



MINUTES AGREED AT MEETING HELD ON 13TH OCTOBER 2020 BUT NOT SIGNED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL ON 29TH SEPTEMBER 2020 HELD VIRTUALLY AT 7.30PM

308/20 PRESENT:

Cllrs Adam, Barker, Boswell, Jones, Mannington (in the Chair), Newton, Robertson and Turner were present. The Deputy Clerk and approximately 21 members of the public were also in attendance.

309/20 APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from Cllrs Brown, Stevens and Tippen. The Clerk also gave her apologies

The Deputy Clerk took the role of Clerk in the Clerk's absence

310/20 APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 22nd September were deferred until 13th October meeting.

311/20 CLLR INFORMATION

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

Changes to Cllrs Register of Interest

There were no changes to Cllrs Registers of Interest

Granting of Dispensation

There were no requests for dispensation on any item on this agenda

312/20 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS INVOLVING PUBLIC SPEAKING

All members of the public wished to speak on item 314/20.

The meeting to be adjourned for the following item

313/20 PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman explained the procedure to be adopted for the virtual meeting. Members of the public had been asked to turn off their video link and to mute. As the agenda subject to be discussed was of importance to the parish, the Chairman was prepared to accept questions, or comments, via the Chat facility on Zoom from more than the usual number outlined in the Public Participation Policy and the CoVid-19 Virtual Meetings Policy. Members of the public were asked not to repeat matters already raised and discussed.

The meeting was reconvened for Cllrs to discuss items 314/20 onwards.

314/20 MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Evidence Documents from Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (SPI) Meeting

The Chairman opened the discussion by emphasising that all Cllrs should have reviewed the relevant documents on this subject from the link previously circulated. The subject could be further exacerbated by the recently announced algorithm which Government was intending to

use to dictate the future housing numbers to district/borough councils. In essence, this meant that Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) had to agree housing numbers under the Review of the Local Plan 2017 at Regulation 18b and Regulation 19, early in 2021 to avoid the possibility of higher housing numbers being demanded.

The Chairman expressed her opinion relating to the evidence documents from the 2019 MBC Call for Sites inasmuch as it referred to the 22 sites put forward for Marden parish. Marden Parish Council had made its opinion clear to MBC in its submission in respect of the sites in February 2020, and in particular those potential residential sites relating to the Garden Community concept as well as other sites, all of which it had opposed. The Chairman considered that this decision should stand.

Cllrs were then invited, in alphabetical order, to express their opinions, following which members of the public would be given the opportunity to speak via the Chat facility.

Councillors Comments:

Cllr Adam: He could see no evidence to alter the Council's previous views on the sites put forward. However, there was useful information to strengthen MPC's case in expanding on the previous responses. He felt there was factual inaccuracies and misleading concerns in some of the documents supplied by MBC's consultants. He had no changes to his own view on the residential sites but the proposed commercial site (286) may be acceptable. He was in agreement that MPC's position should stand.

Cllr Barker: Was unsure of the content in the statement on infrastructure on site 309. He thanked Cllr Adam for his balanced viewpoint and agreed that MPC's position should remain.

Cllr Boswell: After reading the consultants evidence report on site 309 could not see how it can be sustainable and affordable. Feels it does not comply to Garden Community guidance and is more an extension to Marden. Disagrees with statements in the report and is concerned about environmental and biodiversity.

Cllr Jones: Concurs with other Cllrs statements. He felt that further development will take place in order to meet the ever increasing demand for housing but for the time being anyway Marden has done enough, it is time to look to protect what is left of our countryside and the villages that make Kent the Garden of England.

Cllr Newton: Agrees with all comments made by Cllrs and thanked members of the public for their comments on particular potential sites.

Cllr Robertson: In agreement and expressed disappointment relating to the idea of development north of the main railway line as well as taking out large swathes of productive agricultural land. Was also concerned about the loss of natural habitat and the increase in traffic pollution.

Cllr Turner: Reiterated Cllrs opposition, highlighting development north of the railway line and the lack of social cohesion in what was essentially an overlarge extension of Marden village. Concerned in the shortfall of the employment proposal and the 40% affordable is questionable on a scheme delivering high quality design of this size. He feels the evidence put forward does not mitigate any of the principle concerns of the site and that a flood risk assessment would need to be undertaken as part of the site is in Flood Zone 2. He concurred with Cllr Adam that the potential commercial site (286) could be possibly policy compliant.

