

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER
2016**

**Present: Councillor Pickett (Chairman), and
Councillors Fort, Lewins, Naghi, Newton, Perry,
Pickett, Revell, Mrs Stockell and Mrs Wilson**

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hinder. Councillor Stockell advised that she would have to leave the meeting early.

41. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Perry substituted for Councillor Hinder.

42. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

43. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

44. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

45. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

46. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 JULY 2016

Minute 35 - Report of the Head of Finance and Resources – Plaques and
People Protocol

A Member moved that the sentence 'During discussion it was clarified that a protocol would only apply to plaques erected on council owned buildings' should be struck from the record as it was inaccurate. This was agreed by the committee.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed subject to the removal of the following sentence from minute 35:

'During discussion it was clarified that a protocol would only apply to plaques erected on council owned buildings.'

47. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

48. QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

49. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

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

50. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That the committee work programme be noted.

51. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - SURRENDEN FIELD, STAPLEHURST

Jason Taylor, Parks and Leisure Manager, introduced the report which detailed Staplehurst Parish Council's (PC) request for their lease on Surrenden Field to be extended on a longer term arrangement or as a freehold.

It was explained that Staplehurst PC intended to invest in the field, but to do so they required a secure, long term lease. The current lease was for 25 years. Staplehurst PC were entitled to the lease on the same terms, but the officer recommendation was that a lease for 125 years be granted.

A path linking the Field to the A229 named Nicholson Walk was also owned by Maidstone BC and discussions were ongoing with Staplehurst PC regarding the inclusion of this pathway within the lease.

The following points were raised during discussion:

- Staplehurst PC intended to invest in capital improvements on the field such as drainage. The Field was the site of several community events and considered central to the village. Nicholson Walk was a key access point to the Field and a well-used thoroughfare. Staplehurst PC would be willing to take on the maintenance of Nicholson Walk if the freehold for the Field was transferred to them.

- The use of the term 'asset' to describe the Field was queried, as it suggested the potential to change the use of the Field. It was explained that this term was used loosely to describe a part of the Council's estate, and restrictive covenants in place on the Field prevented change of use.

Members requested further information from Mid Kent Legal Services on the security provided by the covenants in place on the Field in order to be able to make a decision on the issue.

It was moved, seconded and:

RESOLVED: That the item be deferred until the 4 October 2016 meeting of the committee, and that the report to that committee include the additional information requested by Members.

For – 9 Against – 0 Abstain – 0

52. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - STRATEGIC PLAN PERFORMANCE UPDATE QUARTER ONE FOR HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Mark Green, Director of Finance and Business Improvement, introduced the report outlining the results of the four performance indicators aligned with the Committee's service areas.

The Committee was informed that two performance indicators had missed their target, those being satisfaction at the Maidstone Leisure Centre, and footfall at the Museum and Visitor Centre.

In response to a question it was explained that several factors contributed to the missed targets in quarter one:

- The Maidstone Leisure Centre had been without a centre manager during quarter one due to the promotion of the previous manager.
- Easter fell within the month of March, which meant that visitors to the Museum and Visitor centre during that busy time were reported on as part of quarter four of the previous municipal year. It was also noted that the closure of the Museum on Mondays correlated with the reduction in footfall.

Dawn Hudd, Head of Commercial and Economic Development advised that an Urban Panel visit to Maidstone would take place early in 2017. This would take the form of a panel of professionals appointed by Historic England, who would visit and review the Borough's heritage assets in order to provide recommendations.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

53. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - FIRST QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING 2016/17

Mark Green, Director of Finance and Business Improvement, introduced the report detailing the financial performance of the services within the committee's remit.

The performance for all services taken overall was under budget, but some individual service areas were over budget. It was expected that the budget would be balanced overall at year end.

With regard to Mote Park it was clarified that:

- Parking at Mote Park was not reported as part of the figures to committee, even though the committee had an interest in its financial performance. This was because the budget fell within parking services, whose financial performance was reported to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee.
- A review of performance at Mote Park café had been undertaken. Action was being taken to address the issues identified, which included a revision of the menu and implementation of portion control, and the employment of a catering and development manager to oversee MBC catering outlets.

Members queried the exclusion from the report of figures for the Cobtree Manor Park and Café. It was explained that responsibility for this budget sat with the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee. The Chairman requested that an explanatory note on the need for separate committees to consider the financial performance of charitable trusts be circulated to Members outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

54. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - MOTE PARK CAR PARK CHARGING REVIEW

The Head of Commercial and Economic Development presented the report on income generation at the Mote Park car park, and put forward reasons for the projected shortfall in income compared to the original targets set in February 2016.

It was explained that:

- Charging for parking in Mote Park was one part of a package of measures designed to generate income and reduce the financial impact of the parks service on the Council's budget.
- In February 2016, when the decision to implement charges was made, the target income was estimated at £171,400. This estimate was based upon research that anticipated 385,000 cars using the car park in one year.

- Income had been lower than expected. Officers recognised that the income target should have been lower for the first year of operation in order to monitor performance, and this understanding would be taken forward and applied to new commercial projects. Reasons for the projected shortfall included:
 - The income target required each parking space to be filled twice in one day;
 - The number of paying customers varied depending on the season;
 - The original income calculations did not include free parking before 10 a.m., and subsequently this was not factored into the financial projections.

The Parking Services Manager informed the committee that:

- There had previously been an issue with the Car Park being used by commuters. Prior to the implementation of charges the gates to the Park were locked until 9 a.m. in an effort to tackle the issue.
- Advanced ticket purchasing, which would allow someone to buy a ticket during the free period to cover the paid period, would mean that someone could park between 10.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. for £1 even if they originally parked at 7.00 a.m. This would reduce parking availability throughout the day for other visitors.

During discussion Members raised the following points:

- Altering or removing free parking before 10.00 a.m. would affect early morning park users such as dog walkers and joggers.
- An increase in the charge for parking would be simple to implement and would raise income. Work should be undertaken to ascertain the most viable charge that could be implemented.
- Use of the car park was expected to increase with the opening of the Adventure Zone. Further analysis on the relationship between the Adventure Zone and the Car Park was required.
- Members stated that it had been understood when the decision was made that the income generated would be put back into Mote Park, however it was noted that a contribution had also been budgeted to be made to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Head of Commercial and Economic Development explained that the contribution prevented the committee from having to make cuts to the Parks budget.

It was moved, seconded and:

RESOLVED: That the report be deferred to the meeting of the committee taking place on 29 November 2016 to address the points raised, and to be considered alongside a report on the Adventure Zone.

For – 7 Against - 0 Abstain - 0

55. DURATION OF MEETING

6.32 p.m. to 8.26 p.m.