

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6 MAY 2014

Present: Councillor Mrs Gooch (Chairman), and
Councillors Black, Butler, Mrs Grigg, Hotson,
D Mortimer, Nelson-Gracie and Pickett

Also Present: Councillors English and Moss

143. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEBCAST

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be web-cast.

144. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies had been received from Councillor Mrs Parvin.

145. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

146. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

Councillor Moss attended the meeting as a witness in relation to Item 10.

Councillor English attended the meeting as a Visiting Member.

147. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

148. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

149. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 1 APRIL 2014

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 April 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

150. MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 15 APRIL 2014

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 15 April 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

151. REMIT OF MID KENT SERVICES (MKS) DIRECTOR

The Committee considered the report of the new Mid Kent Services Director, Mr. Paul Taylor. Jane Clarke, the MKIP Programme Manager was also in attendance as a witness.

Mr. Taylor gave a brief outline of his work programme for the next twelve months and provided further information on his role and responsibilities. In response to questions by Members, the Mid Kent Director informed the Committee that:-

- In the past all partnership decisions had gone through Shared Cabinet Meetings. As part of that process Members of each Authority had the opportunity to call in decisions. However, he suggested that it might be helpful for Members if details of the proposed partnerships would go to Scrutiny Committees for their input prior to that decision making process. He drew comparisons with Tunbridge Wells where decisions would go to Cab Boards first, for their comments, before being fed into the Cabinet decision making process.
- In terms of developing a Communications and Engagement Strategy for Members, he had met with all three authorities and would be liaising with Communications Teams from each of the Authorities and hoped to put together a Communications and Engagement Strategy that would satisfy all stakeholders. He stated that all mediums would be used to ensure there was a continued communication link.
- In responding to a question on what partnerships were being implemented, he advised that these would be Planning Support and Environmental Health Services. These services would go through the implementation stage and a Project Team would be set up and if successful, it would then be decided by the Mid-Kent Partnership whether they should be included in the Mid-Kent Services.
- In terms of commercialisation, he stated that he classified Legal, Audit and Revenues and Benefits as mature partnerships that had the fundamental building blocks to look further afield from their existing partnerships. Mr. Taylor mentioned that Rich Clarke, the Partnership Manager for Audit would be looking at opportunities to sell services to other Kent districts and to other agencies such as the NHS.

Mr. Taylor also advised that Dawn Hudd, Head of Commercial and Economic Development and her team had been working on a commercialisation agenda for Maidstone. He intended to work with them to see if this could be developed for all Partnership Managers.

- With regard to whether he felt it would be a challenge where each authority had different governance arrangements, he advised that

the Director of Regeneration and Communities was in the process of setting up criteria for the authorities involved which would include Service Level Agreements and Shared Risk Registers and that he would report back to the MKIP Board when this work had been completed.

- With regard to how the success of the partnerships would be measured over the three authorities, he advised that one of the reasons why it had worked so well was because there had been a great deal of respect for others' differences.
- It would make sense for a core set of indicators to be developed for all authorities, but different local authorities may want different weights attached to them in order to judge how Partnership Managers were performing for their respective boroughs.

It was noted that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman were to meet with Members from Tunbridge Wells on 7 May 2014 to discuss possible areas for joint scrutiny. The Committee requested that Swale be kept informed of the outcome of the meeting and that any minutes from the meeting should be circulated to all three authorities. This was agreed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. It was also suggested that there should be cross party representation at any future meetings.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

152. THE FUTURE OF MAIDSTONE HOUSE

David Edwards, the Director of Environment and Shared Services, gave a presentation to the Committee about the future of Maidstone House. A copy is attached to these minutes as Appendix A.

Councillor Moss was also in attendance as a witness for this item.

Mr. Edwards appraised Members of the work to date of the cross party Office Accommodation Working Group and of the options considered for both short term and long term wins.

One short term win would be to vacate the first floor of Maidstone House as there was a break clause in the lease of 2016. This would affect Members and Members Services, who would need to move to one of the other floors occupied by the Council. This could accrue savings of £100,000 of annual costs and would enable the Council to sub-lease the first floor if The Mall agreed.

Another area that would be looked at would be the Gateway area in terms of reducing the space it used. However, it was explained that until Kent County Council had reached a decision on whether it would contribute to service delivery in the future, this option would be held in abeyance.

A number of strategies had been looked at by the Accommodation Working Group, including new build; buying an existing building; and

leasing.

During the discussion, reference was made to the following:

- The Council could not afford the rent for Maidstone House in the long term and it would be very difficult to sub-let any parts of it.
- Financially it made sense to self-build.
- The Council could build over public car parks, prime sites that would cost the Council nothing to buy.
- The Council would need to look at a multi-use occupation to share the burden of costs.

RESOLVED: That:

- (a) In view of the significant costs involved in leasing and running Maidstone House, the Committee recommended that Cabinet gives consideration to appointing a project manager, at the earliest opportunity, to enable all accommodation options (build, buy, lease) to be investigated and reported back on without delay; and
- (b) The Committee recommended that the informal, cross-party, Accommodation Working Group, should continue to meet during the 2014/15 municipal year.

153. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the future work programme.

Members were made aware of the work programme workshops to be held in June and July and details would be circulated to Members in due course.

Members were requested to consider the draft future work programme as set out in Appendix A to the Report and also the list of items that had been suggested over the past few months as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the Report.

It was noted that it had not been possible to arrange for the Committee to interview the Head of Finance and Resources about the use of revenue underspend due to time constraints. Members requested that he be invited to the June 2014 meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the draft future work programme, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Senior Corporate Policy Officer, be endorsed;

- b) That the SCRAIP responses as set out in Appendix B to the report be noted;
- c) That the List of forthcoming decisions as set out in Appendix C to the report be noted; and
- d) That the Head of Finance and Resources be invited to attend the next meeting in June to discuss the Council's use of revenue underspend.

154. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 8.35pm