

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE  
POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 MARCH 2023**

**Present:**

<b>Committee Members:</b>	<b>Councillor Garten (Chairman) and Councillors Forecast, Fort, Harper, Hastie, Hinder, Naghi and Young</b>
<b>Lead Members:</b>	<b>Councillor Russell (Lead Member for Leisure and Arts)</b>

112. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Bryant and Mrs Gooch.

113. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Young was substituting for Councillor Bryant.

114. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

115. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members although Councillor Cleator attended the meeting as an observer.

116. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

With regard to agenda item 13 (Maidstone Museum Archaeology Gallery Update), Councillor Harper said that he was a Trustee of the Maidstone Museums' Foundation. He would speak but not vote when the item was discussed.

117. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

118. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

119. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2023

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

120. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

121. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from local residents.

122. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Forward Plan relating to the Committee's terms of reference be noted.

124. MAIDSTONE MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGY GALLERY UPDATE

Prior to the introduction of a report by Councillor Russell, the Lead Member for Leisure and Arts, providing an update on progress towards the creation of a new Archaeology Gallery at Maidstone Museum, Mrs Fran Wilson, the Vice-Chair of the Maidstone Museums' Foundation (the Foundation), addressed the meeting.

Mrs Wilson said that the Trustees of the Foundation hoped that the Committee would agree that the new Gallery was a very exciting project and would prove to be an asset for the Museum and contribute in a significant way to the regeneration of the Town Centre. The Trustees also wanted her to clarify that the Foundation had responsibilities to its donors in relation to the funds it had raised. For example, the Foundation had to ensure that donors' conditions were met, and that the funding was used for the purposes specified in the grant applications to them.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Mrs Wilson and the Foundation for the funds raised.

The Lead Member for Leisure and Arts advised the Committee that:

- A Project Board had been established to oversee the project. Members of the Board were tracking progress of the project with monthly meetings and a work schedule against which individual Officers could report progress or advise of concerns. So far, no impediments to scheduled progress had been encountered. However, the project timescale was very tight.
- The appointment of an exhibition design company was underway with the assistance of the Council's Procurement Team. An invitation to tender had been issued and interviews with the four top scoring tenderers would take place the following week.
- Following the success of the Maidstone Museums' Foundation in raising £100,000 to match an offer from the William and Edith Oldham Charitable Trust, the Foundation had now agreed to attempt to raise an additional £30,000 for the purchase and installation of a platform lift as it had become

clear that the location of the Gallery at the bottom of a short flight of steps was likely to be a barrier to visitors with mobility issues.

The Museums' Director took the opportunity to update Members on the storyline for the Gallery, the artefacts to be used and the way they would be displayed and interpreted. It was noted that there would be a move towards the use of scientific research to support and illustrate the narrative.

In response to questions, the Lead Member for Leisure and Arts advised the Committee that press releases would be issued at the appropriate time to publicise the new Gallery.

Members agreed that the new Gallery was an exciting project and wished to thank all involved for the progress to date. Members particularly wished to thank the Maidstone Museums' Foundation for its success in raising funds for the project and the William and Edith Oldham Charitable Trust and the Kent Archaeology Society for their offers of funding. It was noted that the Maidstone Museums' Foundation had already thanked all those who had responded to its fundraising campaign.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Maidstone Museums' Foundation be thanked for its success to date in raising funds towards the cost of creating a new Archaeology Gallery at Maidstone Museum.
3. That the William and Edith Oldham Charitable Trust and the Kent Archaeological Society be thanked for their generous offers of funding towards the cost of the project.

Note: Councillor Hastie entered the meeting during consideration of this item. She said that she had no disclosures of interest or of lobbying.

125. 2023/24 EVENTS PLAN

The Lead Member for Leisure and Arts introduced a report setting out details of the programme of events planned for the 2023/24 financial year. It was noted that the report covered events being planned or supported by the Council and all known events being planned in the Borough, including those being delivered by third parties/commercial businesses. At this early stage, events were still being developed so further activities were likely to be added to the programme.

In response to questions, the Museums' Director confirmed that the Carriage Museum would be open from 11.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. every Saturday from 15 April 2023 until the end of September 2023, including the day of the River Festival.

Members drew attention to other events taking place over the next few months and requested that they be added to the programme. They emphasised the need to proactively promote events in order to create interest in the area, bring benefits for the local economy and enhance social and cultural well-being. It was suggested that Members should be requested to promote the events programme

to residents within their wards and encourage local communities to feed activities into the events programme.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the points raised in the discussion, the report be noted.

126. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.