

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE 2014

Present: Councillor Mrs Blackmore (Chairman), and
Councillors Burton, Greer, McLoughlin, Perry and
Mrs Ring

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Gooch, B Mortimer,
Newton, Round and Sargeant

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

2. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Chairman stated that, in her opinion, the Petition relating to the proposed Park and Ride Site at Linton Crossroads should be taken as an urgent item as there had been an expectation that this would be presented at the June meeting of Cabinet. In addition, the two Officer Updates relating to the two Petitions being presented should also be taken as urgent items.

3. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillor B Mortimer indicated that he wished to reserve his right to speak on Agenda Items 8 and 9 relating to Petitions concerning the proposed increase in development in Coxheath and the proposed Park and Ride Site at Linton Crossroads.

Councillor Gooch indicated that she wished to speak on Agenda Item 10.

Councillors Newton, Round and Sargeant were also in attendance.

4. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

Councillor Burton disclosed an interest in Agenda Item 10 – Business Rates Reoccupation Relief as he was Chairman of the Marden Business Forum.

David Edwards, Director of Environment and Shared Services also disclosed an interest in Agenda Item 10 – Business Rates Reoccupation Relief as he was a Member of the Town Centre Management Board.

5. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors Burton, Perry and Ring stated that they had been lobbied in relation to Agenda Items 8 and 9 relating to the two Petitions concerning proposed development in Coxheath and the proposed Park and Ride Site at Linton Crossroads respectively.

6. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

7. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 MAY 2014

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

8. PETITION

Mr. Anthony Cross presented a petition on behalf of residents of Coxheath objecting to the proposals put forward in the draft local plan. In presenting his petition, Mr. Cross made reference to the following:-

- Coxheath is not a rural service, it is a small village with an excellent community spirit
- It was home to the famous World Custard Pie Championships
- The scale of the proposed development in Coxheath would increase housing capacity by 25%
- The local school was already full to capacity and there was a 6 weeks waiting time to see a local doctor
- There is already heavy traffic congestion through the village and narrow footpaths along parts of Heath Road
- The proposals would have a major impact on the village and there would be gridlock at Linton crossroads
- There was no local buy in for further housing developments

The Chairman thanked Mr. Cross for presenting his petition and advised that his comments had been noted. She emphasised that in excess of 1500 responses had been received during the consultation period for the local plan and these still had to be processed. Therefore no decisions had been made yet on this.

Councillor Brian Mortimer also addressed the Cabinet and endorsed the comments made by Mr. Cross and urged the Cabinet Members to take on board the strength of feeling in Coxheath against further development.

9. PETITION

Mr. Ron Ellis-Leagus presented a petition on behalf of the residents of Coxheath objecting to the proposed Park and Ride Site at Linton Crossroads. In presenting his petition, Mr. Cross made reference to the following:-

- The strength of local feeling against the scale of the proposed development identified in the draft local plan which would increase capacity by 25%, some 1400 people had signed the petition
- That Coxheath was a small village with a population of 500 in an area of outstanding natural beauty and was on the greensands ridge
- The area proposed for the Park and Ride car park was on a greenfield site where farming was currently carried out and employment opportunities would be lost should that go ahead
- No motorway access, two small roads (at times single lanes) coming into the village, no bus lanes

The Chairman thanked Mr. Ellis-Leagus for presenting his petition and stated that it was duly noted.

Councillor Brian Mortimer also addressed the Committee and endorsed the petitioner's comments. He emphasised that he was a true believer of Park and Ride but did not feel that the proposed site was in the right position. As it was 4 miles out of the town, users would just be stuck in traffic much the same as car users as there were no bus lanes.

10. ACCOMMODATION PROJECT (SCRAIP)

The Cabinet considered the Report of the Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee which provided an update of the work carried out to date on the future accommodation requirements of the Council.

Councillor Gooch addressed the meeting and advised that Maidstone House was costing the Council £1m a year and that it was necessary to look at other options for when the lease was due to expire in five years time. She emphasised that there was an urgent need for a Project Officer to be appointed to take the project forward.

In response to a question from a Member about what funding could be made available for the recruitment of a Project Manager post, the Head of Finance and Resources undertook to report back to either Cabinet or the Cabinet Member responsible in July.

DECISION MADE:

- (a) That, in view of the significant costs involved in leasing and running Maidstone House, approval is given to appointing a project manager, at the earliest opportunity, to ensure all accommodation options (build, buy, lease) are investigated and reported back on without delay; and
- (b) That the informal, cross-party, Accommodation Working Group, continues to meet during the 2014/15 municipal year.

For further information regarding this Decision, please click here:-
<http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=840>

11. **BUSINESS RATES REOCCUPATION RELIEF**

Cabinet considered the Report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits on a Government scheme to provide further business rate relief to support businesses and reduce the number of vacant shops.

DECISION MADE:

That the Business Rates Reoccupation Relief Policy shown at Appendix A of the Report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits be approved.

For further information regarding this Decision, please click here:-
<http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=841>

12. **DURATION OF MEETING**

6.30 p.m. to 7.15 p.m.