

**TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**Wednesday, 5th March, 2025**

**Present:** Cllr S A Hudson (Chair), Cllr K S Tunstall (Vice-Chair),  
Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr Mrs T Dean, Cllr F A Hoskins,  
Cllr J R S Lark, Cllr A McDermott, Cllr M R Rhodes,  
Cllr Mrs M Tatton and Cllr M A J Hood (substitute)

**In attendance:** Cllrs M A Coffin and M D Boughton\* were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(\*participated via MS Teams)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Crisp, who participated via MS Teams in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 15.21, and Councillor Stacey Pilgrim.

**PART 1 - PUBLIC**

**CE 25/10 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Notification of substitute member was recorded as set out below:

- Cllr M Hood substituted for Cllr S Pilgrim

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 25/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**CE 25/12 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the notes of the meeting of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee held on 5 February 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**

### **CE 25/13 WASTE, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT**

Following approval of the strategic approach to the re-commissioning of the Borough Council's Waste Services Contract in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council by Cabinet on 11 February 2025, consideration was given to a set of detailed specifications in relation to the procurement of the joint contract.

As highlighted in the report, when proposing future service provision, consideration had been given to current and pending government legislation, specially related to Simpler Recycling, Extended Producer Responsibility and the Deposit Return Scheme.

During discussion, Members made particular reference to the proposed contract duration, suspension of one collection of garden waste during Christmas period, improvement of street cleansing methodology as part of the areas identified for 'dialogue', inclusion of discretionary contract options and vehicle financing options. The grounds behind the specific proposals were explained and understood, and supported by Members in principle while it was acknowledged that all final tender submissions would still be subject to further consideration by the Scrutiny Select Committee before being presented to Cabinet for approval.

Furthermore, it was noted that the introduction of a 'dialogue' mechanism was regarded vital for the tender process in establishing viability, impact on service provision and the potential scale of contract cost reductions.

Finally, the option to utilise Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) in the Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCV) to achieve emission reductions was highly supported by Members, although the logistical challenge in respect of installation of or access to an HVO tank and the potential risk associated with the fluctuation in price were recognised. Members also noted that there would be opportunity within the proposed new contract to explore the introduction of electric vehicles when the majority of the fleet would be due for replacement in 2031, when the electric RCV market was anticipated to be more mature.

It was proposed by Cllr M Hood, seconded by Cllr F Hoskins that a joint working group of Officers and Members be established to consider contract variations following dialogue and negotiation ahead of the contractors' final bids on the grounds of the significance of the contract. This motion was defeated.

**\*RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the Competitive Flexible Procedure procurement route and timeline as outlined in Section 5.1 of the report, be agreed;
- (2) the proposed contract length of 12 years, as outlined in Section 5.2.1 of the report, be agreed;
- (3) joint delegated authority be given to the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Infrastructure and the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services to agree contract variations following dialogue and negotiation ahead of the contractors' final bids, as outlined in Section 5.1.5 of the report;
- (4) the proposed Specification amendment, highlighted in Section 5.3 of the report, be agreed and reflected in the tender pack;
- (5) the proposed areas of dialogue, as highlighted in Section 5.4 of the report, be agreed;
- (6) the proposed contract options, as highlighted in Section 5.5 of the report, be agreed;
- (7) the approach to vehicle finance options, as highlighted in Section 5.6 of the report, be determined by the Partner Authorities' Finance lead officers and be reported to the appropriate Committee and Cabinet;
- (8) the proposed method of contract indexation, as highlighted in Section 5.7 of the report, be agreed;
- (9) the proposed tender evaluation be progressed in accordance with Section 5.8 of the report; and
- (10) the proposed approach to decarbonisation, as highlighted in Section 12.7 of the report, be agreed.

**\*Recommended to Cabinet**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8.6, Part 4 (Rules) of the Constitution, Councillor M Hood requested that it be recorded in the Minutes that he had voted against Recommendation (3) as set out above.

**CE 25/14 GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to a draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, attached at Annex 1, which provided evidence for the Local Plan and a strategic framework for protecting, enhancing and connecting the borough's natural infrastructure and assets, as well as identifying

potential mechanisms for delivery through a range of council activities, in order to achieve benefits for communities and local places.

As highlighted, the Strategy supported delivery of the Borough Council's Corporate Strategy priorities and was important in supporting the Kent and Medway Nature Recovery Strategy. Beginning by setting out the context and a baseline assessment of existing assets in the borough and mapping the borough's Green and Blue Infrastructure network, the Strategy concluded with a set of recommendations/actions that covered four inter-connected areas of council activity: the Local Plan, Climate Change, Infrastructure, and Council-owned Land.

It was anticipated that the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy would help demonstrate how the Borough Council was meeting its Biodiversity Duty as required under the Environment Act 2021, alongside any subsequent Action Plan that would be developed to support implementation of the recommendations arising from the Strategy as outlined in Section 5 of the report.

Introduction of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy was welcomed by Members, who recognised the significance for the Borough Council to adopt such an important strategy in order to meet the legislative requirements in respect of fulfilling its Biodiversity Duty as well as the vital role of such a strategy in conserving and enhancing existing green and blue infrastructure assets, improving natural and urban environment's resilience to climate change, reducing carbon emissions, managing flood risks and ensuring communities had access to green spaces and nature to promote health and wellbeing opportunities.

As suggested by Members, consideration would be given to including performance data relating to the Strategy as part of a future Action Plan for monitoring, which would be reported to the Scrutiny Select Committee in due course.

Meanwhile, a clarification was made to explain the difference between the 'Local Green Space' as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework within the Local Plan context and the 'greenspaces' as referenced in the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and it was supported that the definition be clarified in the Strategy. In addition, Officers also committed to investigate a number of discrepancies identified in some maps within the draft Strategy.

Furthermore, Members noted that while 12 large Council owned sites had been identified in the Strategy to be prioritised for intervention work, based on the multiple opportunity they presented to deliver multifunctional benefits, this would not preclude projects taking place at other sites where management opportunities were identified. Finally, Members were encouraged to refer to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy which was out for consultation at present for further context.

**\*RECOMMENDED:** That the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, as set out in Annex 1, be endorsed by Cabinet for publication.

**\*Recommended to Cabinet**

**MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**

**CE 25/15    WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26**

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during 2025/26 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 25/16    EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no matters considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm