

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2020

Present: Councillors D Burton (Chairman), Clark, English, Garten, Mrs Grigg, McKay, Munford, Parfitt-Reid and de Wiggondene-Sheppard

135. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

136. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

137. URGENT ITEMS

The Committee agreed to take an urgent update to Item 14 – Fourth Quarter Budget & Performance Monitoring. The reason for urgency was that a correction needed to be made to a table shown in Appendix 2 of the report.

138. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

139. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

140. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillor Burton stated that he had been lobbied on Item 18 – Marden Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor English stated that he had been lobbied on Item 13 – Reports of Outside Bodies.

Councillor McKay stated that he had been lobbied on Item 16 – Local Plan Review Update.

141. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

142. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2020

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed at a later date.

143. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

144. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

145. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

146. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that progress of the 20mph pilot schemes that were due to undergo public consultation had been delayed due to the Corona Virus Pandemic. This issue was raised during the agenda setting process for the Joint Transportation Board.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

147. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

Councillor English noted that South Eastern Railways had allocated up to £400k of funding for the establishment of two community rail partnerships. The proposal would be of significance as it would affect the Ashford service line that would travel through Maidstone East Train Station. A formal report would be received in due course.

148. FOURTH QUARTER BUDGET & PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Head of Finance introduced the report, which provided the provisional outturn information for the 2019-20 financial year. The Committee was informed that the report included information up until the 31 March 2020 and as such did not reflect the impact of Covid-19. The figures had not yet been audited, so were to be treated as provisional.

Performance against the budget was shown in Appendix 1, with particular attention drawn to the net income shortfall of £318k. This related to Planning Services and the shortfall in Development Control income. There was a smaller shortfall shown of £24k within the parking services budget, with the 2021 budget reflecting the reduced income target.

The Head of Finance informed the Committee of a correction to Table 3 in Appendix 1. The correct spending figure was £209,770 whilst the

remaining balance was £308,300. The budget allocation for the 2020-21 financial year was therefore £508,300.

The Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer noted that all three Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had achieved the fourth quarter target. In comparison to quarter three performance, two KPIs had improved, two had been sustained and two had declined, but the overall performance was positive.

In line with the urgent update to the item, the Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer confirmed that the correct figures for the number of appeals for quarters one and two were 48, for quarters three and four were 45 and that the Council's success rate of both periods respectively were 54.17% and 80%. This gave an annual figure of 67.9%. Whilst the figures had been revised, the overall trend was positive. It was noted that the Policy and Information Team would be working with the Planning Team in the future to resolve the data reporting issue.

The Equalities and Policy Officer noted that three of the four annual outturn targets were achieved and the fourth was within 10% of the target. It was explained that some of the data could not be collected due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the debate, several Members of the Committee expressed concerns that the budget shown would be further impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and requested that a report be added to the Committee Work Programme; with an update on parking services to be brought separately, if necessary, to ensure that this information would be delivered expediently.

It was also noted that a five-year budget cycle, instead of the current annual budget allocation process, could be beneficial for the Committee when moving through the Local Plan making process.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 4 for 2019/20, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted;
2. The Capital position at the end of Quarter 4 be noted; and
3. The Performance position as at Quarter 4 for 2019/20, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted.

149. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020-21

The Equalities and Corporate Officer introduced the report, noting that the Appendix shown summarised the new draft KPIs for the Committee's consideration. The Committee requested an additional indicator for information each quarter, on open enforcement cases.

It was requested that the definition of open cases be in accordance with that used for the Planning Committee reports, to ensure that there was consistency in the information provided to both Committees.

A motion was moved and seconded, to include the reporting of open enforcement cases to the Committee at each quarter.

RESOLVED: That

1. The draft Key Performance Indicators for 2020-21, as attached as Appendix 1, be agreed; and
2. The number of open enforcement cases be added as a quarterly Key Performance Indicator for information.

