Council's property assets over the last three months and in response to the Property Asset Review report be noted.

87. NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager presented the report on nominations to outside bodies and requested that the Committee determine who they would like to appoint to the One Maidstone BID Advisory Board, on the extra place that had been requested by the Committee previously, and onto the two vacancies on the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board.

The Committee agreed to appoint the two nominees, Councillors Harper and Round, to the two vacancies on the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board. The Committee then considered the two nominations received for the single One Maidstone BID Advisory Board and resolved to appoint Councillor Garten.

RESOLVED:

1. That Councillors Harper and Round be appointed to the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board; and
2. That Councillor Garten be appointed to the One Maidstone BID Advisory Board.

Note: The meeting was adjourned from 7.40pm to 7.50pm to allow Members time to consider the part II papers. Councillor Purle left the meeting after consideration of this item.

88. GRANADA HOUSE

The Housing Delivery Manager presented the report on a rooftop extension to Granada House. The proposal was to award the contract to a specialist company and to carry out a wider refurbishment of the building. The intention was to create additional market rent units that would be retained by the Council, within its property company Maidstone Property Holdings Limited.

The Committee requested early engagement with Ward Members on proposals as they came forward to ensure that issues that had occurred on previous Council led building projects did not arise this time. Concerns were raised about the rising rents that would result from improving the building and were assured that the Council would raise rents gradually, on a renewal basis, meaning they would not be causing homelessness and would be in line with market rates for the area.

Some concerns were raised about the viability of building a fourth storey and the value that the Council would get out of the building, particularly without lift access. It was noted that providing a lift was not a building regulations requirement for four storeys and there were other examples of similar setups elsewhere.

Development and refurbishment of the building would also have a positive impact on the ground floor retail units.

The following was proposed:

Recommendations as per the papers and add at the end of recommendation 3. '...and subject to the continuing viability of the scheme as outlined in 5.4 with the outcome of that work being reported back to the committee.'

The proposal was not carried.

The following was then proposed:

Recommendations as per the papers and add the end of recommendation 3. '...and subject to the continuing viability of the scheme as outlined in 5.4.'

The proposal was agreed.

RESOLVED:

1. That the tender price submission bid by preferred contractor described in the report and the indicative financial returns for the new build roof top extension to Granada House shown at Exempt Appendix 1, which support the Housing Development and Regeneration Investment Plan be noted;
2. That the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be granted delegated authority to appoint and enter into a JCT Pre Contract Services Agreement (PCSA) with the preferred contractor for stage 1 (pre-construction phase) works to Granada House;
3. That the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be granted delegated authority to enter into a JCT Design and Build and Minor Works Contract with the preferred contractor for the stage 2 (construction phase) works to Granada House, subject to satisfactory performance and planning consent being achieved in

stage 1 and subject to the continuing viability of the scheme as outlined in 5.4; and

4. That the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be authorised to instruct/appoint the Solicitors required and to complete the necessary contract documentation and agreements associated with the works and consultancy services provided for Granada House, on the terms agreed by the Director of Finance and Business Improvement.

89. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 9.02 p.m.