

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2020**

**Present:** Councillors Bartlett, Cox, Fort, Mrs Gooch, Harper (Chairman), Hinder, Lewins, Round and Webb

152. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

153. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

154. ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMAN

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Round be elected as Vice-Chairman.

155. URGENT ITEMS

The meeting was adjourned from 6.40 p.m. to 7.50 p.m. to allow an all Member Briefing to take place on the Hazlitt Theatre and Museum.

156. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

157. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

158. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

159. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

160. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed at a later date.

161. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

162. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

163. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

164. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee were informed that the 17 November 2020 meeting date had been moved forward to 12 November 2020, to allow three reports on the Hazlitt Theatre, Museum and Economic Status of the Nation to be presented to the Committee.

The Draft Economic Development Strategy (EDS) would be presented to the Committee in December, with the full EDS to be presented in March 2021.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

165. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

166. LOCKMEADOW MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

The Leisure Property Manager introduced the report that outlined the progress made since the Council acquired Lockmeadow. A marketing consultant and the Communications team had improved the venue's marketing which had resulted in an increase in followers and social media posts. A shop local themed campaign had resulted in 50 enquiries and 20 new stallholders.

Improvement works had been undertaken that included modernisation of the fascia, removal of the cattle grid structure, opening of the town square for future events to be held and the opening of the Odeon LUXE. A food hall was proposed with the designs shown in Appendix 1 to the report and a feasibility study would be conducted moving forward. Discussions with the Council's planners were underway, with a working group to be formed to improve the links between Lockmeadow and the Town Centre, including signage and the pedestrian journey. Future investment into the venue would include a children's play area and a riverside café.

Several Members expressed a preference for a larger food hall to attract more customers and greater advertisement of the Town Square. It was noted that the Council had been approached by Gravity, to discuss the

introduction of a sports bar to provide games such as mini golf and table tennis.

In response to questions, eight of the twenty stallholders that had attended the market from the communications campaign had continued attendance, with the difficulty in securing long-term stallholders noted. The car park's security was considered and the installation of bollards had been delayed whilst a review of the payment systems in place was ongoing. There had been a few incidents of anti-social parking which were dealt with efficiently. It was noted that a cycle hub was being considered with the Council's planners due to the increase in cycling as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The contents of the report be noted; and
2. The Committee endorse the feasibility work on the Food Hall concept and on improving links with the Town Centre.

167. MAIDSTONE BUS STATION PROJECT

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager introduced the report that provided the results from the public consultation that occurred between 21 July 2020 to 17 September 2020. A majority of the 404 responses that were received came from the online survey, with the Economic Development Team having organised a static display in the Mall for six days, which included a Saturday. Just under two thirds of respondents stated that the improvements proposed were either 'very good' or 'good'. Of the 222 comments received within the surveys, only 31 were classed as negative.

Particular attention was drawn to the priorities of the respondents by age group, whereby the top priority for all was the improved lighting. The refurbished floors, bus signage and timetabling, seating and eastern-side canopy refurbishment all featured within the top three across the age groups. Further, only 16.5% of respondents stated that they would not be more likely to use the Bus Station from the proposed improvements. The Arts and Culture Officer would be submitting a funding bid to support the public art installation proposed.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager confirmed that the designs previously shown at the July 2020 meeting had been further developed and that the concerns expressed about the wooden roof had been addressed.

If agreed, the valuation period for tender would take place between 26 November 2020 until 10 December 2020, with the contract to be awarded from 17 December 2020 to January 2021. The Bus Station would be closed for 12 of the 16 weeks of refurbishment, with the Bus Stops relocated to King Street. To facilitate this, the bollards within the cycle lane on King Street would be temporarily removed and replaced by the

Council upon completion of the Bus Station works. The replacement was not deemed a significant expenditure and further discussion between the Council, Kent County Council (KCC) and Arriva would take place on 12 November 2020.

In response to questions, it was re-confirmed that the lighting in the Bus Station was not sufficient to accommodate plant life and that Arriva would be able to install live timetabling boards at a later date. Further confirmation on the effect of the Bus Station relocation on the taxi rank would be provided after the Council's meeting with KCC and Arriva.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The results of the public consultation survey as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
2. The designs of the bus station as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved, and that these go out to tender for contractors to carry out the works;
3. The Director of Finance and Business Improvement is granted delegated authority to appoint and enter into a building contract with the winning contractor; and
4. If the tendered offers received are over budget, a report be presented to the Committee prior to the contract being awarded.

168. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 9.p.m.

Note: The meeting was adjourned between 6.40 p.m. – 7.50 p.m.