

## **Maidstone Borough Council**

### **Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 28 April 2009**

#### **Interview with Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture**

**Report of:** Overview and Scrutiny Officer

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 At the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 June 2008, Members interviewed the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture with regard to his priorities for the Municipal Year 2008/09. Members also considered a written statement by the Cabinet Member at this meeting, which is attached at Appendix A to this report.

1.2 The relevant extract from the minutes of the 24 June meeting is below:

"The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture, Councillor Brian Moss to the Committee and invited him to give a brief presentation on his priorities for the year ahead.

##### Mote Park

Councillor Moss informed the Committee that the Consultant's paper had been published and he felt that it was a good compromise between keeping the park's character and facility improvement. Consultation with the public on the lottery bid improvements was taking place in the coming weeks. Much media interest had been achieved in response to the recommendation that cattle could graze the park. However he noted that the grass was too coarse for sheep and there would be problems with keeping dogs away from cows and children from cow pats. In response to a question Councillor Moss advised the Committee that the erection of sculptures in Mote Park was restricted by English Heritage.

##### Leisure Centre

The Committee was informed that the new contract for the Leisure Centre management would incorporate the management of catering. The contract would span at least 15 years with the hope that this would ensure considerable investment.

##### Direct Labour

The maintenance of the Council's parks, gardens and open spaces was now fulfilled by the Council's own direct labour force in order that the work force could be used effectively to complete the tasks required. A Member highlighted the benefits of the Millennium Greens which were run by Trustees and explained that one area of concern was the grass cutting and it was suggested that through the direct labour system, the Council could offer them at least one cut a year.

A Member urged that the approaches to the town not be overlooked. Councillor Moss advised Members that he was aware of this as an issue and explained that verges were owned either by the Council, Kent County Council or Parish Councils however he had approached officers regarding joined-up thinking to address the appearance of approaches.

#### Sailing Club

A Member noted the dissolution of the sailing club and queried whether there were plans to re-allocate the money that had been earmarked for the sailing club. Councillor Moss related to the Committee the Council's attempts to assist the Sailing Club and that he was disappointed that it had come to an end. He advised the Committee that his immediate reaction would be to re-distribute the money to the arts department as grants were drying up.

#### Concert Hall

In response to a question, Councillor Moss advised the Committee that a new concert hall was desirable and noted that it would have an effect on the Maidstone Leisure Centre contract as they currently facilitated concerts in the leisure centre. However, the avoidance of large revenue costs would have to be achieved to make the concert hall possible.

#### Play Areas

Councillor Moss advised the Committee that he had not looked at the plans for play areas but was aware that they were coming to the end of investment and would let the Committee know the future plans in due course.

The Committee thanked Councillor Moss for his comments to the Committee".

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are recommended to consider the statement made by the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture at the beginning of the year and ask questions with regard to progress that has been made on those issues highlighted as priorities.