

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Regeneration, Community and Culture**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Thursday, 11 April 2013**

**6.30pm to 10.05pm**

**Record of the meeting**

**Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee**

- Present:** Councillors: Bright (Chairman), Etheridge, Griffin, Griffiths, Adrian Gulvin, Hicks (Vice-Chairman), Hubbard, Juby, Mackinlay, Maisey, Stamp and Turpin
- Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Gilry (Substitute for Harriott)
- In Attendance:** Councillor Rodney Chambers, OBE, Leader  
Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture  
Tim England, Head of Safer Communities  
Stephen Gaimster, Assistant Director Housing, Development and Transport  
Matthew Gough, Housing Strategy Manager  
Neil Howlett, Community Safety Partnership Manager  
Daniel Kalley  
Jill King, Section 106 Officer  
Anna Marie Lawrence-Lovell, Performance Manager  
Councillor Vince Maple, Leader of the Labour Group  
Andy McGrath, Assistant Director, Front Line Services  
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer  
Nicola Swan, Head of Legal Services  
Mark Breathwick, Medway homechoice and allocations team manager

**993 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 31 January 2013 was agreed and signed as correct by the chairman.

**994 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Harriot.

**995 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

The Chairman introduced Daniel Kalley, Democratic Services Officer who will be taking over co-ordinating the Committee.

**996 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests**

Councillor Juby declared an interest in item 8 (Housing Allocations Policy) as a member of his family was on the housing allocations list, but this was not a DPI and he was therefore allowed to speak.

Councillor Etheridge declared an interest in item 8 (Housing Allocations Policy) as a member of her family was on the housing allocations list, but that this was not a DPI and she was therefore allowed to speak.

**997 The Leader in attendance**

**Discussion:**

The Leader had provided a report that set out activities and progress on work areas within the his Portfolio during the past year and the Committee asked him questions about these which included:

- **Future of Rochester Airport** - The Leader confirmed that the long-term future of Rochester Airport was secure and that this site would not be used for development such as housing. The redevelopment of the airport would bring new vitality back to the airport and certain parts of the land would be developed for employment use for hi-tech rather than logistical purposes, although the exact percentage of the site that would deliver business rates for Medway was not known.
- **Concern regarding design of first build at Rochester Riverside** – There was some disappointment with the design of the first build but the quality of the build itself was very impressive.
- **Investment into Rochester Station** - Medway was enjoying investment from Network Rail in improving both Rochester and Strood stations, which had taken many years of discussions with Network Rail. It had been a great achievement to get the magnitude of investment that Medway has received.
- **Closure of Darnley Arches** - The Council had negotiated with Network Rail to carry out the work on Darnley Arches when it was believed to have the least impact on traders. The expectation had been that Network Rail would carry out the work required on the underpass at Darnley Arches, as well as replacing the track but this did not happen and remained an intention of the Council.
- **Strood Community hub** - The plans for the Community hub were still progressing, but were at too early a stage to provide detailed information on the site but it was agreed that a briefing note providing more information would be prepared when appropriate.
- **Assurance that the third Thames crossing maximises benefit for Medway** – The Council is fully integrated with the development of the A2

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and greater access to the national highway network for Kingsnorth had already been achieved. The Leader confirmed he did not support the third crossing directly into Medway, as it would be directly into the middle of the peninsula.

- **Regeneration of Chatham** - One of the biggest regeneration challenges lies with Chatham. With the recession it had been challenging to develop the Pentagon Centre, with difficulty in attracting more big name retailers. Some of the best opportunities to develop Chatham lie near the river.
- **Impact of the Paramount Studios development on events city at Chatham Waterfront** – This would be a commercial decision by developers but it may be considered that it would be complimentary. The leader added that it would be good to see a rapid transit link between the docks and Gillingham station, which would help relieve some of the transport pressure and felt that further consideration needed to be given to the highway infrastructure to support the events city development.

### Decision:

The Committee thanked the Leader for his attendance.

## 998 Petitions

### Discussion:

The Chairman invited Bryan Fowler and James Jefferies and Councillor Maple, as Ward Member, to address Members.

