

Should you wish to refer any decisions contained in these minutes to the **Policy and Resources Committee**, please submit a Decision Referral Form, signed by **three** Councillors, to the **Head of Policy, Communications and Governance** by: **9 September 2020**

Please note the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee has confirmed that the decision from Minute 52 is urgent and any call-in will be rejected.

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 25 AUGUST 2020**

**Present:** Councillors Garten, Joy, Khadka, Mortimer (Chairman), Powell, Purle, D Rose, M Rose and Young

**Also Present:** Councillors Kimmance, McKay, Munford and Springett

36. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Burton.

37. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was noted that Councillor Garten was present as Substitute for Councillor Burton.

38. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Committee agreed that two urgent items in the form of Outside Body Nominations, would be taken under Item 13 – Reports of Outside Bodies.

39. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillor Kimmance was present as a Visiting Member for Item 17 – Public Spaces Protection Order – Town Centre Renewal/Revision.

Councillor McKay was present as a Visiting Member for Item 14 – Resettlement from Temporary Accommodation with a Pet.

Councillor Munford was present as a Visiting Member for Item 18 – Reference from the Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group – England Tree Strategy Consultation Response.

Councillor Springett was present as a Visiting Member for Item 14 – Resettlement from Temporary Accommodation with a Pet, Item 15 – Use of anti-Social Behaviour Powers and the Suppression of Nuisances and Item 16 – Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour relation to dogs: Updating our enforcement tools.

40. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Joy informed the Committee that she was a nominative trustee for The Cutbush and Corral Charity (Incorporating the Qusted Almshouse Charity) in relation to Item 19 – Request to Reduce the number of Nominative Trustee Positions from Cutbush and Corral Charity (Incorporating the Qusted Almshouse Charity).

41. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors Joy and Mortimer were lobbied on Item 10 – Question and Answer Session from Members of the Public.

Councillor M Rose had been lobbied on Item 14 – Resettlement from Temporary Accommodation with a Pet.

42. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

43. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JUNE 2020

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed at a later date.

44. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

45. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were two questions from members of the public.

Question from Mr Peter Coulling to the Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

The Chairman read out the question on behalf of Mr Coulling.

*'The Gyratory layout traffic scheme was determined by KCC and MBC, approved, I believe, by the SPI Committee. It is located at a key and very prominent part of our County Town, encompassing the 1879 Bazelgette bridge and the 1977 St Peter's Bridge. The landscaping was apparently designed under the Green Go Wild campaign and it most certainly has achieved that! The area looks completely un-cared for and does not enhance this part of the urban centre of our County Town. Do you agree that landscaping around the Gyratory requires a complete re-think, dedication of necessary funding and the establishment of formal landscaping to enhance the visual appearance and to welcome visitors to our town?'*

The Chairman responded to the question.

Question from Ms Dee Bonett to the Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

*'Having read the recommended proposal made by Maidstone Borough Council, to Operate a 12month Pilot Scheme, for those residing in Temporary Accommodation with their Pets, I have taken further advise from Housing Experts, who are very excited this may be implemented for the next year. I would have been delighted if option 3.3 had been implemented, but I will accept option 3.2 as the preferred option.*

*However, there does still seem to be this "grey area". I am of the understanding, that those who may now be able to decline the 1st offer, due to a No Pet Policy offer of Accommodation or due to the Accommodation in question not being suitable for the Pet, it would then be expected to accept the 2nd offer given.*

*If the 2nd offer is declined, due to the same reasons as the 1st offer, can this Committee please outline what the "expected" implications of this may be and would this then be viewed as making oneself Intentionally Homeless or being placed in the position to give up their Pets to avoid becoming Intentionally Homeless?'*

The Chairman responded to the Question.

Ms Bonett asked the following supplementary question:

*'Is there a time period that you may envisage, where if the first offer is turned down a second one is made and in exceptional circumstances would Maidstone Borough Council consider some leniency to reach a successful outcome?'*

The Chairman responded to the supplementary question and stated that further written information would be provided to Ms Bonett.