The Chairman then adjourned for the meeting for members of the public to raise questions and concerns via the Chat facility. The Deputy Clerk monitored this and read out the details to Cllrs:

Question/Comment 1:

Serious concern over volume and speed of traffic. Previous developers have submitted traffic calming measures with their applications but to date not all have come to fruition. How can we trust what future developers say when it comes to the safety of our community?

Question/Comment 2:

What is MPC's plan of action, what are your ideas and timescales?

Liaison with Borough Cllr Burton would be made to identify the future SPI meetings when this item is discussed and which is the most appropriate SPI meeting for MPC's attendance. A future MPC meeting would be required to collate our submission to MBC and members of the public would be invited to attend.

Cllr Adam stated that timing is the key issue as we do not know what is going to be decided when. Clarified that agenda for the 7th October had not yet been published and that the crucial SPI meeting appears to be 9th November when Borough Councillors would recommend sites going forward to the next stage. All members of MPOG and members of the public are encouraged to also lobby and made representation to SPI Committee.

Cllrs asked that the Deputy Clerk contact Borough Cllr Burton for clarification in regard to the future SPI meetings and what will be decided when.

Cllr Adam reiterated that we need to be clear on what we want to achieve. The argument we need to concentrate on is why we think the sites in the Marden area, primarily the one North of Marden, should not be on MBC/SPI shortlist. If it continues to remain on the shortlist we need to then focus on why specifically this should not be chosen. At the moment it is why it is not appropriate to be on the short list. MPC's response needs to be clear material planning considerations. Need to keep to the facts, be thorough, be accurate and line it up against policy. It is gratifying to see that many of the submissions sent to MPC from members of the public do in fact acknowledge that it is material planning considerations that are key. Responses should relate to things that comply with NPPF, MBC Local Plan or Marden Neighbourhood Plan. MPC will pull together previous comments, comments received from members of the public and information from documents submitted in the evidence pack. This refers to all the residential sites put forward.

Question/Comment 3:

SPI Meeting on 6th October – is MPC looking to attend and speak? Will the proposed MPC document be part of Regulation 18b consultation or in direct response to the evidence pack? Note: Cllr Burton is not the only ward Cllr. Cllr Blackmore spoke at the last SPI meeting.

MPC: Need to view 6th October agenda and would need to consider the best possible date to put forward our case. Once the agenda has been published we will be able to see what is included. We will be attending the relevant SPI meetings and speak. Our response will need to be formulated and the Chairman would start to draft this and circulate to Cllrs. Comments from members of the public will be taken on board when drafting the response.

Question/Comment 4:

Is MBC accepting comments at this time as in the past they have refused to accept comments on this subject?

MPC: Have not been told they will not receive comments from members of the public and they are encouraged to write into MBC with their concerns.

Question/Comment 5:

The proposed site is in Marden, why is it continually being referred to as "North of Marden"?

MPC: This is how it is referred to by MBC's planning consultants.

Question/Comment 6:

MBC's information pack was received on 14th September. Question on timescales has not been answered

MPC: A detailed timescale cannot be laid out at this current time. It requires further discussion with other Cllrs. Cllr Burton is the Chairman of the SPI Committee and therefore will have the clearest view on what will be discussed and when.

Question/Comment 7:

The agenda pack for 7th October is now online.

MPC: Thank you and Cllrs will look at it to see what is included.

Question/Comment 8:

Understand that MPC needs to attend and speak at the correct time. However, all SPI Committee members stated at the last meeting that they had been lobbied by other Parish Councils. Is MPC lobbying and speaking to all SPI Cllrs on this?

MPC: Cllrs will lobby when the time is right and appropriate meeting. Cllr Adam had reviewed the MBC website and can confirm that the agenda pack is now online as reported by resident. Reported that no items on the agenda related to this item. MPC would be working towards the next SPI meeting.

Cllr Turner proposed that, as previously, a working group meet, virtually, to discuss and formulate a response based on the evidence we have received so far. In view of the timescale the Chairman was proposed a virtual working group would meet on Saturday 3rd October to review the various sites and propose the Parish's submission to MBC. Members of the public would be welcome to join the meeting.