150. LOCAL PLAN REVIEW UPDATE

The Strategic Planning Manager and the Interim Local Plan Review Director introduced the report. It was noted that the report provided was in response to the Committee's previous resolution that a written update concerning any slippage and/or progress on the delivery of the Local Plan Review within the agreed timescale, be brought to each meeting of the Committee.

The Strategic Planning Manager confirmed that the Council, as the Local Planning Authority, would undertake a public consultation from October 2020. This consultation would examine housing, employment and retail growth amongst other topics, with a second public consultation process to take place from February 2021. Particular attention was drawn to paragraph 1.5 of the report, whereby the work undertaken by officers had been outlined.

The Interim Local Plan Director informed the Committee that of the nine garden community sites received in the call for sites process, these had been grouped down to seven. Independent Consultants had been commissioned to undertake a suitability assessment of the sites, which resulted in four sites being recommended to progress to the stage two assessment process.

The work undertaken would be completed by the end of June or early July 2020, which would help inform the Elected Member engagement exercises as included in the report.

In response to questions, the Interim Local Plan Director and Strategic Planning Manager confirmed that Members of the Committee would be able to remove and include sites and set a preferred spatial strategy, with advice from officers.

It was reiterated that the Local Plan Review would be subjected to examination from an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. As such, the consultation produced would need to contain an appropriate

preferred approach, with reasonable alternative approaches demonstrated.

RESOLVED: That

1. The content of this report be noted; and
2. The Elected Member Engagement Protocol to be used in the run-up to the public consultation on the Local Plan Review that is scheduled to commence in October 2020 be agreed.

151. MAIDSTONE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COVID-19 TEMPORARY ADDENDUM MAY 2020

The Principal Planning Officer introduced the report stating that the proposed changes to the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), were necessary to ensure adherence to the document to avoid legal challenge. The provision of physical consultation materials in publicly accessible places, alongside the use of public spaces to hold hearings, would not be possible given recent government guidance.

The proposed amendments were included in Appendix 1, which included that all consultation materials were to be viewed online and any hearings and examinations would occur through written presentation or video conferencing. These changes would ensure that the plan making process would be able to continue. The Committee was also asked to agree that the Head of Planning and Development be given delegated powers to make future changes to the SCI.

The Committee expressed concerns that whilst the need for these changes was understood, removing the general public's ability to inspect physical documents should not occur for longer than necessary. It was requested that the SCI be placed as a standing item on the agenda to be reviewed at regular intervals by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee rather than give delegated authority to the Head of Planning and Development. Instead, in line with keeping the changes in place for as short a period as possible, the committee agreed delegated authority only to end the use of the temporary changes and revert back to the adopted SCI.

The Committee also requested that the Council make reasonable endeavours to provide hardcopies of documents to the public if requested.

Councillor English left the meeting of the Committee after the vote had been taken for Item 17.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Maidstone Statement of Community Involvement Covid-19 Temporary Addendum May 2020 is approved for immediate publication;

2. The Statement of Community Involvement be placed as a standing item on the agenda for the Committee, with the Head of Planning and Development granted delegated powers to reverse the changes proposed within the addendum to the adopted Statement of Community Involvement as soon as Covid-19 restrictions allow; and
3. The Council would endeavour to provide paper copies to any resident when required.

152. MARDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (REGULATION 19)

Prior to the introduction of the report, the Chairman read out a statement on behalf of Councillor Andrew Turner, Chair of Marden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

The Planning Policy Officer introduced the report, noting that reporting of the referendum result to the Committee had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Planning Policy Officer confirmed that there were three neighbourhood plans within the borough, in Loose, North Loose and Staplehurst. The Marden Neighbourhood Plan had undergone two rounds of consultation and examination prior to the referendum having taken place in February 2020.

RESOLVED: That

1. The result of the referendum held on 27 February 2020 on the Marden Neighbourhood Plan be noted; and
2. Council be recommended to make the Marden Neighbourhood Plan.

153. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8 p.m.