Bryan Fowler (lead petitioner) and James Jefferies (petitioner), representing the Gibraltar Terrace Residents' Association addressed the committee and raised the following points:

- They did not believe that the decision of the allocation of parking permits by Cabinet for Central Chatham included residents of Carton House.
- They requested the Council to apply the reasonableness test and apply the decision made at Cabinet.
- That there were 35 marked bays for Gibraltar Terrace, for 47 residential homes, therefore there was already high demand for spaces.
- Commuters who have permit passes for the same zone use the bays as free parking when going to the station, because of its breadth of coverage.
- Due to the area being restricted to permit holders only until 10pm the spaces were often used in the evenings by people attending Crystals nightclub and therefore the petitioners requested an extension to the time restrictions beyond 10pm

Councillor Maple (Ward Member) addressed Members of the Committee on the issue. He felt the wider question was the size of the permit zones in Medway, reiterating that some residents drove from one end of the zone and park at the other end due to the large size of the zones. Carton House had its own parking spaces underneath the building and it was therefore felt that those residents

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should not have access to allocated parking bays at Carton House as well as parking permits.

Members discussed the petition and the wider impact of the parking permit zones including:

- Agreement that controlled parking zones are currently too wide.
- Perception of abuse of the current system as purchasing permits was a cheap way to park in Central Chatham.
- Need to check whether residents of Carton House were consulted when the original consultation took place.
- Requested that the Committee Members are provided with a breakdown as to the cost of consultation.

In response to the issues raised the Assistant Director, Frontline Services explained that consultation on the parking permit zone would cost in the region of £100,000 - £150,000 and that residents of Carton House were able to apply for parking permits as they are on New Road itself, which is within zone C. With regards to the hours of the parking zones he undertook to consider lengthening the enforceable hours.

Members suggested that an informal cross-party working group involving officers and Members from the relevant wards (Chatham Central and River) should look into the parking permit zones and report back to this Committee.

### **Decision:**

The Committee: -

- a) noted the petition responses and appropriate officer action in paragraph 3 of the report;
- b) recommended that an informal members working group (to include, ward members from Chatham Central and River ward) to give detailed consideration to parking permit zones and to report back to this committee.

## **999 Community Safety Plan 2013-16 (Policy Framework)**

### **Discussion:**

The Head of Safer Communities introduced the report and informed Members that the community safety landscape was still in a state of flux following the elections of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The strategic assessment findings would be reported for scrutiny to this Committee on an annual basis and the Committee would then be able to make an informed decision about whether the plan would need to be referred to Cabinet and Council.

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He reminded Members that the legislation controlling Community Safety Partnerships (CSP's) had changed and there was more flexibility for them to determine the appropriate timeframes to be covered by their plan.. He also highlighted the priorities within the draft Community Safety Plan 2013-16, as outlined in the report.

Members discussed the plan and raised a number of points including:

- The reduction in the number of fixed penalty notices (FPN) for littering offences, and more work being needed to bring those to justice who chose to ignore the law, especially with regards to fly tipping
- With regards to domestic abuse, there were concerns around the difficulty in assisting offenders to attend courses, which can cost in excess of £300. Further work should be done with local partners to see how courses can be funded for those who cannot afford it. A further briefing note on support for those who have committed domestic violence crimes was requested.
- Whether the Council had been in contact with the new PCC to see if there could be collaboration with Medway Council to look at alcohol and drug issues, as £500,000 had been earmarked to look at those issues.
- Request that a report that had been carried out on Drug and Alcohol Services be shared with Members.
- In terms of road safety the plan would be enhanced with the addition of the new road safety centre, which will be built with the new Rochester fire station.
- The way police resources are currently used should be considered. In some wards there are vehicles parked on pavements, which could lead to accidents, as pedestrians had to walk round the vehicles into the road. This would be a low priority for police officers to deal with but could be something PCSOs could action if they were given the appropriate powers.
- The need for further work with regards to addressing anti-social behaviour and in particular noisy neighbours, especially supporting the victims who have to suffer for long periods of time before anything is done.
- There was a problem in Medway currently with dog fouling and behaviour, which needed to be looked at.

