

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2019

Present: Councillors Bartlett, Mrs Blackmore, Cox, Fissenden, Fort, Mrs Gooch, Harper (Chairman), Hinder and Mortimer

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from:

- Councillor Webb
- Councillor Lewins

54. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

- Councillor Mortimer for Councillor Webb
- Councillor Fissenden for Councillor Lewins

55. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

56. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

57. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

58. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

All Councillors stated that they had been lobbied on Item 12. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21-2024/25.

59. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

60. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed.

61. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

62. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

63. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development informed the Committee that the Draft Arts and Cultural Strategy was to be considered on 26 November 2019. Further information had become available, which was expected to enrich the work. Therefore, additional time was needed to incorporate the new data into the strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

64. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020/21-2024/25

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement explained that the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had not changed significantly. It had instead been adjusted to reflect recent shifts in strategic priorities, arising from the Council resolution on 10 April 2019 which recognised climate change and biodiversity emergencies. It was stated that central government funding arrangements were to be maintained for the next year. Therefore, if council tax was increased to reflect inflation and current savings targets were delivered, it was possible for Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) to continue to deliver all current services. The possibility of expanding the capital programme, providing that the cost of borrowing money was acceptable, was highlighted.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement replied that:

- MBC continued to explore commercial property investment opportunities. As all investments carried risk, capital investments were required to meet strict criteria prior to implementation.
- MBC had historically invested in the Borough, as this provided additional benefits to the local economy.
- The remaining funding for the Bridges Gyrotory System was allocated to a flood defence barrier.
- The introduction of 75% business rates retention was likely to be accompanied by additional responsibilities for local authorities.

Therefore, it was not anticipated that this would result in additional funding for the Council.

The Committee considered the merits of allocating funds to facilitate the relocation of the Maidstone Mela to Mote Park. It was stated that alternative approaches to funding the Maidstone Mela, such as external sponsorship and devolved Member budgets, were to be considered. The Committee requested that the event organiser, Cohesion Plus, be invited to present a business case on 26 November 2019.

RESOLVED: That the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25 be noted.

65. 2ND QUARTER BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT 2019/20

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement explained that the Committee was expected to remain within its overall net revenue expenditure budget for the year, while there was a £2.29m slippage in the capital budget. This slippage related to projects undertaken at Mote Park. The Data Intelligence Officer stated that five of eight Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had achieved the quarterly target.

In response to questions from the Committee, Officers said that:

- Alternative ways of funding the Maidstone Museum were being explored, as there was uncertainty regarding the funding that had been provided by the Arts Council.
- A footfall counter was in operation at Week Street between HSBC and the Metro Bank. Although it only accounted for one area, this provided a good indication of the general footfall in the high street.

The Committee commented that:

- The football attraction at Maidstone Museum had been a success.
- Consideration could be given to how data collected by third parties could be used to inform the measurement of KPIs.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 2 for 2019/20, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted.
2. The Capital position at the end of Quarter 2 be noted; and
3. The Performance position as at Quarter 2 for 2019/20, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted.

66. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.41 p.m.