

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday, 21st September, 2023

Present: Cllr S A Hudson (Chair), Cllr Mrs S Bell (Vice-Chair), Cllr A G Bennison, Cllr S Crisp, Cllr G B Hines, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr A McDermott, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr Mrs M Tatton, Cllr K S Tunstall, Cllr D W King (substitute), Cllr D Thornewell (substitute) and Cllr C J Williams (substitute)

In attendance: Cllrs T Bishop, Mrs T Dean, M A J Hood, R P Betts, M D Boughton and D Keers were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 15.21.

Virtual Councillors R I B Cannon, R V Roud and K B Tanner participated via MS Teams in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J R S Lark, Mrs A S Oakley and M R Rhodes

CE 23/32 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Notification of substitute members were recorded as set out below:

- Cllr King substituted for Cllr Rhodes
- Cllr Thornewell substituted for Cllr Oakley
- Cllr Williams substituted for Cllr Lark

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 17.5 to 17.9 these councillors had the same rights as the ordinary member of the committee for whom they were substituting.

CE 23/33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

CE 23/34 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee held on 19 July 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

CE 23/35 CAR PARKING PROPOSALS

Consideration was given to a number of proposed changes to the Borough Council's car parking service. The aim was to balance the management of the car parks to meet the needs of all users, optimise the availability of parking, maximise income subject to market conditions and provide consistency across the borough in a fair commercial and efficient manner. It was also intended to resolve some existing parking issues reported to the Borough Council in specific areas.

In addition, it was proposed that formal public consultation on the proposed changes be undertaken and the outcomes reported to a future meeting of Cabinet.

The significant annual costs associated with the operation of the parking service were outlined. It was noted that these had increased on average by 10% over the last 2 years. A number of proposals were detailed in the report and included the extension of car parking charging periods to Sundays, evenings and Bank Holidays, introduction of new charges in Aylesford, Larkfield and West Malling, changes to charging in Avebury Avenue, Tonbridge, extension of charging at Tonbridge Castle and the introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) at trial locations. Proposed charges were set out in Annex 1.

Particular reference was made to the potential extension of Upper Castle Field in Tonbridge to provide additional parking to support the use of a well-used car park, which was often at full occupancy.

The financial implications of the suggested proposals were detailed in the report, which emphasised that income generation was essential given the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and that the Borough Council sought to ensure that its assets were managed in the most efficient way and costs were recovered and optimised.

Members were advised that proposals in respect of Rocfort Road car park in Snodland would follow once a parking review had been completed to consider a number of complex issues in the town.

Whilst there was overall support of the proposals outlined to be consulted upon, there was some concern expressed at the lack of evidence provided to support the introduction of charging in Martin Square and West Malling High Street and Swan Street and the potential impacts on local businesses in those areas. The Leader of the Council agreed to meet with any local organisations including the local Chambers of Commerce and traders organisations.

Local Members supported the removal of the on-street parking machines in Avebury Avenue, Tonbridge and the move to permit parking only but Councillor Hines proposed, seconded by Councillor Crisp, that permits should be limited to 3 per business in this area. This proposal was supported by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) the proposals below be taken forward to public consultation and the outcomes reported to future meetings of the Cabinet:
 - a) parking charges be extended to include Sundays, evenings up to 8pm and Bank Holidays;
 - b) the on-street parking machines in Avebury Avenue, Tonbridge (west of Holford Street) be removed, the area changed to parking permit only to add capacity to the D1 parking area and that the issue of Business On-Street Parking Permits in the D1 area be revised to a maximum of 3 per business to allow more residential parking opportunities;
 - c) parking charges be introduced at Martin Square, Larkfield (as set out in Annex 1);
 - d) parking charges be introduced at both Bailey Bridge car parks in Aylesford (as set out in Annex 1);
 - e) parking charges be introduced to on street parking bays in West Malling High Street and Swan Street (as set out in Annex 1);
 - f) parking charges be introduced to the existing Gateway Visitor parking bays in Tonbridge Castle Grounds (as set out in Annex 1);
- (2) a project to improve the Bailey Bridge East car park be brought forward in the forthcoming Capital Plan Review;
- (3) a scheme to introduce ANPR systems at selected car parks on a trial basis be brought forward in the forthcoming Capital Plan Review;
- (4) a scheme to enable these proposals to be implemented including CCTV, parking machines and signage be brought forward in the forthcoming Capital Plan Review; and

- (5) a scheme to extend the existing Upper Castle Field car park to provide additional parking be brought forward in the forthcoming Capital Plan Review.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

CE 23/36 GROUND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

The report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services advised on the retender of the Borough Council's Ground Maintenance Contract for Public Open Spaces and sought comments and recommendations in regard to the procurement process and timeframe, length of contract, standards and level of service and the proposed evaluation of tenders and award of contract.

