

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Economic and Commercial Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28 JANUARY 2014

Present: Councillor Paterson (Vice Chairman in the Chair),
and
Councillors Ash, Cox, Cuming, Hogg, Naghi and Paterson

Also Present: None

59. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEBCAST

RESOLVED: That all items should be webcast

60. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies were received from Councillors Barned and Newton. Councillor Hogg sent apologies for lateness.

61. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members.

62. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

There were no visiting members.

63. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures.

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

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

65. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26TH NOVEMBER 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the 26th November 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed.

66. ECONOMIC & COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN MAIDSTONE

Dawn Hudd, Head of Economic and Commercial Development, was invited to speak on item 8:- Economic and Commercial Development in Maidstone.

Dawn Hudd informed the Committee that she was the newly appointed Head of Economic and Commercial Development and had been in post for two months. Dawn Hudd previously worked in a similar role at Canterbury City Council and was there for eight years.

Dawn Hudd's first impressions of Maidstone was that she was very impressed with the assets that Maidstone possessed, including:

- Its parks and open spaces;
- The Museum- including the recent renovation and extension;
- Investment in the public realm in the High Street; and
- Its strong retail offer.

Dawn Hudd informed the Committee that her initial priorities were:

- Filling vacant posts;
- 'Sweating the assets' in order to repay the investments that have already been made; and
- Prioritising projects to balance 'quick wins' with more medium and long term projects and investments.

Dawn Hudd had already filled two vacant posts. These were:

- Maidstone Cultural Services Manager- who would be responsible for managing the museum, the contract for the theatre and will be responsible for cultural events in the borough; and
- Commercial Projects Manager- responsible for driving the commercial culture across the organisation and increasing opportunities for income generation.

Members requested that a structure chart be circulated to them after the meeting so they could better understand the structure of Dawn Hudd's department.

The Committee asked Dawn Hudd how she could 'sell' any spend in her area to residents, as many of the services provided were non-statutory.

Dawn Hudd responded that she would demonstrate the economic impact and return on investment (both social and economic) for any projects. It was particularly important to highlight the importance of cultural services to contributing to good quality of life in the borough; which brings inward investment and spend through the visitor economy.

The Committee was interested to hear about the cultural events evaluation toolkit that Dawn Hudd was proposing to use to measure the impact of events in the Maidstone area. This was directly related to the Committee's review of the value of events in Maidstone.

Dawn Hudd explained that the toolkit being proposed was a standard approach used by many different local authorities. The toolkit had the following advantages:

- It is free;
- It is used across the UK; and
- It is used by funders and policymakers.

The toolkit asks a standard set of questions, for which robust data needs to be gathered over the period of the event. The toolkit then works out the economic impact and social return on investment for the event.

Members asked whether there was potential in the future for the organisation running the toolkit to start charging the Council for using the toolkit. Dawn Hudd responded that she didn't think this would happen, but if it did it would be easy to replicate the toolkit ourselves.

Members wanted to know if it was possible to enter past events into the toolkit to see the social return on investment and economic impact of these events. Dawn Hudd informed the committee that this would not be possible as the correct data had not been gathered for these events. Dawn Hudd highlighted that there were several case studies contained on the website that demonstrate how the toolkit works.

Councillor Hogg arrived at 19:25.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) The committee note the report and verbal update given by Dawn Hudd;
- b) The organisational structure of Dawn Hudd's department be circulated to members of the committee;
- c) The web address and case studies contained in the events toolkit be circulated to members; and
- d) That an update be given to the committee once the Maidstone Cultural Services Manager had been in post for three months.

67. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered the future work programme.

The committee noted that a press release had been sent out with a call for evidence from the public on their experiences of events in the town. The press release resulted in coverage in the Kent Messenger. The deadline for submissions is the 28th February.

The committee suggested that it may be beneficial to arrange a visit to the museum to inspect the collections that are currently in storage. This should take place before the 30th May 2014, which is when the Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development is due to make a decision on the collection development policy.

The committee considered the next meeting, when the following witnesses would be invited as part of the on-going review of events:

- The events manager at Medway Council; and
- The organisers of 'The Social' festival that was held on Mote Park in September 2013.

The committee clarified that the interview with the events manager at Medway Council should be focused around the following themes:

- What support Medway Council gives to those organising events in their area; and
- How they organise policing for the events as it is so different to how it is carried out in Maidstone.

The Committee clarified that the interview with the organiser of 'The Social' should focus on the following themes:

- Their evaluation of the support offered by Maidstone Borough Council when organising and running their event;
- The value of the event to the borough;
- Who benefitted from the event; and
- Who valued the event (ie was it valued by different communities, or valued by those inside or outside of the borough).

RESOLVED: That

- a) A visit be arranged for the Committee to the museum for the purpose of inspecting the collections prior to the Cabinet Member decision on collections on the 31st May 2014.

68. DURATION OF MEETING

6:32pm to 8:20pm