The full responses were recorded on the webcast and were made available to view on the Maidstone Borough Council Website.

To access the webcast recording, please use the below link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zG-XICaAtZc>.

46. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

47. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman informed the Committee that five Members from the Committee would sit on the task and finish panel for the Access to Services Review. These were Councillors M Burton, Joy, Mortimer (Chairman), Powell and M Rose.

A Member requested that an update be given on when the Committee would be presented with the GP Provision Briefing Note.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

48. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

Two nomination forms for Outside Body vacancies were considered under this item.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. Councillor English be appointed to the Collis Millennium Green Trust as the Council's representative; and
2. Councillor Brindle be appointed to the Vinters Valley Park Trust as the Council's representative.

49. RESETTLEMENT FROM TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION WITH A PET

The Head of Housing and Community Services introduced the report and highlighted that whilst the Council operated a Pet Policy in temporary accommodation, the Council had less influence in whether an offer of permanent accommodation would allow pets. This was in part due to the numerous housing associations that the Council worked with, which each had their own approach to allowing pets.

The Committee was informed that there were no other Local Authorities that had implemented a policy similar to that proposed within the report, which was partly why the Committee were recommended to agree recommendation 3.2 of the report which would implement a 12 month pilot scheme. The Head of Housing and Community Services explained that recommendation 3.3 of the report would likely cause an increase in Nightly Paid Accommodation from a lack of free movement from Temporary to Permanent Accommodation. Following its completion, a report would be presented to the Committee that detailed the experiences of the pilot.

It was confirmed that there had been no refusals on accommodation based on pet ownership in the current financial year and that the Council has over 80 temporary accommodation units.

Councillors McKay and Springett addressed the Committee as Visiting Members in support of the item.

The Committee welcomed the report and proposed pilot scheme within but felt that the wording of recommendation 3.2 of the report should be strengthened.

**RESOLVED:** That recommendation 3.2 of the report be agreed, subject to the replacement of wording to read:

'Staff would be mindful of the pet situation and have discretionary powers to ensure that an appropriate offer is made'.

50. USE OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POWERS AND THE SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES

The Head of Housing and Community Services introduced the report which had been written in response to the Member Agenda Item Request that was presented to the Committee in June 2020. A typographical correction to the recommendation of the report was made whereby points 3.1-3.3 should have stated points 2.1-2.3 inclusive.

Reference was made to the Committees involvement in the Strategic Plan and the overarching objectives set for the Community Protection Team as a result, through its function as the Crime and Disorder Committee. However, to encourage greater member involvement the report recommendations included a series of Briefing Sessions, an increase in Member dialogue through the creation of "Ward Clusters" that would include up to four wards in any one Cluster, and an improved communication strategy.

The Head of Housing and Community Services confirmed that during the Coronavirus lockdown period, there had been a 56% increase in demand for the services provided by the Community Protection Team. In one particular week this had amounted to a 270% increase in calls to the team. Particular attention was drawn to the confidential nature of much of the work undertaken by the Community Protection Team, but that Members would be informed of the team's successes.

Councillor Springett addressed the Committee as a Visiting Member and referenced the need for greater officer presence in many areas.

The Committee welcomed the report and the proposed increase in Member Engagement, with particular reference made to the "Ward Clusters".

**RESOLVED:** That

1. A series of Member Briefing Sessions to raise Members' Awareness be agreed, that would include:
  - a. Noise and Nuisance Investigations, including event noise;
  - b. Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and the role of the District Contextual Safeguarding Meeting in protecting young people; and
  - c. Domestic Abuse Services and the role of Domestic Abuse Champions.
2. An Increase in Member Dialogue to occur through the opportunity to conduct frequent engagement sessions with Kent Police and Key

Partners on Anti-Social Behaviour, Nuisance and Concerns, be agreed. This would include:

- a. The creation of "Ward Clusters" that contained up to four wards based on geography, urban or rural setting, demographics and concerns;
  - b. Twice annual meetings with Ward Members and Parish Chairs as appropriate for each Cluster; and
  - c. The creation and agreement of collaborative plans to address local concerns, through the utilisation of an evidence-based approach, that would be collated and reported to the Committee annually.
3. An Increase in Member's awareness of successes through an improved Communication Strategy between Officers and Members, with the possible creation of an online newsletter, be agreed; and
  4. The relevant Officers consider that the vacant Safer Communities Officer post be filled as soon as practically possible.

