

DEVELOPMENT & CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2021 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Reay (Chairman)

Cllr. Thornton (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Cheeseman, Penny Cole, P. Darrington, Fothergill, Hunter, McGregor, Pett and Thornton

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Roy

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr Reay be appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2021/22.

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr Thornton be appointed Vice Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2021/22.

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee held on 4 March 2021, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

5. Actions from previous meeting

There were none.

6. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder gave an update on the services within her portfolio. She expressed her thanks to Cllr Hunter for her service as Chairman of the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee and Deputy Portfolio Holder.

From 1 July, the Building Control Service came back in house following the end of the Partnership with Tonbridge & Malling. Admin and support with technology would continue while database separation is achieved.

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With more staff preparing to move back to more office based working, the team were keen to maintain some of the benefits the pandemic presented them with. For example, Zoom meetings and asking applicants to put up their own orange site notices as both initiative have been successful and allow saved time and travel expenses for officers. Printed plans for parish council consultations would not return which would make large savings in printing.

The Enforcement Plan was now online following Member engagement and training. The new structure of the Enforcement team had received positive feedback. In particular, they were praised for their work at Wheatsheaf Hill in Knockholt.

It was recently announced that the Government's long awaited response to the White Paper would not come out until the autumn, significantly later than expected in spring.

Member training had continued via Zoom on a monthly basis.

7. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

8. Approval of AONB Management Plans

The Principal Planning Officer (Policy) presented the report which sought adoption of the management plan for the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which the Council is legally required to do. The role of the management plan is to set out the key components, characteristics and qualities of the AONB and to identifies ways and opportunities to conserve and enhance the landscape.

The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan review (2021-2026) was approved by the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) of the AONB unit on 26 January 2021.

Members discussed the report. It was clarified that management plan supported national and local planning policy but was not a policy in itself.

Cllr Hunter addressed the Board as the Council's Member representative on the JAC. She highlighted that the management plan had been thoroughly researched and widely consulted on.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the adoption of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan be recommended to Council.

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9. Local Plan Update

The Strategic Planning Manager presented the report which updated members on the local plan.

In April 2021, the Council received confirmation from the Court of Appeal that the application to challenge the judgement of Mr Justice Dove, regarding the approach to meeting the Duty to Co-operate, had not been successful.

There were plans to meet with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Planning Inspectorate to discuss main steps for taking the plan forwards.

The evidence base would be updated in response to the themes identified in the March report, including making the best and most efficient use of land, changes in work patterns and economic drivers, and the future of town centres. Officers were currently advancing the productions of a District-Wide Characterisation Study, Town Centre Strategy and a targeted review of Housing Needs. Emerging areas of policy and research likely to influence the built environment included health and wellbeing, and smart city technology.

Following questions, Members were advised that engaging with the local community was very important in the production of the updated local plan. Members welcomed the use of smart technology to help support Council service delivery but expressed concerns over the use of residents' data.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

10. Work plan

The work plan was noted with the addition of an item on Budget 2022/23: Review of Service Dashboard and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) and a Building Control Update at the meeting scheduled on 19 October 2021. An Enforcement Update would be brought to the following meeting on 2 December 2021.

The Committee requested their vote of thanks to be recorded, to the staff in the Enforcement team within the Council, to acknowledge their hard work in their service delivery and the positive feedback received from residents.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.00 PM

CHAIRMAN