

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2021

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

Also Present: Councillors McKay, Naghi, Perry and M Rose

222. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

223. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

224. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

225. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillors McKay, Naghi, Perry and M Rose were present as Visiting Members, and registered to speak on Item 15 – Further development of the Lockmeadow Leisure Complex.

226. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

227. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors Gooch, Harper and Round had been lobbied on Item 15 – Further development of the Lockmeadow Leisure Complex.

228. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

229. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed at a later date.

230. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

231. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There was one question from a member of the public.

The Democratic Services Officer read out the question on behalf of Ms Maggie Lack.

'We would like to ask the Committee to give serious consideration to how to deal with the decimation of the town centre following the demise of so many high street brands.

Welcoming residents back to our town centre will be crucial in re-establishing a sense of community and pride in our town. There is a fantastic opportunity to reshape our urban environment for the better and contribute to MBC achieving its goal of net zero carbon emissions.

We believe that MBC should support the establishment under one roof (possibly the House of Frazer site), of uses such as –

- *Repair Café*
- *Refill Stations*
- *Local craft stalls*
- *Pre - loved clothes*
- *Farmers market goods*
- *Classes and workshops of various sorts, with an emphasis on arts and culture*
- *Youth hang-out and support hub, with art, music and performance encouraged*

As establishments that have community benefit at their heart, they should be given an initial free period to become established, followed by preferential business rates.

Will you agree to support and encourage such innovative changes of use, which could revitalise vacant commercial premises and help to regenerate our town centre?'

The Chairman responded to the question.

The full responses were recorded on the webcast and made available to view on the Maidstone Borough Council website.

To access the recording, please use the link below:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0UjOALsLyk>

232. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

233. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development requested that a report be added regarding the Additional Restrictions Grant to raise awareness of the policy and the progress made. A request was also made for the Capital Expenditure Proposals - Maidstone Museum to be delayed until 20 April 2021 to allow for further consultation with stakeholders.

An item to inform the Committee about the proposed use of arts and cultural activities in encouraging residents back to the town centre would be added to the work programme.

It was requested that a briefing on the progress of Making Maidstone More Active be arranged, and all Council Members invited.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

234. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

235. 3RD QUARTER FINANCIAL UPDATE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT 2020/21

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced the Financial Update report and explained that the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances was £7.568 million. Services reporting to the committee had an overspend with a notable negative variance forecast for the Maidstone Leisure Centre, as a result of both the missed income usually provided and the contractor's expectation for the Council to underwrite their costs. The main activity within the Capital budget was the Mote Park lake dam works, which had been successfully completed.

The Senior Business Analyst introduced the Performance Monitoring update of the report and explained that four of the five Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had missed their target due to the Covid-19 restrictions imposed. It was noted that, as there had been a lockdown during quarter four, it was expected that further targets would also be missed.

It was highlighted however that the fifth KPI, number of visits per month to Visit-Maidstone.com, had surpassed its target, having achieved almost double the target number.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 3 for 2020/21, including the actions that had been taken or proposed to improve

the position, where significant variances had been identified, be noted;

2. The Capital position at the end of Quarter 3 be noted; and
3. The Performance position as at Quarter 3 for 2020/21, including the actions that had been taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted.

236. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCKMEADOW LEISURE COMPLEX

The Leisure Property Manager introduced the report, and explained that Phase I of the improvement works to the Lockmeadow leisure complex had been completed in December 2020. The Phase II developments had been presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 10 February 2021 and consisted of three parts: create a food hall; expand the existing outside terrace; and install a children's play area.

The Committee were informed that Kent County Council, as highways Authority, had received funding for an investigation into the traffic flows and to examine the possibility of a one-way system, on the surrounding roads. A timetable for the works would be shared with the Committee, when available.

In response to questions, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement explained that the Phase II proposals had previously been endorsed by the Committee during its October 2020 meeting, with the plans having been presented to the Policy and Resources Committee meeting for budget approval. The Committee were then presented with the developments again for their comments.

Concerns were raised regarding the amount of traffic in the local area with particular reference to Hart Street, and the road improvements necessary to the area. The speed at which the Section 106 (S106) monies had been used by the Highways Authority to carry out road improvements was questioned. It was felt that the use of S106 monies should be further considered by the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee.

The Leisure Property Manager confirmed that all applicants currently being considered for the food hall were local and provided a variety of food options. A further three companies had contacted the Council, in response to an article promoting the food hall in the local press. It was proposed that the Council would choose any new tenants to the complex, to then be managed by the existing management agent.

It was explained that the results of a consultation regarding improvements to the pedestrian journey from the town centre to Archbishops Palace and the Lockmeadow complex were expected imminently and would be fed back to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That

1. The proposals for the improvement works be noted alongside the comments provided;
2. Officers request that Kent County Council, as highways authority, prioritise the proposed works at Hart Street and request that the item be considered during the next meeting of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board;
3. Additional improvements to the riverside landscape between the Lockmeadow complex and Maidstone Bridge and the underpass, be considered; and
4. The Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee be requested to review the slowness and reluctance in dealing with the Section 106 monies associated with McDonalds planning approval.

237. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.59 p.m.