

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**PLANNING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2023

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Blackmore (Chairman), Cleator, Conyard, Mrs Grigg, Jeffery, Kimmance, McKenna, Spooner and Trzebinski
Cabinet Members:	Councillor Paul Cooper, Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development
Visiting Members:	Councillor English

70. APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jones.

71. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Jeffery was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Jones.

72. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman stated that there was an urgent update to Item 12 – Sutton Valence Conservation Area - Proposed Extension, which had been accepted to provide more information about the legal implications of the decision.

73. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor English was present as Visiting Member for Item 11 – Consideration of works to amalgamate and extend Medway Street Car Park and Item 12 – Sutton Valence Conservation Area – Proposed Extension.

74. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

75. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

76. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

77. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 OCTOBER 2023

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development advised that the report concerning the Town Centre Strategy (the Strategy) had been delayed. Further work was required on the Strategy to ensure that it achieved the outcomes desired for the Town Centre, as well as cross-party consensus, before it was presented to Members.

The Cabinet Member was unable to give a definitive date for presentation of the Strategy at this time.

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

79. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting adjourned between 6.35 p.m. to 6.40 p.m. due to a fire drill.

80. FINANCIAL UPDATE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development introduced the report and advised that:

- There was an overspend of £108,000 and the end of year overspend was expected to be £92,000 relating to the Committee's remit. The overspend was mainly due to less planning applications, particularly major, being submitted reducing the planning fee income generated. It was noted that this would likely change in the next municipal year should the next iteration of the Local Plan be adopted; and
- Overall, the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were being met. The 'Town Centre Footfall' (TCF) KPI had achieved significantly less than targeted. The Council did not own the town centre, which contributed to the creation of the Town Centre Strategy, with the role of the area in supporting the economic growth, increasing visitor numbers and providing employment opportunities.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member advised that he was working with the Information and Analytics Manager on improving the KPIs measurement used for TCF. Further details could be provided in future reports on the processing of planning applications.

The Information and Analytics Manager stated that around half of the open enforcement cases had been opened in the last nine months, with further information available online. The link would be circulated to the Committee outside of the meeting.

During the discussion, several Committee Members expressed that there was a range of factors affecting town centre footfall, in addition to those highlighted in

the report. These included the departure of businesses that were not then replaced, resident safety and security and the difference in perception of the town centre as a place to visit between the rural and urban areas of the borough. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the points raised.

RESOLVED: That the following be noted

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 2 for 2023/24, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified;
2. The Capital position at the end of Quarter 2 for 2023/24;
3. The Performance position as at Quarter 2 for 2023/24, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified;
4. The Recovery & Renewal Update, attached at Appendix 3; and
5. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund update, attached at Appendix 4.

81. CONSIDERATION OF WORKS TO AMALGAMATE AND EXTEND MEDWAY STREET CAR PARK

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development introduced the report and stated that there a high demand for parking within Medway Street car park; expanding the site through its amalgamation with an existing car park adjacent to the site would provide additional parking spaces. The site adjacent had previously been let to local businesses but was now vacant.

The proposal would include improvements to the car park and the provision of secure bicycle storage which was in high demand. Additional revenue could be generated for the Council by expanding the car park, with the proposal being funded entirely through a ring-fenced high street enforcement budget.

The Cabinet Member expressed concern that the electric car sharing scheme may not be well utilised given the close proximity of a car hire company.

In response to comments/questions, the Cabinet Member stated that:

- The existing electric car charging points within Medway Street car park would be retained. Additional charging points would not be installed as they were expensive, there was no demand for additional chargers, and the technology supporting the vehicles was developing and changing at pace. It was better to wait until demand had increased;
- There was no evidence of demand to support the viability of an electric car sharing scheme if introduced, but there was nothing preventing the scheme being implemented in the future;
- They wished to encourage visitors to the town centre through multiple transport modes, including by car, with the site being well utilised.

Addressing town centre congestion was a separate matter; and

- Providing a solar roof to the car park and enclosing the area could deter visitors from using the site due to the negative perception this could have on safety and lead to anti-social behaviour, but this could be explored if possible; and
- A separate piece of work was being conducted concerning town centre bicycle storage, which would also be presented to the Local Ward Members.

During the discussion, overall support for the proposal was expressed. Some Members suggested that consideration should also be given to the provision of parking for residents living in or near the Town Centre, and the importance of promoting other forms of transport.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET MEMBER: That

1. The funding works to amalgamate and extend the car park at an estimated total budget of £177,500, be approved; and
2. An Additional £20,000 for provision of green bike store and electric car sharing scheme points (if not externally funded in whole or part), be agreed.

82. SUTTON VALENCE CONSERVATION AREA - PROPOSED EXTENSION

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and stated that expansion of the Conservation Area (CA) in Sutton Valence was an improvement to the existing CA, with no adverse comments received from the Local Ward Members or Parish Council. The urgent update was briefly outlined.

The Cabinet Member responded to a question arising out of the public feedback received on further extending the CA. The Cabinet Member also confirmed that a report concerning an overarching Conservation Area Management Plan would be presented at the next meeting.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET MEMBER: That

1. The extension to the Sutton Valence Conservation Area as set out in the "Sutton Valence Conservation Area Proposed Boundary Alterations (December 2021)" document at Appendix 1 be agreed; and
2. Delegated powers be given to the Head of Development Management to undertake the necessary statutory requirements to implement the agreed boundary changes.

83. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.38 p.m.