

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Regeneration, Community and Culture**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**Wednesday, 29 September 2010**  
**6.33pm to 8.45pm**

**Record of the meeting**

- Present:** Councillors: Andrews, Bhutia, Bright (Chairman), Godwin, Tony Goulden, Hewett, Hicks (Vice-Chairman), Hubbard, Mackinlay, Maisey and Ruparel
- Substitutes:** Councillor Avey for Councillor Sylvia Griffin  
Councillor Juby for Councillor Crack
- In Attendance:** Councillor Ted Baker  
Councillor Nick Brice  
Councillor Teresa Murray  
Abigail Cooper, Research and Review Team Manager  
Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture  
Stephen Gaimster, Assistant Director Development, Economy and Transport  
Anna Marie Lawrence-Lovell, Performance Manager  
Brian McCutcheon, Local and Regional Planning Manager  
Martin McKay, Design and Conservation Manager  
Frances Madders, Senior Urban Design Officer  
Jonathan Male, Senior Lawyer  
Helena Payne, Senior Planner  
Caroline Salisbury, Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator  
Carly Stoddart, Senior Planner

**386 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 18 August 2010 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

**387 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Crack and Sylvia Griffin.

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

There were none. However, the Chairman asked to vary the order of the agenda in that agenda item 11 (Member's item: refurbishment of and charging for the Pentagon toilets) was brought forward for discussion after agenda item 5 (Petitions) and the committee agreed this change.

### **389 Declarations of interest**

Councillors Tony Goulden and Mackinlay declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (The Interface Land Development Framework) as they were both council appointed trustees on the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust.

### **390 Petitions**

#### **Discussion:**

The lead petitioner, Mr Huw Jarvis, addressed the committee advising that the petition had been raised because there had been no consultation carried out on the temporary re-routing of a footpath across Watts Meadow due to the construction of Bellway's housing development.

Mr Jarvis advised that he accepted the responses provided in the Director's letter and in the report but that the recent development had raised future concerns of encroachment on to Watts Meadow. There was a body of people, some of them in a group called the Watts Meadow Volunteers, interested in the future of this piece of land who could also act as a ready-made group for the council to consult in the future. Members were also advised that there was a covenant (legal agreement) on the land which had left it for the "enjoyment of the people of Rochester". If Watts Meadow was to be designated as a nature reserve, the volunteers would like to be consulted, so that there were no requirements for alternative use put on the land for the future.

Councillor Murray, who had presented the petition at council and Steve Goddard, the Secretary of the Watts Meadow Volunteers, addressed the committee and asked about recent clearance of an area that had been fenced off and turned back into allotments, as there had also been no consultation about this.

The Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture responded that communication with regard to the Bellway development should have been better and he apologised on behalf of the council. The footpath (once restored) should become a public right of way. He added that the council would be happy to work with the Watts Meadow Volunteer group in the future. The Local and Regional Planning Manager answered questions over the status of the allotments.

In response to the comment about the new allotments, this land was designated as 'open space' which was a planning term that included use as allotments. The Director advised that he was prepared to accept that the volunteers were not consulted about these and would investigate this further. Councillor Murray also asked whether the process for legalising the footpath as a public right of way had begun and was advised that it had and that anyone could write to the council to support or object to the proposal.

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The committee commented on the quality of the signs that had been provided for this change of route and asked whether it would be possible to set a minimum standard for other developments in the future. The Director responded that he would ensure this was implemented.

**Decision:**

The committee agreed to:

- (a) note the petition responses and appropriate officer action in paragraph 3 of the report;
- (b) ask the Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture to consider the comments and requests of the public and the committee about any future works on Watts Meadow and other developments in the future, as set out above.

**391 Member's item: refurbishment of and charging for the Pentagon toilets**

**Discussion:**

Councillor Godwin introduced the item, advising that he had raised it as a Member's item because he had received a number of representations about the introduction of the 20 pence charge for entry into the newly refurbished toilets at the Pentagon Centre in Chatham. He raised a question over the quality of the refurbishment works and asked whether the council had any control over these and the charging, as it had given £210,000 of government money for these works? He also advised that old basins and sinks seemed to have been re-used and were cracked and stained and that this did not represent value for money.

The Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture responded that it had been money from the council's capital budget that had been allocated for this work and that the Pentagon now owned and ran the toilets. The toilets were previously free but were in a very poor state of repair with regular anti-social behaviour, such as drug-taking and prostitution, taking place there. Photographs of the refurbished toilets were circulated for Members information.

The Director advised that the Pentagon Centre Manager had received comments of appreciation about the refurbishment and although the Pentagon had decided to charge for use, there were other facilities free of charge around Chatham and there would also be free toilets in the new bus facility, due to be opened in early 2011. The Pentagon toilet refurbishment would save £5.5 million of council money over the lifetime of the lease.

Some Members commented that most of the capital money seemed to have been spent on the barrier and controlling gate, rather than the toilet area and that it was not a good incentive to shop in Chatham, as toilets were part of the shopping experience.

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Councillor Godwin added that although the council had agreed the finances for the refurbishment under the capital programme, councillors had been unaware of the plan to charge for the toilets. In his opinion, the council had failed to tie up the agreement with the Pentagon, which was a company who had to work well with the council due to its future expansion plans in Chatham. Other nearby retail outlet centres did not charge for toilet facilities, so why did the Pentagon not recognise the public good of providing this service to encourage shoppers?

Councillor Godwin proposed that the committee write to the Pentagon about this matter and reminded the company of its future working arrangements with the council for expansion. On being put to the vote, this proposal was lost.

**Decision:**

The committee noted the report and comments made by Members as set out above.

**392 Building for Life implementation**

**Decision:**

The Senior Urban Design Officer introduced the report advising that Building for Life was a national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. There were 20 criteria that made up the assessment framework and this would be used as a means of negotiation on design quality and for scoring and comparing applications for housing developments.

The committee commented that these important proposals were welcomed and would be reflected in future developments for the greater good of Medway.

Members asked whether there was any reference to facilities for disabled people and were advised that building regulations governed disabled facilities.

**Decision:**

The committee endorsed the Building for Life assessment method and recommended that Cabinet agrees to adopt this into the council's planning processes.

**393 Local Development Framework: Draft Core Strategy**

**Discussion:**

The Local and Regional Planning Manager introduced the report advising the committee that an earlier version had been due for consideration in July 2010 but that this had coincided with the announcement of the abolition of the South East Plan. The draft core strategy had since been refined and references to the South East Plan removed. Members were notified that the draft strategy did not contain proposals for new development other than at Lodge Hill but did have a

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range of features, detailed in paragraph 4.5 of the report, planned to shape Medway over the next 15 years.

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- affordable housing – some Members commented that the levels remained too low;

Officers responded that the figures were based on a commissioned Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the recommendations reflected that study.

- additional jobs target by 2028 (paragraph 3.9, page 99 of the agenda) how would the success of this be measured?

Officers agreed that a clear baseline should be included in the strategy.

- new coal power station at Kingsnorth (paragraph 5.28, page 117 of the agenda) how robust was the strategy on waste heat?

Officers confirmed that they would consider whether the reference to the re-use of waste heat could be strengthened.

- Canterbury Street, Gillingham as a secondary shopping centre.

Officers advised that the Local Plan proposals showed four local centres in Canterbury Street. It had all been assessed and it was proposed that one area, relatively distance from Gillingham town centre should be designated as a neighbourhood centre. This served a significant residential area.

- Strood station nearer to some parts of Rochester? How will the council improve links from Strood across the river?

The importance of links across the river were recognised and would be taken into account when detailed proposals come forward.

- Bryant Road – should this be designated as a neighbourhood centre given its proximity to the High Street, Strood?

Is doing well compared to other local centres but is close to the High Street. On balance, it is considered that it should be designated subject to views being received as part of the public consultation on the Core Strategy.

- housing type and tenure – (paragraph 6.26, page 149 of the agenda) small amount of executive-style accommodation. Members considered that this required further detail, as it could be very important in the future. There was too little suitable housing for executives in Medway and by choosing to live in other areas, this also took away their money from being spent in Medway;

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Officers replied that this could not be addressed through the draft core strategy but sites could be designated in the forthcoming Allocations and Development Management Policies development plan document.

- development sites in River ward totalled 6,300 new units but what of the road infrastructure to cope with this large number of extra vehicle movements?

Officers responded that the figures did include the un-developed parts of St. Mary's Island and Rochester Riverside which already had planning permission. Other sites in central Chatham were close to the retail area and rail station and could be expected to have lower than average car ownership rates.