In response to the points raised by Members, the Head of Safer Communities welcomed the comments in relation to the issuing of FPNs for littering and fly tipping and explained that a combination of education and enforcement would be used to combat these problems. In addition, there were a number of options that officers could look into with regards to excluding dogs from certain spaces and dogs being required to be kept on leads in certain areas/circumstances. The Assistant Director, Frontline Services commented that before Medway Council was established that there were bye laws in place excluding dogs from certain areas, however these only applied to play areas in existence at the time. The Head of Legal Services added that some byelaws were now defunct and usually offered less penalty than national legislation in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act that the Council might use in relation to dog fouling problems.

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The Assistant Director, Frontline Services commented that the council had entered into a multi-agency framework to commission independent domestic abuse advisors, which includes provision for improving support for victims and offenders of domestic abuse. With regards to FPNs, if the number issued rises then this means that people are being challenged more on littering, which helps to bring about reductions. He also undertook to forward the request for the drug and alcohol report to the Drug and Alcohol Action Team Partnership.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to:

- a) Note the report and draft Community Safety Plan 2013-16 and recommend the Cabinet to forward the plan to full Council for approval;
- b) Request a further detailed briefing note on courses and support for those who have committed domestic violence crimes;
- c) Request a report that had been conducted on drug and alcohol services to be shared with Members of the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **1000 Housing Allocations Policy**

### **Discussion:**

The Head of Strategic Housing Services introduced the report to Members explaining that the Council is required to have an allocations policy to set out how it will allocate social housing. He advised Members that there has been a wide public consultation. The policy being proposed would be implemented in phases and would reflect the priorities as set out in national guidance.

A Member commented on the eligibility criteria and in particular the income that is taken into account when deciding if a person or household is likely to exceed £50,000 and what that criteria was? The Head of Strategic Housing Services explained that the wording used for income is general and could include assets, personal income etc.

The Head of Strategic Housing Services also informed Members that when individuals apply to go on the housing list they are asked what connection they have with Medway.

One Member raised the supply and demand balance of the housing waiting list and how this related to the proposed policy, but acknowledged that this would be considered within the in-depth review into Housing in Medway – demand, supply and affordability, which had been scheduled to begin in August 2014.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to:

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- a) Recommend the Cabinet to adopt the revised Housing Allocations Policy, attached at appendix 1 to this report, to come into effect on the 1 August 2013;
- b) Recommend the Cabinet to delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, to agree wording changes where these are of a minor nature.

### 1001 Community Infrastructure Levy

#### Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Housing, Development and Transport introduced the report to Members and explained that the proposed alternative arrangements to the current Section 106 obligations allowed local authorities to collect money from developers which would be used for infrastructure. The proposals, which were currently out to consultation, included suggested rates for Medway as set out in the report. The Government required local authorities to carry out two consultations, the first running from 1 March to 19 April 2013 and the second would take account of the comments received. The Levy is scheduled for adoption in April 2014, and a further report will be submitted to this committee before adoption. He added that the rates being proposed have been compared with proposals from other councils in Kent and fall broadly in line with those.

Members discussed the Levy and raised a number of points including:

- Concern that Medway might be missing out on charging a levy to major commercial developments that could take place, for example, expansions to the National Grid in Grain and a new power station in Kingsnorth.
- Concern that the charge being applied to residential dwellings was excessive and that if charges were reduced it could encourage further development.
- Uncertainty relating to the fact that zone A included Rochester Riverside and yet Strood Riverside, Temple and Strood Town Centre were similar areas and yet had not been split out into zone A.
- Concern that the current charges being proposed will price out the smaller builders and advantage the bigger companies.
- Concern that brown field sites and run down sites would not be developed, as the charge might be too high.
- If the levy is too high it might encourage more opportunistic builds, for example in back gardens.
- Query as to why the differentiation for zone A between the charge for up to 14 dwellings and 15 plus dwellings was less than the differentiation in zone B.
- Suggestion that the words “whether a new building or an extension” be amended or removed at paragraph 1.3 of the introduction to avoid confusion.



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The Assistant Director, Housing, Development and Transport responded to the queries and concerns raised. With regards to the charges being proposed, these were in line with other local authorities and were based on figures provided from a viability consultant. The levies proposed were generally less than those proposed by the Viability Consultant. He also undertook to check the issue raised re differentiation with the Viability Consultant.

The Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture alerted Members to the estimated cost of the infrastructure required in Medway being £747 million, the identified funding currently being £154 million. Up to £574 million is therefore still required to fund infrastructure.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed that:

- a) A further report on the Community infrastructure Levy will come back to Committee once consultation processes have been completed and before formal adoption.

### **1002 Six month review of Fair Access to Credit Task Group report**

#### **Discussion:**

The Chairman of the Fair Access to Credit Task Group introduced the report setting out an update on progress on the Committee's recommendations from the Fair Access to Credit in-depth review agreed by Cabinet on 4 September 2012.

Members were directed to the letters attached to the report, including from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. He added that in March 2013 the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) had expressed concern with payday lenders and the Competition Commission were conducting a review into payday lender procedures and performance.

Another Member of the task group spoke, informing Members that the report had been discussed at length at the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 April 2013. A number of Lords and cross-party MPs had considered the report and it was felt the report had helped influence the action by OFT.

One Member asked if there had been any response from the banks to letter sent from Medway. The Assistant Director, Frontline Services confirmed that no banks responded. He added that the Council welcomed the OFT referral of payday lenders, which suggested that 90% of payday loans were not in line with what is affordable in terms of re-payments.



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### Decision:

The Committee noted the progress made against the actions from the review and agreed:

- a) That all Members should receive a briefing note on assisting a Credit Union in Medway;
- b) A report on further progress against the actions be presented to this committee in 12 months time.

### 1003 Council Plan monitoring 2012-2013 - quarter 3

#### Discussion:

The Performance and Intelligence Manager, Regeneration, Community and Culture introduced the report to Members which provided performance information against the Council's relevant Key Measures of Success for quarter 3 (October to 31 December 2012) 2012.

Members were directed to page 227 of the report and Key Measure LRCC4 - Number of jobs created and safeguarded. Updated information had been received from partners 'Locate in Kent' and confirmed the figures for the last three quarters as; Qtr 1 - sixteen, Qtr 2 - 153 and Qtr 3 - 63 (giving a total of 232).

Members raised a number of points with regards to the performance report including:

- A request that unemployment data be provided in future with actual numbers of people in unemployment as well as percentages.
- A need to ensure that residents' views relating to street cleaning are listened to and actioned.
- Issue with the number of leaves on the roads and pavements, contractors who clean the leaves can't always get to certain spots due to the obstruction of parked vehicles, therefore options to alleviate this problem needed to be considered.
- The need for an impressive theatre in Medway to attract people to the area.
- Congratulations were given on the heritage lottery fund achieved for Eastgate House.
- There are a number of cigarette ends within the tree grates in Chatham.
- Action was required to encourage people to wash their properties and streets
- A request that officers speak with neighbouring local authorities about street cleaning for areas bordering Medway.
- Please to see Medway is operating CCTV cameras for neighbouring areas as we are an example of best practice for this.

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The Performance and Intelligence Manager, Regeneration, Community and Culture agreed that actual figures of unemployment would be added to the report.

The Assistant Director, Frontline Services responded to some of the issues raised. With regards to the street cleaning satisfaction has improved but will take on board comments made by residents on areas that could be improved. There is an issue with the build up of leaves each year; the council will look at how this can be done effectively. He acknowledged that the tree grates at Chatham were a problem; they were very difficult to clean and needed to be replaced. In response to a Member's suggestion he agreed that neighbourhood groups could be used to clean up private property to add to the sense of wellbeing in local areas. He added that the cross-boundary CCTV setup had achieved better value for money and helped with the arrests of offenders.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to note the report and comments made.

## **1004 Work Programme**

### **Discussion:**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report to Members and informed them that an in depth review for this committee to undertake was agreed at Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The topic was Housing in Medway – Demand, Supply and Affordability and was scheduled to commence in August 2014.

Additional items were suggested for the work programme including:

- High marginal cost of bus travel – report on how costs in Medway currently compare with other local authority areas – bus companies to be invited to attend;
- Long term empty properties – report on scale of issue and action being taken;
- Community Officer Service – review of impact of any changes implemented following Better for Less review;
- Update on Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Progress report on Fair Access to Credit.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report and agreed to the additions to the work programme as suggested.

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April 2013**

**Chairman**

**Date:**

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