

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 MARCH
2021

Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Chappell-Tay, Cox,
Mrs Gooch (Chair), Joy, Lewins, Perry, Purle and
Webb

Also Present: Councillors Adkinson, Naghi, M Rose and
Springett

166. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Hastie.

167. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Cox was present as a Substitute for Councillor Hastie.

168. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

169. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillors Adkinson, Naghi and M Rose were present as Visiting Members for Item 14 – Reference from Council – Motion – Question and Answer Sessions for Members and Members of the Public at Council and Committee Meetings.

Councillors Naghi and Springett were present as Visiting Members for Item 16 – Scope for Church Road, Otham Review.

170. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

171. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors Chappell-Tay and Gooch had been lobbied on the following items:

14 – Reference from Council – Motion – Question and Answer Sessions for Members and Members of the Public at Council and Committee Meetings;

15 – Local Government Boundary Review Update; and

16 – Scope for Church Road, Otham Review.

172. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

173. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed at a later date.

174. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

175. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

176. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

177. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the special meeting of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee had been rescheduled to 31 March 2021.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

178. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

179. REFERENCE FROM COUNCIL - MOTION - QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS FOR MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AT COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the reference and explained that the motion was moved at the Council meeting on 24 February 2021, and an amendment to widen the scope of the motion had been agreed by the mover and the seconder. It was suggested that an officer report could be provided if requested.

Councillor Adkinson addressed the Committee as mover of the motion at the Council meeting.

In response to questions, the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager explained that YouTube is a very accessible platform and includes a transcription service. The purpose of Minutes was to record the decision-making process of the Committee, and when answering questions, the

Chairman would be presenting their view only. It would be possible to compile a report for the Committee's next meeting in June 2021 to examine the current process around question and answer sessions.

Concerns were raised regarding the extra resource required in minuting or transcribing the answers to questions, and the difficulties in minuting the gist of an answer. However, access concerns were raised for those who would not be able to utilise the webcast due to disability.

RESOLVED: That an officer report be brought back to the Committee to review the terms of reference for question and answer sessions, including the platform on which questions should be answered.

180. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY REVIEW - UPDATE

The Democracy and Electoral Services Manager introduced the update report, and informed Members of the key dates for decisions to be made throughout the next year. The first key date was for the Council size submission to be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission England (LGBCE) in November 2021, which would involve Members working through the LGBCE's Council Size Proposal Template and submitting their recommendation to Council.

Members were reminded that a further briefing from the LGBCE had been scheduled on 22 March 2021.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

181. SCOPE FOR CHURCH ROAD, OTHAM REVIEW

The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance introduced the report, and explained that the Policy and Resources Committee considered the outcome of the Church Road, Otham planning application appeal at their meeting on 3 February 2021. The proposed scope for the review was based on this discussion and Member feedback following the meeting. It was proposed that the report be presented to the Committee at the meeting on 8 September 2021 to allow time for a thorough review.

External planning advice would be sought to support the review, and there would also be involvement from key stakeholders. Several research methods would be used including interviews, surveys and desktop research.

In response to questions, the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance outlined the percentage of complaints that related to planning for 2019-2020, however this would not have captured any complaints relating to the item being discussed.

Concern was raised about communication between Officers and Members and the level of support given to Members to aid the technical understanding of planning applications.

RESOLVED: That the scope for the Church Road, Otham review, as set out in 3.2 of the report, be approved and reported back to the Committee on 8 September 2021.

182. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.