

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 17 OCTOBER 2022

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Blackmore (Chairman), Mrs Grigg, Munford, Spooner and Springett
Lead Member Present:	Councillor Paul Cooper, Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure

52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Kimmance, Trzebinski and Young.

53. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

54. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman stated that two urgent updates had been published on Friday 14 October, in relation to Item 17 – Draft Statement of Common Ground. The updates contained information relating to the decision.

55. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting members.

56. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

57. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying

58. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public in public, unless any Member of the Committee wished to refer to the information contained within Items 18 – Exempt Appendices 1 and 2 (Item 17 Statements of Common Ground – Lower Thames Crossing and Soft Sand) – Draft Statement of Common Ground between Maidstone Borough Council, Kent County Council, East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council, West Sussex County Council, and the South Downs National Park Authority; and Draft Statement of Common Ground between Maidstone Borough Council & National Highways and Item 19 – Urgent Update to Item 18 – Exempt Appendixes 1 and 2 (Item 17 – Statements of Common Ground – Lower Thames Crossing and Soft Sand).

59. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 AUGUST 2022

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 15 August 2022 are agreed as a correct record and signed.

60. DEFERRED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 JUNE 2022

RESOLVED: The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2022 be agreed as a correct record and signed.

61. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

62. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from local residents.

63. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

64. FORWARD PLAN RELATING TO THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan to be noted.

65. FINANCIAL UPDATE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure introduced the report, stating that the work relating to the Bridges Gyrotory flood defence barrier was due to start in early 2023. The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) showed largely positive performance, although the 'Percentage of Priority 2 enforcement cases dealt with in time' had only achieved 86.78% against the 90% target. It was anticipated that the KPI would achieve its target for the current quarter, with additional staff having been recruited to the pre-existing vacancies.

The Committee reiterated the importance of ensuring continued progress on enforcement cases, particularly given the significant correspondence received by Members from the Public on the matter. However, it was noted that enforcement cases could be complex and difficult to resolve, particularly in the short-term.

The Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure provided reassurance to the Committee that discussions were ongoing with the Head of Development Management, to ascertain if improvements to the enforcement service could be made.

RESOLVED: That;

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 1 for 2022/23, 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 1 be noted; and

3. The Performance position as at Quarter 1 for 2022/23, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted.

66. PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO KING STREET CAR PARK

The Lead Member of Planning and Infrastructure introduced the report and stated that the site required general maintenance and visual improvement. If agreed, the improvements would be funded from the existing budgets within Parking Services.

The Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm highlighted the collaborative working between several council teams, including involvement from the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager, in producing the proposed improvement scheme.

In response to questions, the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure confirmed that signage would be installed to reflect the 'Go Green Go Wild' initiative. The designs proposed would ensure that the site was visually attractive but easily maintained, with preference given to native plants. The Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm stated that the Parking Services Manager would be informed of the concerns expressed in relation to ensuring that the planters would not become unkempt. The tiered planting within the scheme would be suitably watered.

The Committee expressed support for the proposal as it would ensure that the site was well maintained and visually appealing to those visiting the town centre, whilst positively benefitting biodiversity. The importance of re-wilding that was well maintained was reiterated.

RESOLVED: That the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure be recommended to approve the proposed Planting and Maintenance Scheme to improve the King Street Car Park, as detailed in section 2 of the report.

67. DESIGN AND SUSTAINABILITY DPD ISSUES AND OPTION

The Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure introduced the report, referencing the decisions taken by the Council's de-commissioned Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee to produce a Design and Sustainability Development Plan Document (DPD). The Design and Sustainability DPD would form part of the borough's statutory development plan and carry equal weight to the Local Plan whilst being a separate document.

The Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure stated that a public consultation was proposed to take place between 28 October 2022 to 12 December 2022 on the scoping, themes and issues as contained within Appendix 1 to the report.

