

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE
POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 JULY 2022

Present: Councillor Garten (Chairman) and
Councillors Bryant, Fort, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Hastie,
Hinder and Naghi

Also Present: Councillor Jeffery (Visiting Member)
Councillor Burton (Leader of the Council)
Councillor Russell (Lead Member for Leisure and
Arts)

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Forecast.

19. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

20. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items. However, having been informed that Mr John Foster had left the employment of the Council, the Committee:

RESOLVED: That Mr John Foster (former Head of Regeneration and Economic Development) be thanked for his services to the Council over the years.

21. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Jeffery indicated his wish to speak on agenda item 13 (UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Local Investment Plan).

22. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

With regard to agenda item 14 (Maidstone Museums Forward Plan 2022-2027):

Councillor Harper said that he was a member of the Maidstone Museums' Foundation.

Councillor Mrs Gooch said that she was a Friend of the Maidstone Museums' Foundation.

23. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

24. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

25. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 JUNE 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

26. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

27. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from local residents.

28. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

29. FORWARD PLAN RELATING TO THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was noted that, currently, there were no items in the Forward Plan relating to this Committee's terms of reference.

30. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND, LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN

The Leader of the Council introduced a report setting out a proposed list of priority projects for inclusion in the Local Investment Plan to be submitted to the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities for approval prior to release of the funding allocated to the Council from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (£1,199,253). The Leader of the Council advised the Committee that:

- The deadline for submission of Local Investment Plans was 1 August 2022 and failure to meet the deadline might result in the loss of the funding.
- It was important to choose projects carefully to maximise the impact and benefits for residents. It was proposed that the Local Investment Plan should focus on Maidstone Town Centre with an emphasis on:
 - A. Building Pride in Place through promotion of the Town Centre and Events.
 - B. A Safe and Attractive Town Centre achieved through Greening and Lighting.

- C. A Community Arts Hub and Maker Space.
- D. Links from the Town Centre to Lockmeadow – Activity/Outdoor Gym - Callisthenics

- The funding had been profiled to be spent over the next three years.
- Meetings had been held with Helen Grant MP and Helen Whatley MP who had both indicated support for the Local Investment Plan and the ideas put forward.

Councillor Jeffery (Visiting Member) addressed the Committee identifying (a) other issues that the Council could help mitigate (the cost-of-living crisis, fuel resources, pollution, waste, climate change and biodiversity etc.) and (b) other areas that might be addressed including safety and the night-time economy with a move potentially to an evening economy, promotion of fifteen-minute neighbourhoods, greening initiatives at Lockmeadow, promoting locally owned businesses and access to the town centre from west Maidstone for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Leader of the Council wished to emphasise that delivery of the projects would run alongside bids for Safer Streets funding and Town Centre Strategy work.

The Committee supported the proposed list of priority projects for inclusion in the Local Investment Plan and identified issues that it would like the Executive to consider taking forward in future.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL:

1. That the planned projects and actions set out in Appendix 4 to the report be approved as the Local Investment Plan for Maidstone.
2. That the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance be delegated responsibility to submit the Local Investment Plan to Government by 1 August 2022.

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Executive be requested to consider taking forward the following issues in future:

Enhancement/improvement of the night-time/evening economies
Town centre access from the west
Recognition of the riverside as part of the town centre
Riverside lighting including maintenance of existing
Promotion of events
Involving local people in town centre arts and events

31. **MAIDSTONE MUSEUMS FORWARD PLAN 2022-2027**

The Lead Member for Leisure and Arts introduced a report setting out the Maidstone Museums Forward Plan 2022-2027 and seeking approval for the release of capital funds for initial work on the new archaeology gallery.

The Lead Member advised the Committee that:

- The Museums' team had worked with the Chairman and Vice-Chair of the former Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee on a Plan setting out priorities over the next five years. The Plan was based on a review of the opportunities and discussions with a wide group of people and interested parties. The team was now ready to implement the Plan.
- Under the new Executive arrangements, she was responsible for this work. Having visited the Museum and reviewed the Plan with the Museums' Director she was now happy to present it to the Policy Advisory Committee.

- The key priorities for the Museums' Service were:

To create a new archaeology gallery telling the story of Maidstone's earliest history using items from the collections in a fresh and innovative way.

To complete a review of the Carriage Museum and its operation with a short-term goal to open the Museum using volunteer staff.

To undertake a review of Museum governance and the role of external trusts.

To provide better access for all residents to the collections and decision-making.

- The next steps included:

Engaging with the Maidstone Museums' Foundation and other key stakeholders. It was understood that the Foundation supported the concept of the new archaeology gallery and was willing to help raise funds for it to complement the Council's capital investment.

Commencing work on the design of the gallery and the report recommended that she approve the release of capital funding for the initial work.

To assist Members in their discussion on the Maidstone Museums Forward Plan and the proposed creation of a new archaeology gallery, the Chairman agreed to take floor plans of the Museum and Art Gallery as urgent items.

In response to questions:

- The Lead Member confirmed that she had asked the Officers to consider the option of housing the new archaeology gallery in the former café area on the ground floor at the Museum.

- In terms of developing the Carriage Museum as a Transport Museum to include the display of historic cycles possibly on loan from a private collection, the Museums' Director said that she did think that there was potential in the long-term for the Carriage Museum to reflect more generally the science and technology of vehicles and present a more STEM-based alternative to the main Museum which was largely arts based. However, the Museums had a carefully defined collecting policy, and it would be necessary to consider how the cycles would meet the criteria of the policy.
- The Museums' Director explained that the feasibility of relocating the Tyrwhitt-Drake collection of carriages to Headcorn was considered in 2015, but the project was not progressed.
- It was noted that an options report would be submitted to Members later in the year addressing the issues of the Carriage Museum and its collections.

The Committee supported the recommendations set out in the report.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR LEISURE AND ARTS:

1. That the Maidstone Museums Forward Plan 2022-2027, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for consultation with external stakeholders.
2. That the release of funds of up to £50,000 from the Museum's capital programme for initial work on the new archaeology gallery be approved.

32. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.