

Medway Council
Meeting of Regeneration, Culture and Environment
Overview And Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 18 August 2016

6.30pm to 7.47pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Clarke (Chairman), Bhutia (Vice-Chairman), Brown-Reckless, Craven, Etheridge, Gilry, Griffin, Hicks, Osborne, Stamp and Tejan

Substitutes: Councillors:
Howard
Purdy

In Attendance: Councillor Pat Cooper
Councillor Phil Filmer, Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services
Richard Hicks, Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation
Stephen Baker, Acting Head of Waste Services
Louise Browne, Principal Engineer
Tom Clegg, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority
Michael Edwards, Principal Transport Planner
Shane Hales, Chamberlain of the Rochester Oyster Floating Fisheries
Alex Saul, Democratic Services Officer
Paul Starling, Freeman of Rochester Oyster Floating Fisheries
Peter Starling, Freeman of Rochester Oyster Floating Fisheries
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer
Will Wright, Chief Officer of Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority, Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority

192 Tribute to Andy McGrath

At the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman stated that he had been shocked by the recent news that the former Assistant Director of Front Line Services Andy McGrath had passed away following his retirement due to ill health. The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation paid tribute to Andy as a warm hearted, well known and highly valued officer as well as a true friend. The Committee held a minute's silence in memory of Andy McGrath.

193 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carr and Saroy.

194 Record of Meeting

A Member referred to Minute 68 recommendation c) and sought clarification on when the two briefing notes would be circulated.

The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation confirmed that work was in hand to finalise these briefing notes and their circulation was imminent.

The record of the meeting held on 16 June 2016 was approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

195 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

196 Declaration of interest and whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

197 Presentation by the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Discussion:

The Chairman welcomed Tom Clegg and Will Wright from the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (KEIFCA)

The Chairman also welcomed Shane Hales, Paul Starling and Peter Starling from Rochester Oyster Floating Fisheries (ROFF).

The Committee received a presentation from Tom Clegg on the closure of an area of the estuary to all fishing activities as a 'no take zone' so as to protect juvenile fish that are reliant on these habitats.

A summary of points raised as a part of the presentation included:

- The preservation of the river as the cultural and historic heart of Medway is of critical importance

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- That the no take zone, as a 'Medway Nursery Area', to protect juvenile fish would be vital to replenish adult stocks of fish and would be the largest 'no take zone' in the United Kingdom
- Bass were a species of fish that needed this kind of protected habitat as they have slow growth and late maturity and were also highly vulnerable to overfishing as they have a tendency to gather in specific sites
- Surveys have shown a rapid decline in adult Bass populations since 2012 and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) had advised that to sustain their population none should be caught in 2017
- Saltmarsh and mudflats are vital feeding and shelter areas
- Medway has lost 70% of its Salt Marshes since 1850
- The remaining Salt Marshes are the habitat of close to 50 species of rare bird
- The recent and successful River Festival was used to inform the public of the no take zone to protect fish populations and of its importance
- The work undertaken to establish the 'no take zone' had been undertaken in conjunction with both the Rochester Oyster Floating Fisheries and the Environment Agency.
- Research projects and surveys still planned on the estuary

The Committee then viewed a short video on the estuary and the recent River Festival.

Shane Hales, Chamberlain of ROFF, stated that both he and his colleagues fully endorsed the proposals and the presentation by KEIFCA.

The Committee discussed a number of the points raised and both KEIFCA and ROFF answered questions as follows:

- In response to a query confirmation was given by Shane Hales that both ROFF and KEIFCA would be responsible for policing the 'no take zone'. He explained that ROFF had taken action against poaching on the river many times over the years.
- A Member expressed a view that this project had educational benefits for Medway's children in explaining the source of food and therefore should be fully supported.
- In response to a question on the choice of area for the 'no take zone', Will Wright confirmed that this site had been selected after consultation with the local fishing community as it was a prime area for a nursery for juvenile fish. He also explained the benefits scientifically in having such a large no take zone in close proximity to London and a number of Universities.
- In response to a concern raised by a Member that local fishing businesses might be affected by the 'no take zone', Paul Starling, Freeman of the ROFF, assured the Committee that the impact on business would be quite light.
- In response to a question on pollution in the river, Tom Clegg advised the Committee that the increasing population of Smelt was an indicator

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that there had been great improvement in the cleanliness of the water. He informed the Committee that Smelt require good water quality and that they had been coming back to the river in large numbers in recent years.

