

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 30 OCTOBER 2023

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Knatchbull (Chairman), Conyard, Hastie, Jeffery, Joy, Mortimer, Rose and Springett
Cabinet Members:	Councillor Parfitt-Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Health
Visiting Members:	Councillors English

65. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Riordan and Khadka.

66. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Conyard was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Khadka.

67. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items, with it noted that the minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated to the Committee separately.

68. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor English was present as Visiting Member for Item 10 – Granada House Refurbishment.

69. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

70. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

71. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public, unless any Member of the Committee wishes to discuss Item 11 – Exempt Appendix to Item 10 – Granada House Refurbishment, in which case the Committee would enter into closed session due to the possible disclosure of exempt information, for the reason specified having applied the public interest test.

72. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10 OCTOBER 2023

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference be noted.

74. GRANADA HOUSE REFURBISHMENT

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Health introduced the item, stating that Granada House was dilapidated and required works to ensure the property's compliance with the Decent Homes Standards. The property was 100 years old, with no major works having taken place since its completion. The building was owned by the Council and managed by Maidstone Property Holdings Limited. The council was experiencing a significant loss of rental income as the property was vacant.

The Cabinet Member outlined the previous procurement exercises undertaken, with the most recent resulting in a works price lower than previously given, although higher than the target price given by the Cabinet. The contractor could not meet the specification at the lower target price and was not willing to conduct works that were insufficient to meet health and safety requirements.

It was proposed that the scheme's total cost would be increased to meet the specification needed. The increased Total Scheme Cost would be met using some of the Council's share of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), with the units becoming affordable rented homes. The scheme would make a positive contribution to the local street scene. The decision was classified as urgent, with the call-in period having been waived by the Overview and Scrutiny Chairman to enable its immediate implementation.

In response to questions, the Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed that no other Council projects would be negatively impacted by using the LAHF monies at Granada House and that the rejected Figure E in the exempt appendix did not include the same 10% uplift as Figure A.

The Committee expressed support for the proposal.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE CABINET MEMBER:

That the following be agreed:

1. To carry out the proposed refurbishment works to Granada House up to a maximum cost of (See figure A in Exempt Appendix), but noting that the revised net Total Scheme Cost, as a result of the grant monies now being available, will still be within the previous approval;
2. To enter into a contract with the preferred contractor to carry out the refurbishment works to Granada House;

3. A) Officers explore fully with Pelling's (the appointed Employers Agent) and the appointed Contractor the merits of providing solar PV to the property as a way of off-setting electrical use;

B) That this option and additional expenditure, of up to £70,000 (above the figure in 1) is only pursued after consultation, post contract award with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Health;
4. The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement be granted delegated authority to enter into any related appointments, legal actions, deeds, contracts and agreements which may be required to facilitate the refurbishment works required;
5. The Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be authorised to deal with all legal formalities including the negotiation and completion of the necessary contract documentation, deeds, agreements and ancillary documentation associated with the refurbishment works on the terms as agreed by the Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement or to appoint external solicitors to undertake this or elements of this work; and
6. To invite Maidstone Property Holdings Limited to surrender its lease on the building, so it can become affordable housing upon the grant funding being applied to it and that the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be authorised to attend to the necessary legal requirements, formalities and ancillary documentation or to appoint external solicitors to undertake this or elements of this work.

75. EXEMPT APPENDIX TO ITEM 10 - GRANADA HOUSE REFURBISHMENT

RESOLVED: That the item be considered alongside Item 10 – Granada House Refurbishment.

76. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 6.41 p.m.