**Decision:**

The committee endorsed the Local Development Framework: draft core strategy and recommended it to Cabinet for approval to go out for public consultation (as set out in paragraph 4.7 of the report), together with the committee's comments set out above.

**394 Amherst Hill Design Brief Supplementary Planning Document**

**Discussion:**

The Senior Urban Design Officer advised that Amherst Hill was owned by Defence Estates and allocated for housing in the Local Plan. It was situated next to Fort Amherst with long views across to Rochester. The Local Plan had set out that there had to be a detailed design brief to guide development of the site in a manner appropriate to its sensitive setting and prominent location. The results of the six week consultation on a draft design brief with English Heritage, the owners and other stakeholders were set out in the report. Minor amendments had been made as a consequence of the consultation but the principle remained the same.

Members asked why the comments of the Brompton Village Association set out on page 261 of the agenda with regard to the development of the Kitchener Barracks could not be incorporated into the design brief. Officers responded that Kitchener Barracks had not been released for development and it would be important to have a separate design brief for that area.

**Decision:**

The committee agreed to endorse the Amherst Hill Design Brief, having given regard to the comments raised during the consultation.

**395 The Interface Land Development Framework (Supplementary Planning Document)**

**Discussion:**

The Assistant Director for Development, Economy and Transport gave a presentation detailing the area of land covered by this Supplementary Planning Document and the key issues raised during the consultation period.

The committee asked why covered slip number 7 was not part of the consideration for this document and officers advised that it was by far the largest covered slip and because of its size it had a viable future whereas the other covered slipways had been problematic to find a suitable use for. Officers emphasised that they had developed a very good working relationship with English Heritage which supported the aims of this planning document.

**Decision:**

The committee agreed to endorse the Interface Land Development Framework and recommended it to Cabinet for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

**396 Quarter 1 Council Plan Monitoring 2010/2011**

**Discussion:**

The Performance Manager gave an overview on progress made during quarter one (April – June 2010), advising that the report also showed proposed changes to the Council Plan.

The committee was informed that it was unusual to suggest in-year changes to the Council Plan but this was in order to keep the plan consistent with recent changes brought in by the coalition government. Officers had also taken the opportunity to re-visit the actions and indicators reported in the plan and those highlighted in yellow in Appendix 2 were proposed for removal from the Council Plan.

Members were advised that the Cabinet had recently agreed that certain actions and measures highlighted in yellow could remain in the Council Plan for the remainder of the financial year.

The committee asked if the council had been officially notified by the government about the withdrawal of funding from the Playbuilders scheme and was advised that a letter had been received which asked the council to put this scheme on hold. To date, nothing further had been received.

Members also asked for an explanation of the difference between the indicator on page 376 of the agenda (Carry out a programme of test purchases of age restricted products including knives, solvents and alcohol) and the indicator on page 377 of the agenda (Test purchase operations to be run to ensure alcohol

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is not sold to under 18s) and questioned why the first indicator was proposed to be removed rather than the second, as the first indicator on page 376 encompassed all products rather than a specific one. The Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture agreed that this should be amended.

Members expressed some concern that it had taken so long for the Quarter 1 performance monitoring information to be presented to the Committee. Officers were asked to consider how the reporting cycle for performance monitoring information could be changed in future to achieve more timely reporting of this information to Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

**Decision:**

The committee agreed to:

- (a) note the two stage process outlined at section 3.6 of the report for reviewing the Council Plan to ensure it responded to the national abolition of CAA and accurately reflected the council's priorities and targets whilst taking into account resources to deliver them;
- (b) note the targets for performance indicators included within appendix 2;
- (c) recommend to Council on 14 October 2010 the changes to the Council Plan actions and measures highlighted in Appendix 2, **with the exception of** the following actions which it recommended **should be amended** for the remainder of the reporting year, as follows:

Action – 'Carry out a programme of test purchases of age restricted products including knives, solvents and alcohol' **should be retained** for the remainder of the reporting year, and

Action – 'Test purchase operations to be run to ensure alcohol is not sold to under 18s' **should be removed** from the Council Plan.

**397 Work programme**

**Discussion:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised that no new items had been added to the recently published Cabinet Forward Plan within the remit of this committee.

**Decision:**

The committee noted the report and current work programme.



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**Chairman**

**Date:**

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