- Shane Hales expressed a view that the ROFF hope the success of the 'no take zone' in the Medway would encourage other areas to establish similar 'no take zones'.
- Will Wright confirmed that KEIFCA had looked at Medway Council's policies and strategic plans and had produced a report on how their activities adhered to this. He stated that he would be happy to send this report to Medway Council to be distributed to Members for their information.

Decision:

The Committee thanked the representatives from KEIFCA and the ROFF for attending the meeting, their excellent work on raising the profile of the river and giving a presentation on the closure of part of the estuary from fishing activities as a 'no take zone' to protect juvenile fish and agreed that;

- a) The presentation from KEIFCA be noted;
- b) The Committee receive a further briefing from the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority on the project in 12 months;
- c) A copy of the report referred to by the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority be supplied and circulated to Members of the Committee.

198 Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services

Discussion:

Members received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services which fell within the remit of this Committee as set out below:

- Local Growth Fund transport projects
- Parking
- Public transport
- Roads
- Street Cleaning and waste collection/recycling/waste disposal
- Traffic management
- Transport Strategy
- Travel Safety

The Portfolio Holder expressed his sadness at hearing that Andy McGrath had recently passed away and explained that Andy had been very proud of Medway and a good friend over the years.

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The Portfolio Holder responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Road Safety** – A Member referred to the increase in the number of recorded Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) casualties in the 2015 calendar year and asked whether the Portfolio Holder was aware of any reasons for this increase and whether any specific locations could be identified where there were problems. The Portfolio Holder explained that Officers regularly monitored the information received so as to assess whether there were any blackspots and were therefore on the case.
- **Gully Cleaning** – In response to a concern raised that not all gullies had been cleaned when they should have been and a query into what checks were in place to ensure that gullies had actually been cleaned, the Portfolio Holder advised that there were occasions when it was not possible for gullies to be cleaned on the planned cycle e.g. when parked cars created an obstruction but he reassured the Committee that such areas were revisited at a later date. He also confirmed that Officers undertake random checks on gullies to ensure that the cleansing work had been carried out. In the event that the contractor was found to have underperformed, the contract contained the required conditions to enable the necessary action to be taken.
- **Road surfacing and cleanliness of verges** – The Portfolio Holder was congratulated on the quality of the road surfaces in Medway and the cleanliness of the verges. In response to a query on what contact he had with Kent County Council in regards to the quality of roads and verges just outside of Medway's borders, the Portfolio Holder explained that he is in close contact with Kent County Council concerning these issues
- **Resurfacing of The Tideway** – A Member questioned when the resurfacing of The Tideway would be undertaken and asked how many roads were on the planned resurfacing schedule that were subsequently delayed to future years. In response, the Portfolio Holder explained that an annual list of planned resurfacing works was produced so that it was possible to see in advance scheduled works and he confirmed that it was not usual for slippage to occur. However, resurfacing was taking longer in The Tideway due to the jointing on the road, which, in this instance, made resurfacing particularly difficult.
- **Staffing levels** – In response to a concern in regards to whether there were adequate staff to deal with consultations on highway issues e.g. requests for double yellow lines, the Portfolio Holder reassured the Committee that whilst consultations on such matters involved a lengthy process, sufficient staff were in place to respond to such enquiries.
- **Parking Enforcement** – A Member referred to a Member's Item that he had submitted in 2013 seeking a full breakdown of information relating to parking enforcement and asked if the Portfolio Holder could provide information to a

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similar detailed level. In response, the Portfolio Holder drew attention to the figures detailed at section 3.1.1 of the report and advised that that he would provide a further breakdown to the Member outside of the meeting.

- **Communications on Waste Services** – A Member asked whether the Portfolio Holder considered that action should be taken to fine individuals who left their waste outside their homes far earlier than the planned collection day. The Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that the Council wished to encourage the public to recycle but that if any Member had a specific issue in their own Ward they should bring this to the attention of Officers.
- **Waste Collection/Greenspaces** – A Member expressed gratitude to Medway Council's refuse collectors and the quality of their work and commended Medway's Greenspaces on the condition of Darland Banks and the flowerbeds along Watling Boulevard. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would pass on these comments to those involved.
- **Disabled Parking Bays Qualification Criteria** – A Member expressed concern that in some areas, Disabled Parking Bays could cause issues due to narrow roads and she asked whether there was coordination between Officer's assessing applications for a Disabled Parking Bay and Officer's responsible for considering the location of the Disabled Parking Bay on highway grounds. The Portfolio Holder explained that the team who determine whether an applicant qualified for a Disabled Parking Bay did not fall under his remit but he reassured Members that the Officer's responsible for assessing the location of a Disabled Parking Bay would have regard to the narrowness of the road. The Member asked for further information as to the eligibility criteria for Disabled Parking Bays and the Democratic Services Officer was asked to supply this to the Member concerned.
- **Street Cleansing Rota** – A Member asked for a copy of the street cleansing rota and the Portfolio Holder assured the Committee that he would arrange for this to be sent to Members outside of the meeting. Steve Baker, Acting Head of Waste, also informed Members that Officers were working on a project for the rota to be available digitally.
- **European Parking Collections**– In response to a query from the Chairman the Portfolio Holder agreed to provide information to Members on the percentage of European Parking Collections (EPC) which had been due to be paid to the Council.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- a) thank the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services for attending the meeting and answering questions;

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- b) note that the Portfolio Holder will supply to the Member concerned a more detailed breakdown of information on parking enforcement;
- c) note that an updated street cleansing rota for each Ward will be distributed to Ward Members;
- d) note that information will be supplied on the percentage of European Parking Collections (EPC) which had been due to be paid to the Council
- e) note that the Democratic Services Officer will supply to the Member concerned, information as to the eligibility criteria for Disabled Parking Bays.

199 Petitions

Discussion:

Members considered a report on petitions received by the Council which fell within the remit of this Committee, including a summary of the responses sent to the lead petitioners by officers. The Democratic Services Officer informed the Committee of the following updated information:

- The lead petitioner on the “Petition to make the crossing on Rochester Road, Halling, safe” had indicated that she wished to wait to see if the petitioners concerns were resolved by Medway Council before referring this to a meeting of this Committee following reassurances she had received from the Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation that this was being looked into.
- The “Petition to keep the Strand Lido Gillingham open for all” would now be referred to the meeting of this Committee on 25 October 2016 at the request of the lead petitioner.
- The ‘Petition objecting to the new pavements at William Street Rainham’ would now be referred to the meeting of this Committee on 25 October 2016 at the request of the lead petitioner.
- The lead petitioner for the petition asking for a speed camera for Walderslade Road, between the Poachers Pocket Public House and Weeds Wood Road, had requested that the petition be referred to this Committee for discussion but had asked that this be held over until the meeting on 25 October 2016 as the lead petitioner was unable to attend in August.

A Member informed the Committee that he had received an email from the lead petitioner of the “Keep Splashes Leisure Pool open until at least 9.30pm on Sunday evenings” petition which stated that they had been disappointed with the response from the Director but had not indicated that they wished the petition to be referred to this Committee.

Similarly he had also been contacted by the a petitioner in regards to the petition on the Strand Lido stating that the response had not addressed concerns regarding the change in opening hours which meant that the facility was not available for individuals who work.

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Decision:

The Committee agreed to;

- a) note the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the report;
- b) note the updated information as to the requests for petitions to be referred to this Committee on 25 October 2016.

200 Work programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer reported on the Committee's current work programme.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the current Work Programme.

Chairman

Date:

Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

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