Attention was drawn to the proposed levels of service and potential savings presented to Members at the previous meeting of the Committee (attached at Annex 1). No requests for further alterations had been received. However, proposals for the removal of flower beds had been rejected and Officers would work with the incoming successful contractor to increase the use of perennials in the future design of flower bed displays.

An outline tender timescale had been developed in accordance with the Borough Council's Contract Procedure Rules and took into account programmed meetings of this Committee, Cabinet and Council. Details of the timescale were set out in Annex 2.

With regard to external procurement the Kent Commercial Services framework provided the opportunity to seek tenders from a list of contractors which had already undergone thorough financial and quality appraisals. The use of this framework met the authority's procurement rules and there was no additional cost.

Consideration was given to the type of contract to be awarded, the length of contract and the proposed criteria for tender assessment (outlined at Annex 3).

Particular reference was made to the use of pesticides and Members welcomed the proposal that contractors offer alternative costed methods through the tender process for consideration.

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) Kent Commercial Services Framework be used for external procurement;
- (2) the length of the contract be five years plus five years;

- (3) the Contract be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tender and be evaluated on 50% price and 50% quality;
- (4) the proposed levels of service and potential savings (as set out in Annex 1) be noted, and incorporated in the contract documentation;
- (5) the quality assessment criteria be agreed (as set out in Annex 3); and
- (6) a lease of the Maintenance Buildings be granted to the successful contractor as per the terms detailed in the report.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

CE 23/37 KCC COMMUNITY WARDEN CONSULTATION RESPONSE

(Decision Notice D230081MEM)

Consideration was given to a proposed response from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council in respect of the KCC Community Warden review, which was out for consultation until 3 October 2023.

The proposals presented as part of the Consultation had been developed with information from service users and input from staff and partners and were intended to redesign the service to achieve savings of £1million by 2024/25.

The work of the Community Wardens across Kent and within Tonbridge and Malling and the proposed cuts to the service were detailed at 1.2 and 1.3 of the report.

Members expressed concern that cutting, or reducing, the Community Warden service would lead to increased costs in other organisations and a lack of support for vulnerable residents. There were also concerns that Local Authorities would be expected to provide and/or support services in those areas where the service would be withdrawn. It was recognised that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council did not have the resources, capacity or experience to fill these gaps.

The Committee had regard to the legal implications, financial and value for money considerations and the risk assessment set out in the report and expressed significant concern that the proposed reduction to one Team Leader and three wardens covering Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling would severely stretch resources. The role of the Community Wardens in supporting residents in their own homes and addressing safeguarding concerns was valued.

RECOMMENDED*: That:

- (1) the summary of the consultation document and the potential implications for the Borough Council of the review of the KCC Community Wardens service be noted;
- (2) the Borough Council's response to the consultation should be to strongly object to the proposals, recommend that there should be no change to the service and the significant concerns regarding the impact on other agencies and vulnerable residents should be highlighted; and
- (3) delegated authority be given to the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Community Services, to submit a final consultation response by the deadline of 3 October 2023.

***Decision Taken by Cabinet Member**

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

CE 23/38 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Members received a list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that were relevant to the committee. A baseline covering April to June 2022 had been used, with the data for January to March 2023 representing the most up-to-date available statistics. The KPIs would be monitored on a quarterly-annual basis and would be made available on an ongoing basis.

CE 23/39 WASTE CONTRACT - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Members noted the performance of the Waste Contract against a suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the period April to July 2023. Comparative data for April to July 2022 and the percentage variance when compared with the previous performance was also included.

CE 23/40 WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during 2023/24 was attached for information. Members were invited to suggest future matters by liaising with the Chair of the Committee.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

CE 23/41 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no matters considered in private.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm