

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Minutes of the Meeting of the Maidstone Area Committee of the Kent Association of Local Councils held via Zoom Conference at 7pm on Monday 29 June 2020.

Present: Councillors: Geraldine Brown (Chairman) Yalding, Cheryl Taylor Maggio (Vice-Chairman) Langley Helen Anderson (Secretary), Fay Gooch Barming, Richard Ash and Erin Sudgen (Parish Clerk) Bearsted, Anthony Humphryes Boughton Monchelsea, Ivor Davies Boxley, Tina Clark Broomfield and Kingswood, Steve Standish Collier Street, John Wilson Coxheath, Lyn Selby and Nigel Pyman Headcorn, Bob China Leeds, Zuri Loose, Lesley Mannington Marden, Sue Forward Staplehurst, Eve Poulter Sutton Valence, Peter Coulling and Chris Douglass Teston, Peter Titchener Ulcombe, John Perry and Martin Cox MBC.

Apologies. Councillors: Robert Turner and Ron Galton Boughton Malherbe, Malcolm Ireland, East Sutton, Fred Stanley Harrietsham.

- 1. Welcome.** Cllr Brown welcomed everyone to this inaugural virtual meeting.
- 2. Virtual Meetings.** It was agreed that future meetings would be held via Zoom conference facilities if circumstances necessitate.
- 3. Minutes.** The minutes of the 2 March 2020 meeting were taken as read, confirmed as a correct record. These will be signed at the next available meeting held in person.
- 4. Matters Arising.**

Cllr Wilson noted that due to the Coronavirus crisis the HGV Pilot Scheme has not progressed any further.

A short questionnaire is still to be compiled to Parishes regarding attendance at KALC Area Committee meetings, agenda content, speakers etc.

- 5. Deferral of the 2020/21 AGM** – This was agreed. All positions/representatives remain the same.
- 6. COVID-19.**

6.1 The leader of Maidstone Borough Council was welcomed to the meeting and gave a very comprehensive review, answering the following points:-

- 6.1.1 Where we are as a Borough** Maidstone Borough Council were relatively prepared for when lock down happened on the technology front. This was mainly due to much work that had been carried out pre-Brexit when two trial runs of 'work from home' for all employees was carried out. It was acknowledged, however, that their Councillors were perhaps not as well accommodated for and this has had to be remedied during the pandemic and relevant IT solutions found to host council meetings etc.

The Council has received grants from Central Government to help set up their hub and provide community services such as providing food boxes and a distribution centre, housing the homeless etc.

Their website received many more hits over the lockdown period and people in need were identified through this medium as well as providing useful webinars to businesses.

The Government also provided funding to the Borough Council for onward distribution to businesses including the leisure and hospitality sector which encompasses village halls operated by management committees. This has been

acted on immediately and many businesses/organisations have shown their appreciation.

6.1.2 Recovery As the current lockdown period is coming to an end, the community hub will continue until the end of July before being phased back. The main issue that needs to be addressed is the need to balance the accounts for the financial year, currently estimated to be in deficit by £7m to £8m. This is mainly down to lost revenue from business rates, car park levies, licensing applications etc. Cllr Cox noted that prudent spending for the remainder of the financial year will need to be achieved but did not expect any additional raise in Council tax charges for the financial year 2021/22. A cross party recovery group has been set up and currently meets weekly do look at key aspects/issues across the community relating to Covid-19 and determine how they can be addressed and/or resolved.

6.1.3 Recovery and Support for Parishes It was noted that probably medium to large councils would be more likely to be affected by financial losses.

6.1.4 What do Parishes Need Please do let MBC or this committee know if you have any issues may require their support.

7. Consultation on the LGA Model Member Code of Conduct

7.1 It was noted that the deadline for the consultation is 17 August 2020. It was agreed for KALC to support this.

7.2 It was noted that an email had been received from Gary Rowland of MBC Legal suggesting that MBC would not support any changes from Parishes. It was noted that in the past all Parish Councils agreed the Model Code of Conduct and duly advertised in the required local press advert as a collective.

8. Report from Representatives

8.1 **Parish Liaison Group** – The April meeting was cancelled, however, a virtual meeting is to be held on 13 July and therefore if any Councils have any issues they wish to raise please let Cllr Brown know as soon as possible at chairman@yaldingparishcouncil.gov.uk

9. Reports from Executive

9.1 The April meeting was cancelled, however, a new virtual meeting has been scheduled for 16 July 2020.

9.2 The Area Chairman held a virtual meeting on 4 June, the minutes will be circulated in due course.

9.3 Area Chairman and Vice Chairman have been invited to attend a virtual workshop on 24 July 2020.

10. Local Plan Review

10.1 The call for sites has been deferred until October 2020.

10.2 This committee will begin to formulate a response upon release of the information.

10.3 Maidstone Borough Council has lobbied Central Government regarding the housing numbers. Cllr Cox did report that they received a very unsatisfactory

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reply/acknowledgement and that they have now forwarded a further letter requesting a detailed response.

11. Parish Funding from MBC

11.1 Covid-19 grants were available for businesses. These have now closed.

11.2 Cllr Coulling is to contact Mark Green of MBC to confirm the status of our Parish Services Scheme funding going forwards.

12. Any other business

Headcorn Parish Council is seeking support from KALC regarding the clearing of litter/rubbish from roadside verges where the speed limit is in excess of 30mph. It was noted that this will be raised at the next Parish Liaison meeting.

Cllr Wilson reported that the Kent Resilience Forum is looking at post Covid-19 issues such as the effects of the use of pavements for additional outside seating for pubs and restaurants, plus planning infrastructure around the county.

Cllr Coulling wished to re-iterate that Councils must ensure that they remain legitimate through the current Covid-19 period until such time that public meetings can be held again in person. If a Council does not hold an advertised meeting within 6 months (we are already 3 months in) then Councillors run the risk of being struck off. If you are unable to attend a virtual meeting for any reason, then apologies must be given, accepted by the Council and duly recorded in the minutes.

Cllr Titchener raised the issue of what the Borough Council's legal duty is to evicted travellers. Cllr Cox reported that in order for the Police to enforce Section 61 it is required for a public site to be in the county and there is basic access to schooling, medical facilities, rubbish collections etc. It was noted that this issue needs to be taken up further at County level.

The meeting closed at 8:45pm

The next meeting will be held by Zoom Conferencing in August (date to be confirmed).

Helen Anderson
Secretary
KALC Maidstone Area Committee