
Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 23 November 2023 from 7.00 pm - 7.54 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney (Vice-Chair), Derek Carnell (Substitute for Councillor Richard Palmer), Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould (Chair), James Hunt, Julien Speed, Karen Watson, Mike Whiting and Tony Winckless.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Philippa Davies, Joanne Johnson and Jhilmil Kishore.

OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Natalie Earl.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Terry Thompson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Rich Lehmann.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Elliott Jayes and Richard Palmer.

428 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

429 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 September 2023 (Minute Nos. 292 – 304) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

430 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

Part A Recommendations for the Policy and Resources Committee

431 **Sheerness - Marine Town Conservation Area Review**

The Senior Conservation and Design Officer introduced the report as set-out in the agenda papers.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions and make comments, and points raised included:

- Agreed with the extensions, but clarification sought on why other areas, with similar characteristics as the proposed extensions, had not been included; and
- considered this conservation area could be joined up with Mile Town, Sheerness Conservation Area, as it was so close.

In response, the Senior Conservation and Design Officer said Marine Town was a very interesting area, and there needed to be proper justification for designation, and not all the surrounding areas had surviving features. She referred to the possibility of joining both conservation areas together and explained that the area in-between had lost its historical significance, and there was no gain in them being joined together. The Senior

Conservation and Design Officer added that both conservation areas had completely different requirements. Marine Town was primarily a residential area, whilst Mile Town was the commercial centre of Sheerness, and so she advised that they be kept separate.

Further comments from Members included:

- Acknowledged that some of the properties were not up to the standard of being included in a conservation area; and
- suggested something be done to encourage residents to improve the buildings.

The Senior Conservation and Design Officer explained that some properties were included in the interest of street continuity and as an example of the surviving streetscape/scale, with the potential to improve the existing housing stock, whilst maintaining the streetscape and scale of the area.

Councillor Monique Bonney moved the following motion: That a policy be brought forward within the Local Plan for Sheerness Town Centre. This was seconded by Councillor James Hunt. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Councillor Monique Bonney moved the recommendation, and this was seconded by Councillor James Hunt.

Recommended:

(1) That the content of the public consultation draft of the character appraisal and management strategy document produced for the review, and the representations made on this by interested parties, the details of which are set out in the report appendices, be noted.

(2) That the changes to the review document proposed in response to the representations are agreed.

(3) That a policy be brought forward within the Local Plan for Sheerness Town Centre.

432 Sheerness - Mile Town Conservation Area Review

The Senior Conservation and Design Officer introduced the report as set-out in the agenda papers.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions and make comments and points raised included:

- Acknowledged and thanked officers for their work on this project;
- requested that an up-to-date photograph of the town clock be included on page 15 of the document; and
- agreed with the extensions.

Councillor Derek Carnell moved the recommendations, and these were seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney.

Recommended:

(1) That the content of the public consultation draft of the character appraisal and management strategy document produced for the review, and the representations made on this by interested parties, the details of which are set out in the report appendices, be noted.

(2) That the changes to the review document proposed in response to the representations are supported and agreed.

433 Scheme of Delegation and Committee Procedure Rules - proposed changes

The Interim Head of Planning introduced the report as set-out in the agenda papers. She drew attention to Appendix III which set out the proposed changes following the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group meeting on 19 September 2023, and also guided Members through the table set out on page 152 of the agenda papers.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions and make comments, and points raised included:

- Thanked officers for taking on board some of the comments made at the last meeting;
- agreed in principle to the changes as too many very small planning applications were brought to the Planning Committee;
- considered the latest draft went a little too far the other way;
- with reference to paragraph 2.8.13.2, considered the amended paragraph (d) was too prescriptive;
- clarification sought on the wording of ‘relevant’ in paragraph 2.8.15.2(b) and questioned whether the Head of Planning should be given the final decision;
- the Council was a Member-led administration, not officer-led, and if a councillor wanted an application to be called-in to the Planning Committee, they should have the right to do so;
- considered parish councillors were more knowledgeable now of the reasons that applications were referred to the Planning Committee, and these referrals should be permitted, without the decision being made by the Head of Planning as to whether the application be considered by the Committee;
- welcomed that interested parties could speak again when the application came back to the Planning Committee after being deferred to the Planning Working Group;
- agreed that votes were recorded;
- noted the wording in the case of householder applications, but some might have an impact on the wider environment;
- clarification sought on small commercial applications;
- noted that the Constitution made reference to Member engagement when Enforcement action was to be taken, but was silent when no action was the proposed officer outcome;
- clarification sought on householder applications going to Planning Committee when the householder was a Member or an officer; and
- considered the wording needed to be amended to read that any representations were based on relevant national and local policy.

In response, the Interim Head of Planning explained that the professional opinion of the Head of Planning would be a collective decision in consultation with case officers. She explained that small commercial applications could still be called-in to the Planning Committee, and in terms of Enforcement action she explained that this had been discussed by officers as part of the early drafting of the Enforcement Local Plan, and was planned to be proposed to the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group for change. This would be accelerated.

Councillor James Hunt moved the following amendment: That under paragraph 2.8.15.2(b), the wording be changed to: Provided that any such representations are, in the professional opinion of the Head of Planning, based upon relevant national and local planning policy. This was seconded by Councillor Mike Whiting. On being put to the vote, the amendment was agreed.

Councillor Monique Bonney moved the recommendation, and this was seconded by Councillor Tony Winckless.

Recommended:

(1) That the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation and Committee Procedure Rules, as set out in Appendix 3, be considered by the Constitution Working Group, with the following additional amendment: That under paragraph 2.8.15.2(b), the wording be changed to: Provided that any such representations are, in the professional opinion of the Head of Planning, based upon relevant national and local planning policy.

434 Kent County Council's Enhanced Partnership, Local Focus Group - nominations

The Interim Head of Planning introduced the report as set-out in the agenda papers.

Councillor Tony Winckless nominated Councillor Karen Watson and this was seconded by Councillor Kieran Golding.

Councillor James Hunt nominated Councillor Alastair Gould and this was seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney.

Recommended:

(1) That Councillors Karen Watson and Alastair Gould be nominated to sit on Kent County Council's Enhanced Partnership Local Focus Group.

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel