

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY COHESION POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2024

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Cleator (Chairman), Conyard, Fort, Harper, Milham, Oliver, Parfitt and Rodwell
Cabinet Members:	Councillors English (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Enforcement), Jeffery (Leader of the Council) and Wales (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness)

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dawes, Khadka and Wilby.

21. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

- Councillor Conyard for Councillor Khadka
- Councillor Harper for Councillor Dawes

22. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

23. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

24. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

25. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

26. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public, unless any Member of the Committee wishes to discuss Item 15: Exempt Appendices to Item 13: Property Acquisition (Ref 240822A) or Item 16: Exempt Appendices to Item 14: Property Acquisition (Ref 240822B), 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.

27. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JULY 2024

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed.

28. 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.

29. UPDATED ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, WASTE CRIME & COMMUNITY PROTECTION ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Enforcement introduced the report detailing the update on the shared Enforcement Policy due to regulatory changes and expansion in the council's role in animal welfare protection/licensing. He advised that this had been presented to all Policy Advisory Committees (PACs) due to the range of areas covered.

In response to queries, the Community & Strategic Partnerships Manager advised that the new neighbourhood policing model introduced last year had seen significant improvement, with the collaborative work being seen as a flagship example to other authorities in Kent.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET: That adoption of the Environmental Health, Waste Crime and Community Protection Enforcement Policy 2024 to replace the 2019 policy be approved.

30. REVISIONS TO THE COVERT SURVEILLANCE AND ACCESS TO COMMUNICATIONS DATA POLICY AND GUIDANCE NOTES

The Senior Lawyer (Corporate Governance) introduced the report and advised that the policy was reviewed annually. In this instance there were no revisions and approval was sought to roll the policy over for a further year.

The Committee were happy to approve the recommendation.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET MEMBER: That the Council's current Covert Surveillance Policy be rolled over for a further year.

31. 1ST QUARTER FINANCE UPDATE REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness introduced the report and stated that:

- An online dashboard of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) was being developed to promote transparency. This would have filters to sort by Committee and would be refreshed monthly;
- There was a £354,000 revenue overspend for quarter one overall, with a projected £200,000 for this Committee, which related to temporary accommodation. Although £450,000 was built into the budget, demand for temporary accommodation had remained high and acquisition of value for

money properties being slower than expected. There had been reprofiling stock purchases to reflect the lack of suitable properties on the market; and

- Capital expenditure was behind projections by £48.67 million, mainly because of slippage in the council's housing program. The figures would be reprofiled as part of the 25/26 budget.

In response to queries, the Director of Regeneration and Place advised the following: That

- The Council were on track to acquire 80 residential dwellings for temporary accommodation by the end of this year, as per the target quantum, and that any resultant financial underspend could be rolled over to next financial year. This would be proposed in the budget setting work for 25/26 that is now getting under way. Alternatives to address the pressures of homelessness would be looked at in the Autumn budget setting and discussed with the Cabinet Member;
- As part of the Council House Building Programme, sites were being purchased and developed to potentially accommodate households currently placed in temporary accommodation; and
- Different ways to use resources available were being looked at as less affordable homes were available, including bolstering the resources available to the Council's Housing Standards Team, to improve the property available within the private rented sector across the borough, so as to tackle another route cause of homelessness.

The Committee were supportive of continued work within the Council and in collaboration with external organisations to decrease homelessness and were keen that the underspend continue to be invested in temporary accommodation with an additional recommendation proposed for consideration by Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 1 for 2024/25, 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 for 2024/25 be noted; and
3. Cabinet be asked to give serious consideration to using the forecast underspend on temporary accommodation in 24/25 to purchase further temporary accommodation in the next financial year, and that this sentiment be captured in the next iteration of the capital programme for 25/26 and beyond.

32. PROPERTY ACQUISITION (REF 240822A)

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness introduced the report and stated that the Council was proposing to purchase a town centre brownfield site to provide 20 units. Once purchased the Council would seek funding from Homes England via the Social Housing Grant and submit for planning permission based on the report. The Cabinet Member stated that it was a good opportunity to

provide high quality, affordable homes. Houses would be more desirable to meet demand for affordable homes but would provide a lower return than a scheme with flats.

In response to queries, the Head of New Business and Development advised the Committee that the Council had previously been successful in applying for higher level funding with Homes England.

The Committee were supportive of the recommendations and continuing to provide affordable housing in the Borough.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET: That

1. The financial returns for the proposed acquisition as shown in Exempt Appendix 3 to the report, which supports the Housing Development and Regeneration Investment Plan and overall Development Strategy be approved;
2. The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement be given delegated authority to:
 - a. Negotiate terms for the purchase of the proposed acquisition for the sum as shown in the Exempt Appendix 3 to the report;
 - b. Procure and enter into all such deeds, agreements, contracts and documents which may be required to facilitate the purchase of the site, and the subsequent redevelopment works required to deliver the scheme referred to in the report. Including (but not limited to) any related appointments such as suitably qualified consultants and a Contractor; and
 - c. Subject to satisfactory conclusion of all due diligence, to negotiate and finalise and complete all legal formalities, deeds and agreements which may be required to facilitate the purchase.
3. The Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be authorised to appoint the Solicitors required to negotiate and complete the necessary contract documentation, deeds and agreements associated with the purchase and construction works on the terms as agreed by the Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement;
4. A suitably qualified Planning consultant be procured and appointed and then, in conjunction with the project team and consultation with the Portfolio Holder, a planning application be submitted in respect of the redevelopment of the site for the preferred scheme detailed in the report and to deal with all associated planning matters;
5. Post completion of the procurement process, appointment of a contractor be agreed for the works cost detailed in the financial summary at Exempt Appendix 3 to the report. If in the event tenders for the works cost are in excess of the agreed sum, then officers will return to the Committee/Cabinet to seek further approval prior to the development itself commencing; and

6. The Head of New Business & Housing Development will, post-acquisition of the site, use reasonable endeavours to bring forward a scheme that will include (at least) some houses and homes for social rent on a financially sustainable basis, subject to the availability of favourable Social Housing Grant funding from Homes England, in consultation with the portfolio holder.

33. PROPERTY ACQUISITION (REF 240822B)

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness introduced the report and stated that the Council was proposing to purchase a town centre brownfield site with intention to apply for planning permission post-acquisition for housing. He stated that this site was part of a larger land assembly project and would improve the street scene in the area. After purchase, Homes England would be approached for funding via the Social Housing Grant. The Cabinet Member stated that their preference for the area was houses rather than flats to create a better community feel rather than building densely, but acknowledged a need to provide a mix of properties for different needs.

The Committee were supportive of the acquisition and several Members expressed a preference for houses rather than flats.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET: That

1. The financial returns for the proposed acquisition as shown in Exempt Appendix 3 to the report, which supports the Housing Development and Regeneration Investment Plan and overall Development Strategy be approved;
2. The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement be given delegated authority to:
 - a. Negotiate terms for the purchase of the proposed acquisition for the sum as shown in the Exempt Appendix 3 to the report;
 - b. Procure and enter into all such deeds, agreements, contracts and documents which may be required to facilitate the purchase of the site, and the subsequent redevelopment works required to deliver the scheme referred to in the report. Including (but not limited to) any related appointments such as suitably qualified consultants and a Contractor; and
 - c. Subject to satisfactory conclusion of all due diligence, to negotiate and finalise and complete all legal formalities, deeds and agreements which may be required to facilitate the purchase.
3. The Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be authorised to appoint the Solicitors required to negotiate and complete the necessary contract documentation, deeds and agreements associated with the purchase and construction works on the terms as agreed by the Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement;
4. A suitably qualified Planning consultant be procured and appointed and then, in conjunction with the project team and consultation with the

Portfolio Holder, a planning application in respect of the redevelopment of the site for the preferred scheme detailed in this report and to deal with all associated planning matters be submitted;

5. Post completion of the procurement process, appointment of a contractor be agreed for the works cost detailed in the financial summary at Exempt Appendix 3 to the report. If in the event tenders for the works cost are in excess of the agreed sum, then officers will return to the Committee/Cabinet to seek further approval prior to the development itself commencing; and
6. The Head of New Business & Housing Development will, post-acquisition of the site, use reasonable endeavours to bring forward a scheme that will include (at least) some houses and homes for social rent on a financially sustainable basis, subject to the availability of favourable Social Housing Grant funding from Homes England, in consultation with the portfolio holder.

34. EXEMPT APPENDICES TO ITEM 13: PROPERTY ACQUISITION (REF 240822A)

RESOLVED: That the item be considered alongside Item 13: Property Acquisition (Ref 240822A).

35. EXEMPT APPENDICES TO ITEM 14: PROPERTY ACQUISITION (REF 240822B)

RESOLVED: That the item be considered alongside Item 14: Property Acquisition (Ref 240822B).

36. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.24 p.m.