Cllr Adam reiterated that the Parish Council is a statutory body and has to act in a certain way in order to be lawful and have more impact. However, we are aligning ourselves with the very good points that groups and individuals are relaying to us. Parish Councils have to respond in a different way to how a member of the public could response. MPC will always act in the best interest of the community and will maximise the main impacts as best we can. Members of the public have more freedom on putting their views across as they are not covered by the same constraints as MPC. However, together, if pushing in the same direction, we will have the most impact.

The Chairman reported that a case would start to be drafted this week and would be circulated to all Cllrs for comment. Cllr Tippen has offered to attend SPI meetings when necessary.

Question/Comment 9:

Would it be wise to be ready for the 7th October SPI meeting in case agenda changes? The proposed working group should meet within days, not weeks.

MPC: MPC can understand concerns which is why the response will start to be drafted this week and a date proposed for Saturday for working group.

Question/Comment 10:

Lenham PC had spoken at recent SPI meeting, Harrietsham and Barming had sent statements. It is not obvious why MPC cannot get involved in the same way.

MPC: Although MPC could be involved now we propose the best result is in the way that has been explained previously. Different councils will take different approaches based on experiences. However, it will be done. It is a question as to what is most effective. MPC's stance is based on experience to act on when the time is right. The best result is that MBC reach the same conclusion as Marden in that no Marden site is suitable.

Question/Comment 11:

Surely is this the more reason to reiterate this now more than later?

MPC: Feel that nothing else can be added to what has been commented on before.

Question/Comment 12:

Is MPC saying that the best result is no houses?

MPC: No, the best result is for MBC not to adopt any of the Marden sites. Future years many see more development but tonight we are talking about what is being submitted in the Call for Sites.

Question/Comment 13:

MPC should be seen to be putting forward opposition at every opportunity.

Question/Comment 14:

Will members of the public have sight of MPC's response?

MPC: MPC's response will be uploaded to MPC's website. Members of the public are invited to attend any of the working groups when the response is being put forward. The response will then need to be adopted by Full Council and at this time it will be uploaded.

Question/Comment 15:

Marden Neighbourhood Plan allows for approximately 198 more houses in Marden.

MPC: Cllr Turner would be happy to look into this and respond. Cllr Adam informed the meeting this was a pro-rata calculation rather than a policy.

Time is of an essence and need to do a response at the right time and right manner. There is a lot of work to be undertaken and a lot of evidence to plough through. MPC will need to collate all evidence before submitting a response. Would like to see a timescale as to what MPC would be working to. The next Full Council meeting is due on 13th October and it was agreed that as many Cllrs, and members of the public, would meet on Saturday 3rd October. The Chairman will send bullet points of what has gone on before and what has been raised this evening to Cllrs prior to Saturday's working group.

Question/Comment 16:

Could MPC use some financial resources to put together a solid and substantive argument against the garden community for legal advice, traffic analysis etc?

MPC: No budget has been allocated for this. This would need to be considered at a Finance Committee meeting.

Question/Comment 17:

Will the finances be discussed at the next meeting?

MPC: As mentioned above this would need to be discussed by the Finance Committee.

Question/Comment 18:

Was there a misunderstanding regarding a quote for Christmas lighting?

MPC: No decision has been made on spending money on Christmas lights.

Question/Comment 19:

Would you prepared to look at finances, legal advice etc?

MPC: If identification can be put forward to MPC which could provide details on how legal advice could help at the current time this will be viewed. However, as it is planning consideration that is being discussed at the moment.

Question/Comment 20:

Could a solicitor be taken on to respond to Regulation 18b, Regulation 19 and Judicial Review if needed? MPOG has quotes and what can be achieved.

MPC: If a member of the public can suggest a course of action to the Council explaining what this might achieve and costs MPC would consider it. If received by MPC this can be placed on the next available agenda to discuss further.

Question/Comment 21:

Can an item be added to the next agenda for this and for canvassing residents of Marden.

MPC: MPC will consider it if it can be put in writing to the Clerk of what is requested.

No further questions or comments were forthcoming.

Cllr Adam thanked members of the public for their participation, which was welcomed by the Parish Council.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.35pm

Signed

Date

Cllr Lesley Mannington

Chairman, Marden Parish Council

Marden Parish Council

Parish Office

Goudhurst Road

Marden

01622 832305

07376 287981

clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk

www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk

The next meeting of the Full Council will be held on 13th October 2020