

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE LEAD MEMBER FOR LEISURE AND ARTS

Decision Made: 19 July 2022

Maidstone Museums Forward Plan 2022-2027

Issue for Decision

To approve the Maidstone Museums Forward Plan 2022-2027, attached as Appendix 1 to the report of the Museums' Director, for consultation with external stakeholders.

To approve the release of funds of up to £50,000 from the Museum's capital programme for initial work on the new archaeology gallery.

Decision Made

1. That the Maidstone Museums Forward Plan 2022-2027, attached as Appendix 1 to the report of the Museums' Director, be approved for consultation with external stakeholders.
2. That the release of funds of up to £50,000 from the Museum's capital programme for initial work on the new archaeology gallery be approved.

Reasons for Decision

The Business Plan for 2022-2027, attached as Appendix 1 to the report of the Museums' Director, sets out the vision and the strategic aims for Maidstone Borough Council's Museum Service over the next five years and explains how the Museums contribute to the Council's overall priorities.

This Five Year Plan reflects the overall outcomes of the Museums' 20 Year Plan:

- The delivery of a high quality service
- Creating a sustainable and resilient organisation
- Caring for and creating access to our collections for present and future generations
- Inspires, educates and challenges visitors and users
- Ensuring that the Museum is accessible to all and has the power to transform lives through the use of its collections
- Developing and encouraging a forward-thinking and innovative workforce
- Working to nationally recognised standards.

The Plan was developed through a review of existing practice, a review of the original Transformation plans after the failure to secure £4m from

Lottery Heritage Fund, staff discussion and workshops both prior to closure for the Covid lockdowns and after. Once a draft Plan was outlined, the Museum management team consulted with the elected Members with the leading responsibility for the area at the time, being the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee, to discuss their ambitions for heritage in the borough and how these might be met. That discussion highlighted the following priorities:

1. To address the quality of displays and storytelling through, initially, the redisplay of the Museum and Kent Archaeological Society's archaeological collections to tell the story of Maidstone's earliest history with themes that affected the shaping of the borough such as migration, industry and agriculture.
2. To complete a review of the Carriage Museum and its operation with a short term goal to open the Museum using volunteer staff.
3. To review the governance of the Museums and the role of external trusts in the operation of the Museum and to streamline or strengthen those relationships where appropriate.
4. To provide better access for all residents to collections and decision-making through the audit and cataloguing of collections, upgrades to the Museums' collections software including online versions, new exhibitions and one-off displays as well as the establishment of user panels working on, initially, the new archaeology gallery.

Key milestones in the successful completion of these objectives and the 5 Year Plan are highlighted below:

DEADLINE	ACTIVITY
01-Jul-22	Launch of volunteer recruitment campaign
31-Jul-22	Complete review of Museum marketing by external media adviser to increase footfall and spend
30-Jul-22	Commence volunteer-led regular openings of the Carriage Museum with the first to coincide with Maidstone River Festival
July-Sept 2022	Complete specialist archaeological object research for new gallery to identify rare and important items in the Museums' collection
September 2022	Report to PAC and Executive Member on options for the future of the Carriage Museum. Action Plan will follow on from decision.
30-Sep-22	Implementation of recommendations from Museum marketing review

30-Sep-22	Complete review of Museum governance and relationship with Trusts
15-Dec 2022	Procurement, appointment and contract agreement for Exhibition Design Specialists completed
30-Nov-22	Production of Community Engagement Plan to ensure the involvement of residents in future plans and developments completed
November 2022 - August 2023	Scientific analysis of human remains and artefacts for new gallery to identify where people and objects came from to Kent and how the environment affected them
01-Dec-22	Action plan for Community Engagement Plan implementation begun
01-Jan-23	Application made for continuation of funding from Arts Council England/DCMS for Learning Service
01-Apr-23	New visitor feedback surveys introduced to direct future service improvements
Jan-June 23	Iterative design process including initial concepts through to final design of gallery
June to November 2023	Specification, procurement of AV and interactive designers and content production for new Archaeology Gallery
23-Dec-23	Refurbishment of area for new Archaeology Gallery completed while the Museum is closed to the public
07-Jan-24	Start of fit out and install of Archaeology Gallery
01-May-24	Launch of new Archaeology Gallery
30-Nov-24	Replacement of Museum's cataloguing software Adlib including online version for public browsing

Underpinning all this work is the continuing need for the Museum to find a secure financial footing and sustainable ways of working as well as the day-to-day delivery of a high quality service.

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

At its meeting held on 5 July 2022, the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee agreed:

1. That the Maidstone Museums Forward Plan 2022-2027, attached as Appendix 1 to the report of the Museums' Director, be approved for consultation with external stakeholders.

2. That the release of funds up to £50,000 from the Museum's capital programme for initial work on the new archaeology gallery be approved.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

1. Do not proceed with the Five Year Plan.
2. Agree modifications to the Five Year Plan.

However, proceeding with the Five Year Plan as outlined in this Record of Decision (a) will ensure that the actions set out start to be implemented at the earliest possible date and (b) is consistent with the Council's overall strategic objective of making Maidstone a thriving place.

Background Papers

None

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including the possible alternative options rejected) set out.

Signed: _____

(Lead Member for Leisure and Arts – Councillor Claudine Russell)

Full details of the report for the decision can be found online at:

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Lead Member for Leisure and Arts, 19/07/2022 12:30 \(maidstone.gov.uk\)](#)

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance by: **5.00 p.m. Tuesday 26 July 2022**