

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday, 7th February, 2024

Present: Cllr S A Hudson (Chair), Cllr A G Bennison, Cllr S Crisp, Cllr G B Hines, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr J R S Lark, Cllr A McDermott, Cllr Mrs A S Oakley, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr Mrs M Tatton, Cllr K S Tunstall and Cllr C J Williams (substitute).

In attendance: Councillors R P Betts, M A Coffin and D Keers were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Virtual: Councillor M D Boughton, R W Dalton and K B Tanner participated via MS Teams in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S Bell (Vice-Chair).

PART 1 – PUBLIC

CE 24/1 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Notification of a substitute member was recorded as set out below:

- Cllr C Williams substituted for Cllr S Bell

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

CE 24/2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

CE 24/3 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee held on 6 November 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

CE 24/4 RECYCLING BRING SITES

The report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services provided an update in respect of the current recycling bring sites. Since the introduction of the new recycling services in October 2019, use of all sites had reduced significantly as had been anticipated.

Members noted that the overall tonnage of most of the materials which were now collected from kerbside had reduced significantly and continued to reduce with the roll out of the communal recycling service. In 2022/23, bring site materials accounted for around 2% of all recycling collected, compared with 14% in 2018/19.

Consideration was given to a number of options detailed in the report and particular attention was given to whether the textile and/or charity banks should be retained. On balance, the Committee felt that there were sufficient alternative options for residents to recycle textiles, such as local charity shops. It was also felt that retaining these banks could encourage fly tipping when they were full.

RECOMMENDATION*: That all remaining sites be removed due to the reasons detailed at section 1.2 of the report.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

CE 24/5 FIXED PENALTY NOTICES - LITTERING & FLY TIPPING OFFENCES

(Decision Notice D240016MEM)

In July 2023, as part of its Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan, the UK Government laid down a Statutory Instrument to increase the levels of Fixed Penalty Notices for littering and fly tipping and guidance confirmed that the fees should be set at an appropriate level to reflect local circumstances, including local ability to pay. The Council's current level of fees was set at the previous maximum amounts as set by Government.

Consideration was given to the options outlined in the report for Fixed Penalty Notice levels for littering and fly tipping. It was noted that if two levels of Fixed Penalty Notice charges for littering were created, this would ensure that the maximum deterrent was available to the Council whilst retaining the ability to take into account the severity of the offence, impact on the environment and the relative cost to the taxpayer of clearing up the litter/fly tip. Furthermore, two levels of Fixed Penalty Notices for littering offences would also ensure that the consequences

were proportionate to the offence, as per the Council's Corporate Enforcement Policy.

RECOMMENDED*: That two levels of Fixed Penalty Notice charges for littering be introduced and that the one level of charges for fly tipping be retained, with an increase in charges as set out in Option 4 at 1.4.4 of the report.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

CE 24/6 REVIEW OF PEST CONTROL SERVICE

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health outlined the current provision in respect of pest control and set out a number of options from November 2024.

Details of the cost of providing the service for the last three full financial years and the estimated increased cost of the current one year contract extension was provided together with the position across Kent local authorities. Members were reminded that it was not a statutory requirement for the Borough Council to provide a pest control service.

Careful consideration was given to the 'pros and cons' of the three options detailed in the report, the financial and value for money considerations and whether subsidised treatments should be provided for those residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction.

RECOMMENDED*: That a pest control service where residents could be referred to and agreed treatments subsidised for those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction within an agreed annual maximum cost to the Borough Council from November 2024 (Option 3) be tendered for.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

CE 24/7 CONSULTATION DRAFT - TONBRIDGE RACECOURSE SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT PLAN

(Decision Notice D240017MEM)

The Report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services sought Member comment on the draft Management Plan for Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground prior to formal public consultation.

Members noted that the existing five-year Management Plan expired in December 2023, and therefore needed to be reviewed and updated for the next five years. The draft Plan was intended to provide guidance and direction for the management of the Sportsground and be used to inform future maintenance and development of the site.

Particular reference was made to the Plan having been developed in line with the criteria of the Green Flag Award, a national standard for parks and open spaces, and Members noted that a section of the Plan dealt specifically with environmental management of the site which was a key criterion for the Award.

RECOMMENDED*: That the draft Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Management Plan, attached at Annex 1, be taken forward for public consultation.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

CE 24/8 TADDINGTON VALLEY - WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

(Decision Notice D240018MEM)

Consideration was given to the comments received as part of the public consultation exercise on the draft Taddington Valley Woodland Management Plan and proposed amendments to enable the Plan to be submitted to the Forestry Commission for approval. The draft Plan was intended to provide guidance and direction for all aspects of the management of the woodland and be used to inform future maintenance and development of the site.

Particular reference was made to the core part of the Plan which was the nature recovery by regeneration of the woodland using coppicing and pollarding of trees where appropriate, however the Plan also covered many aspects of the site's management including community engagement.

RECOMMENDED*: That the draft Taddington Valley Woodland Management Plan, attached at Annex 1, be submitted to the Forestry Commission for formal adoption, subject to the incorporation of the proposed amendments listed at Annex 3 to the report.

***Recommended to Cabinet**

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

CE 24/9 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Members received a list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that were relevant to the committee. The KPIs would be monitored on a quarterly-annual basis and would be made available on an ongoing basis.

CE 24/10 WORK PROGRAMME 2024

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during 2024 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 24/11 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no matters considered in private.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm