
Extraordinary Policy and Resources Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Committee Room - Swale House on Wednesday, 31 January 2024 from 6.00 pm - 6.43 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney, Lloyd Bowen, Charles Gibson (Substitute for Councillor Mike Henderson), Tim Gibson (Chair), Angela Harrison, James Hunt, Mark Last, Chris Palmer (Substitute for Councillor Derek Carnell), Richard Palmer, Julien Speed, Mike Whiting, Ashley Wise and Dolley Wooster.

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Rich Lehmann.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Robin Harris, Georgia Hawkes, Zoe Kent, Kellie MacKenzie and Larissa Reed.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Shelley Cheesman, Simon Clark and Tony Winckless.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mike Baldock, Derek Carnell and Mike Henderson.

579 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

580 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

581 **Revenues and Benefits proposed shared service**

The Revenues and Benefits Manager introduced the report as set-out in the agenda papers regarding whether the Swale Revenues and Benefits team should join the Mid Kent shared service.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

The Chief Executive, the Revenues and Benefits Manager and the Mid Kent Services Director clarified where necessary and responded to points raised by Members. The Chief Executive confirmed that the revenues and benefits customer face-to-face service would still be available at Swale House, Sittingbourne and The Gateway, Sheerness. The Revenues and Benefits Manager said they could provide an officer telephone directory of the service for Members. She confirmed that officers had explored outsourcing the service but there were not many options available. The Revenue and Benefits Manager also confirmed that administrative processes would be looked at once the new service commenced to ensure the best service was provided. Post, scanning and telephone calls would still come to Swale House, Sittingbourne.

In response to a question from a Member, the Chief Executive advised that the Council could pull out of the shared service if Members considered it was not working. She explained that the Council had one third of the decision. Maidstone Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council were having a joint Cabinet meeting on 14 February 2024 to consider whether to allow Swale to join the shared revenues and benefits service.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager said she would not have supported the proposals if she did not think they would work. She explained there were differences now to when the Council previously agreed not to join the partnership, such as more staff working from home; being more familiar with shared services as a lot of the Council departments were now shared; and there was a shared staff payroll and ITrent. She acknowledged it would be a big change for staff, but they would be supported, and the proposal would provide resilience across all teams of the revenues and benefits service.

Resolved:

- (1) That Swale Revenues and Benefits team join the Mid Kent Revenues and Benefits partnership.***
- (2) That the Director of Resources be given delegated authority to make the appropriate arrangements in line with the business case and sign the shared service collaboration agreement.***

582 Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no discussion on the exempt appendix, and it was not necessary to exclude the press and public.

583 Revenues and Benefits proposed shared service - Appendix II Business Case Financial Information - Exempt Appendix

There was no discussion on the exempt appendix.

Chair

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