

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scrutiny Coordinating Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 10 JULY 2014

Present: Councillor J.A. Wilson (Chairman), and
Councillors Black, Butler, English, D Mortimer,
Paterson and Springett

1. **APOLOGIES**

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs Gooch.

2. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES**

There were no visiting members or witnesses.

3. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED: That Councillor J A Wilson be elected Chairman of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

4. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED: That Councillor D Mortimer be elected Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

5. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS OR OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

6. **TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**

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

7. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 APRIL 2014**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

8. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14**

Tessa Mallett, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, introduced the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013-14.

The following issues were discussed:

- The roles and functions of all Councillors / Article 2 of the Constitution
- The criteria for quality recommendations
- The importance of Overview and Scrutiny making a positive impact on public service delivery
- Training attended by Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members
- Decision making and Council structures at Maidstone Borough Council
- Reviews carried out during 2013-14 including the Events Review and the Accessing Mental Health Services Before the Point of Crisis Review

RESOLVED:

- (a) That, subject to the footnote on page 9 being moved to page 2 and a number of typos being corrected, the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013-14 be approved for submission to full Council.
- (b) That Democratic Services be asked to look at the possibility of developing a Pocket Guide to the Constitution to summarise the roles and responsibilities of all Councillors.

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE - REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Senior Corporate Policy Officer setting out proposed revisions to Article 6 of the Council's Constitution.

In response to questions, the Senior Corporate Policy Officer informed the Committee that the proposed revisions had been put forward following:

- Feedback from officers and Members as part of the planning process for the June/July 2014 round of Committee meetings
- Various restructures across the organisation and a recent portfolio change in relation to housing responsibilities.

The following issues, in relation to terms of reference, were discussed:

- Leisure activities including sporting and recreational based activities
- Spatial planning including the Local Plan
- The roles and responsibilities of the Standards Committee, and Audit Committee, in relation to the proposed changes to the Constitution
- The scrutiny of issues relating to Maidstone's heritage.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the inclusion of the Local Plan in relation to Planning Transport and Development OSC and review by the Monitoring Officer, the Committee recommended the revisions to Article 6 of the Council's Constitution, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Senior Corporate Policy Officer, be agreed by full Council.

10. CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

The Committee considered the report of the Senior Corporate Policy Officer setting out mechanisms for addressing cross cutting issues to prevent duplication in the work of individual committees.

It was explained that during the June/July round of meetings a number of cross cutting issues had been identified. These included the Night Time Economy, Using the River Medway and Employment implications arising from a review of the Economic Development Strategy and key employment issues arising from Local Plan representations.

It was noted that the Night Time Economy had been put forward as a review topic by the Economic and Commercial Development OSC. It was also explained that issues in relation to violent crime at night would be considered by the Community, Leisure Services and Environment OSC (acting as the Crime and Disorder OSC).

It was agreed that the Economic and Commercial Development OSC should lead the Night Time Economy review but should keep the Community, Leisure Services and Environment OSC informed especially in relation to Crime and Disorder issues. It was suggested that the review scope, once agreed by Economic and Commercial Development OSC, should be considered by the Crime and Disorder OSC in October 2014. In addition, it was agreed that the final report should be sent to the same Committee in February 2015, for comment, before being sent to the Executive for a response.

In terms of the scrutiny suggestion in relation to the River Medway it was explained that during the 2013/14 municipal year the Economic and Commercial Development OSC had suggested reviewing the fees charged for using the river. In addition the following issues were discussed:

- The roles and responsibilities of different agencies in relation to the River Medway
- Ways to make the river more accessible
- Moorings on the river
- Income generation

It was agreed that the suggestion in relation to the River Medway should remain with the Economic and Commercial Development OSC however certain issues, for example accessibility, would be picked up by the Planning, Transport and Development OSC as part of their work on the Local Plan.

It was noted that employment implications arising from a review of the Economic Development Strategy, a qualitative study on employment sites, and employment issues arising from local plan representations were key issues for Planning, Transport and Development OSC and Economic and Commercial Development OSC.

Following a discussion it was agreed that a joint meeting should be organised as the Employment Land Report and the Economic Development Strategy were co-dependent.

In addition to the issues highlighted in the report of the Senior Corporate Policy Officer, the Committee discussed the Review of the Parish Charter in terms of consultation with Parishes on Spatial Planning Policies. It was noted that the Review of the Parish Charter would be considered by Community, Leisure Services and Environment OSC and it was agreed that these issues should be considered at the same time.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Economic and Commercial Development OSC be the lead Committee for the Night Time Economy Review.
- (b) That, once scoped, the Night Time Economy Review be considered by the Community, Leisure Services and Environment OSC (acting as the Crime and Disorder OSC) in October 2014.
- (c) That the final report, in relation to the Night Time Economy Review, be considered by the Community, Leisure Services and Environment OSC (acting as the Crime and Disorder OSC) in February 2015, for comment, before being sent to the Executive for a response.
- (d) That the Economic and Commercial Development OSC be the Committee to consider the River Medway suggestions, as part of its work programme development for 2014-15, with Planning, Transport and Development OSC addressing certain issues, such as accessibility, as part of their work on the Local Plan.
- (e) That the Planning, Transport and Development OSC and Economic and Commercial Development OSC hold a co-located simultaneous meeting, during autumn 2014, to enable consideration of the Employment Land Report at the same time as the Economic Development Strategy.
- (f) That issues in relation to consultation with Parishes on Spatial Planning Policies be considered by the Community, Leisure Services

and Environment OSC at the same time as the Review of the Parish Charter.

11. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Christian Scade, Senior Corporate Policy Officer, introduced the Future Work Programme and Member Development Needs Report.

It was explained that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee may wish to consider the support and development it could offer the four Scrutiny Committees at each meeting by structuring its own work programme.

The following issues were discussed:

- Skills for Scrutiny Members and Chairmen
- Member development activities including an event that would be facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, in July 2014, on developing working relationships between Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet members.
- Plans to develop a practical and interactive "Questioning and Challenging Skills" event.
- The possibility of organising a site visit to the House of Commons to watch a Select Committee.
- Following up and monitoring recommendations made by scrutiny.
- The importance of selecting appropriate witnesses, especially for review topics.
- Decision making and Council structures at Maidstone Borough Council compared to other local authorities.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the next Scrutiny Coordinating Committee meeting be held in September 2014, with a time and date confirmed outside of the meeting by the Senior Corporate Policy Officer.
- (b) That the following items be considered by Committee in September:
 - (i) Audit Committee Work Programme, (ii) Review of Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Action and Implementation Plans for 2014-15, (iii) Making Quality Recommendations and (iv) Member Development Needs (Update).

12. DURATION OF MEETING

14:35 to 16:10