51. TACKLING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR RELATING TO DOGS: UPDATING OUR ENFORCEMENT TOOLS

The Community Protection Manager introduced the report, having highlighted to the Committee the changes in legislation in recent years that had led to the introduction of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) through the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The Community Protection Manager confirmed that the Community Protection Team had received the concerns of members of the public, the Council's partners and Ward Members and had engaged in a public consultation process with regard to the proposed recommendations.

**RESOLVED:** That the Head of Housing and Community service be given the authority to make the new Public Space Protection Order, as shown in Appendix 4 to the report.

52. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER – TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL/REVISION

The Community Protection Manager introduce the report, with the results of the Public Consultation shown in Appendix 1 to the report. Reference was made to the previous item on the Committee's agenda, whereby it was hoped that the "Ward Clusters" agreed would capture the concerns of Ward Members that had the largest footing in the PSPO boundary. It was noted that if necessary, the PSPO could be expanded further within the next three years.

Councillor Kimmance addressed the Committee as a Visiting Member and expressed concerns regarding the PSPOs success. The Head of Housing

and Community Services responded that positive feedback had been received from local businesses and the night-time economy on the effectiveness of the PSPO. It was noted that the Council worked with and have funded positions within Change Grow Live (CGL) to assist in providing help to individuals, rather than enforcement, when appropriate.

In response to questions, the Community Protection Manager confirmed that the Business Improvement District (BID) Ambassadors had been trained in the completion of warning forms and intelligence sharing as part of the PSPO. There were some minor amendments necessary to the Memorandum before it would be implemented.

**RESOLVED**: That

1. The Head of Housing and Community Services be given delegated authority to extend the existing Public Space Protection Order for a further three years; and
2. The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to waive the call-in period arising from the publication of the Meeting's Minutes in order that the PSPO can be extended by 1 September 2020.

53. **REFERENCE FROM THE BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP - ENGLAND TREE STRATEGY CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager introduced the Reference that had been created by the Council's Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group in response to the ongoing consultation on the England Tree Strategy. The response was likely to carry more weight upon submission if supported by the Committee and was shown in Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Munford addressed the Committee as a Visiting Member in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group. Specific reference was made to the consultation process and the various strategies, policies and grants that would be produced after its conclusion.

During the debate, the Committee referenced the importance and loss of ancient woodland within the borough. The references made to Planning Policy within Appendix 1 to the report were noted.

**RESOLVED**: That the Consultation response to the England Tree Strategy Consultation as shown at Appendix 1 to the report be agreed, with delegated authority to be given to officers to summarise and include wording to the effect of:

'Local Planning Authorities be given better enforcement powers to protect exiting woodland and that legal loopholes be closed'.

54. REQUEST TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF NOMINATIVE TRUSTEE POSITIONS FROM CUTBUSH AND CORRALL CHARITY (INCORPORATING THE QUESTED ALMSHOUSE CHARITY)

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager introduced the report and highlighted that whilst the Committee had the authority to appoint Members to the Outside Body, all other functions were the responsibility of Full Council. The Committee were informed that there was no likely legal basis for the request to be refused, but that Cutbush and Corral Charity (Incorporating the Quested Almshouse Charity), had resolved to obtain permission from the Council before the reduction in positions was made.

**RESOLVED:** That Council be recommended to approve the request received to reduce the number Nominative Trustee positions appointed by the Council from four to two.

55. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.18 p.m.