

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 29 September 2016.

PRESENT: Mr D L Brazier (Substitute for Mr L B Ridings, MBE), Mr N J D Chard, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr C P D Hoare, Mr R A Marsh (Substitute for Mrs P A V Stockell) and Mr D Smyth

ALSO PRESENT: Miss S J Carey and Mr G Cooke

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs R Spore (Director of Infrastructure) and Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

81. Membership

(Item A1)

The Democratic Services Officer announced that Mr N J D Chard had joined the Sub-Committee in place of Miss S J Carey, and this was duly noted.

82. Apologies and Substitutes

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr King, Mr Ridings and Mrs Stockell.

Mr Brazier was present as a substitute for Mr Ridings and Mr Marsh as a substitute for Mrs Stockell.

83. Election of Vice-Chairman

(Item A2)

Mr Marsh proposed and Mr Brazier seconded that Mr N J D Chard be elected Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

Agreed without a vote

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr Chard thereupon took the Chair.

84. Declarations of Interest by Members in Items on the Agenda

(Item A4)

There were no declarations of interest.

85. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2016

(Item A5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Vice-Chairman. There were no matters arising.

86. The process around identifying school sites as surplus to requirements
(Item A6)

Mr K Pulsford, Asset Strategy and Disposals Manager, was in attendance for this item.

1. The Cabinet Member, Mr Cooke, introduced the report and explained that it had been produced at the request of the Sub-Committee, arising from a discussion about school sites at previous meetings. Ms Spore and Mr Cooke responded to comments and questions from Members, as follows:-

- a) the request for clarification of process had arisen specifically in relation to the disposal of part of the site of the Chaucer School in Canterbury and a desire by Members that they and the public should be able to see that the correct process had been followed. Ms Spore set out the process followed when identifying the proportion of the Chaucer site which could be declared surplus and she and Mr Cooke undertook to advise questioners in more detail, before the next meeting of this Sub-Committee, about the process followed for the Chaucer School and when and how the disposal had been reported to County Council committees;
- b) Mr Cooke assured Members that all proposed disposals which were over the limits of officer delegations were reported to the Property Sub-Committee for comment before any decision was taken;
- c) the Vice-Chairman suggested that a simplified flow chart of the process, on one page of A4, be sent to Members of the Sub-Committee before the next scheduled meeting (on 21 March 2017) and that any questions arising from that be raised at the next meeting. Mr Cooke agreed that this would be done;
- d) in response to a question about the reinvestment of proceeds when an education site was disposed of, Ms Spore advised that she was required, as part of the formal processes set out by the Department for Education, to report how the proceeds of the disposal would be used. The DfE had the power to direct the County Council about how funds were used in any specific case but had never done so;
- e) the question was raised of school sites being declared surplus at a time when the school population was rising across the county, and clarification was sought about the role of Sport England as a consultee in disposing of school playing fields. Mr Cooke explained that the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, which set out a strategy for future land use, had undergone extensive consultation and took full account of differing requirements in different parts of the county. It was, of course, important to accommodate parent choice of school as far as possible, but need for additional places, when identified, was being met by expanding existing good schools rather than building new ones. Surplus sites would arise naturally from this process. Ms Spore assured Members that Sport England was fully consulted by the County Council as a statutory consultee to any planning application where the development would affect the playing field capacity of the school; and

- f) in response to a question about the extent to which the County Council could monitor playing field provision in schools which it did not control, Ms Spore explained that the Council had limited influence over such schools. Information about these was held by, and managed by, the Department for Education (DfE). Ms Spore undertook to provide a questioner with links to the DfE website dealing with this information.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the details of the process around identifying school sites as surplus to requirements be noted; and
- b) a simplified flow-chart of the process, on one page of A4, be sent to Members of the Sub-Committee and any questions arising from that be raised at the next meeting. This information should include that requested in paragraphs 1 a), c) and f) above.

87. Motion to exclude the press and public for exempt items of business

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEMS (OPEN ACCESS TO MINUTES)

88. Strategic acquisition, Maidstone - joint freehold acquisition of the Royal Mail site, with Maidstone Borough Council
(Item A7)

Mr S Dodd, Disposal, Acquisition and Development Surveyor, was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Cooke introduced the report and set out the rationale for the proposed use of the site, which was of strategic importance to both the County and Borough Councils and would benefit both, as well as the economy of Maidstone. Mr Cooke, Ms Spore and Mr Dodd responded to questions of detail from the Sub-Committee on the information set out in the published and exempt reports, including the planned short- and long-term uses of the site, the way in which the planned stages and design would be communicated to Members and shared with the public, and the planned next stages, including the appointment of a development manager early in 2017.

2. The proposed development was generally welcomed and supported by the Sub-Committee, and the officer team was congratulated on the project, which was an excellent example of joint working between the County and Borough Councils to enhance Kent's county town, provide a mixed retail and residential development and new employment.

3. RESOLVED that the joint acquisition, the short-term holding strategy and long-term objectives for the site be noted.

89. Total Facilities Management - bi-annual review

(Item A8)

Ms E Luxton, Operational Property Portfolio Manager, was in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Spore introduced the report and, with Mr Cooke and Ms Luxton, responded to questions of detail from the Sub-Committee on the information set out in the published and exempt reports about the performance of the contracts and the measures taken to ensure consistent good service across the county.
2. Members asked that future reporting include a frank appraisal of performance of contracts, with clear RAG ratings, so they could have a complete and clear overview of performance. Ms Spore also undertook to provide information about the value of the respective contracts. Mr Cooke and Ms Spore undertook to prepare a briefing for Members to update them on issues arising in managing the contracts.
3. RESOLVED that the performance of the Mid Kent, West Kent, and East Kent Total Facilities Management contractors since the second biannual review, the issues which have occurred and the actions taken to resolve these issues, and the existing County Council contract governance in place to manage and monitor the performance of the Total Facilities Management contracts, be noted.