In response to questions on the document and consultations' accessibility, the Interim Local Plan Review Director confirmed that advice would be given by the Council's Communications Team to ensure that it was fully accessible to all.

The Committee expressed support for the draft Design and Sustainability DPD as contained within Appendix 1 to the report, alongside the proposed consultation.

The document attached at Appendix 1 to the report would be proof-read by a numerous Officers before its publication.

RESOLVED: That the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure be recommended to:

1. Approve the Maidstone Design and Sustainability DPD Scoping, Themes and Issues document (Regulation 18) attached at Appendix 1 to the report; and
2. Give delegated authority to the Interim Local Plan Review Director to finalise the format of Design and Sustainability DPD; Scoping, Themes and Issues Document for presentation to the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure, including any corrections required.

68. ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING

The Committee adjourned for a short break between 7.00 p.m. to 7.05 p.m. to provide the committee with additional time to read the urgent updates circulated.

69. STATEMENTS OF COMMON GROUND - SOFT SAND AND LOWER THAMES CROSSING

The Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure introduced the report and stated that the Council has a duty to cooperate with other proscribed bodies on cross-boundary matters, with the National Planning Policy Framework guidance recommending that Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) be used to demonstrate that the Council has co-operated appropriately.

The Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure explained that the SoCG attached as Exempt Appendix 1 to the report, related to Soft Sand reserves in the Southeast and the reliance made by authorities of the reserves within Kent. The Council was a co-signatory due to the presence of soft sand in Lenham. The SoCG had previously been agreed by the Council's de-commissioned Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee in February 2022, but the Statement has been updated to reflect the current supply and demand modelling.

The Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure stated that the SoCG attached as Exempt Appendix 2 to the report including the urgent update provided, concerned the proposed Lower Thames Crossing (LTC). The Council had been requested to support the development consent order required by the TLC by National Highways. A Public Consultation on the proposed scheme was due to commence imminently. The SoCG reflected the Council's general support for the LTC as outlined within previous consultation responses, but highlighted the need for transport modelling to take place given the likely impact of the proposal on the wider local transport network which should be supported through funded improvements to that network, and air quality concerns.

In response to questions, the Strategic Planning Manager advised that the two SoCG would swiftly be sent to the relevant authorities following their approval by the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure. This would allow the relevant authorities to make their submissions at pace.

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified, having applied the Public Interest Test:

Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description

Item 19 – Urgent Update to Item 17 – Draft Statements of Common Ground – Soft Sand and Lower Thames Crossing	3 – Financial/Business Affairs.
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The Committee entered into closed session between 7.14 p.m. to 7.21 p.m.

During the debate the position between National Highways and the Council was questioned. In response, the Strategic Planning Manager reiterated the purpose of the SoCG in demonstrating the duty of co-operate.

Having discussed the matter in private, the Committee returned to open session.

RESOLVED: That the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure be recommended to approve the updated versions of the draft Statements of Common Ground, attached at Exempt Appendices 1 and 2 to this report.

70. EXEMPT APPENDICES 1 AND 2 (ITEM 17 - STATEMENTS OF COMMON GROUND - LOWER THAMES CROSSING AND SOFT SAND) - DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND BETWEEN MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL, KENT COUNTY COUNCIL, EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL, BRIGHTON AND HOVE CITY COUNCIL, WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL, AND THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY; AND DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND BETWEEN MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL & NATIONAL HIGHWAYS

RESOLVED: That the item be considered alongside Item 17 – Draft Statements of Common Ground – Soft Sand and Lower Thames Crossing.

71. URGENT UPDATE TO ITEM 18 - EXEMPT APPENDICES 1 AND 2 (ITEM 17 - STATEMENTS OF COMMON GROUND - LOWER THAMES CROSSING AND SOFT SAND)

RESOLVED: That the item be considered alongside Item 17 – Draft Statements of Common Ground – Soft Sand and Lower Thames Crossing.

72. DURATION

6:30pm to 7:26pm