

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 6 December 2022
Time: 6.30 p.m.
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Garten (Chairman), Hastie (Vice-Chairman), Bryant, Forecast, Fort, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Hinder and Naghi

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

AGENDA

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Issued on 28 November 2022

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this meeting, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 2 December 2022). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 2 December 2022). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk.

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2022

Present:

Committee Members:	Councillor Garten (Chairman) and Councillors Brindle, English, Fort, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Hastie, Hinder and S Webb
Lead Members:	Councillors Burton (Leader of the Council) and Russell (Lead Member for Leisure and Arts)

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Bryant, Forecast and Naghi.

49. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

Councillor Brindle for Councillor Bryant
Councillor English for Naghi
Councillor S Webb for Councillor Forecast

50. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

51. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

52. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

53. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillor English stated that he had been lobbied on agenda items 14 (Carriage Museum Options) and 15 (Framework for Research into Demand for Extending Opening Hours at Maidstone Museum).

54. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

55. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 OCTOBER 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

56. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

57. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from local residents.

58. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members.

59. 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.

60. RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND INVESTMENT PLAN

Councillor Burton, the Leader of the Council, introduced a report setting out a plan for spending the Rural England Prosperity Fund money which had been allocated to the Council as an addendum to the UK Shared Prosperity funding received earlier this year. The Leader of the Council explained that:

- The Council's fund allocation was £539,728 to be spent on capital projects over two financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. The deadline for the submission of the plan for spending the allocation to Government was 30 November 2022.
- The proposed approach was to invite partners across the rural areas (Parish Councils and community groups etc.) to apply for grants to improve community facilities such as village halls and community assets with a view to creating a greener and more sustainable community infrastructure. This could involve the installation of battery energy storage systems, solar PV systems, EV charging points and air source heat pumps. This would have a direct benefit in reducing energy bills and showcase new technologies.
- It was also proposed to place a cap of £50,000 on the value of applications, although schemes costing above or below this figure would be considered on their merits.
- The aim was to support projects that would deliver best value for money, maximum impact, greening and a positive impact on local communities.
- The views of the Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee would be sought on the proposals.

In response to questions, the Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance advised the Committee that it was understood that the funding would be profiled

over two years with a smaller amount in the first year. The scoring matrix attached to the report would be developed further and the decision-making process finalised before launching the scheme. The Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager and the Biodiversity and Climate Engagement Officer would be able to provide advice and support to applicants to help maximise the potential of their projects.

Members were supportive of the proposals. They considered that there should be flexibility regarding scheme size and there should be an inclusive approach. Applications should be asset based for a community and assessed on their merits. A business directory of green solution providers should be developed to give advice and support to applicants.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL:

1. That the Intervention for the Rural England Prosperity Fund, as set out in the report, be approved, and submitted to the Government by the Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance.
2. That there should be a guideline figure of £50,000 on the value of applications, but schemes which are significantly above or below this figure be considered on their merits.
3. That a business directory of green solution providers be developed to give advice and support to applicants.

Note: Councillor Hastie entered the meeting during consideration of this item (6.45 p.m.). She said that she had no disclosures of interest or of lobbying

61. **CARRIAGE MUSEUM OPTIONS**

Councillor Russell, the Lead Member for Leisure and Arts, introduced a report setting out options for the future of the Carriage Museum and recommending an approach which offered the opportunity for organic growth in opening hours and the number of visitors. The Lead Member explained that:

- The Carriage Museum had been closed during the pandemic, but it had opened on three Saturdays so far in 2022, on each occasion attracting over 100 visitors with positive feedback. The Museum had been opened in conjunction with other events taking place in the town such as the River Festival.
- The former Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee agreed at its meeting held on 19 April 2022 that the Member of the Executive with responsibility for the Carriage Museum under the new governance arrangements be asked to review the opening hours of the Museum to ensure that it is accessible to the public. Subsequently, this Committee, at its meeting held on 5 July 2022, approved the Maidstone Museums' Forward Plan which included as a priority a review of the Carriage Museum and its operation with a short-term goal to open the Museum using volunteer staff. The purpose of the report was to respond to these commitments.
- Four options had been identified as follows:

- Option 1 – Do nothing
- Option 2 – Close the Museum and Disperse the Collection
- Option 3 – Revise the Operational Model for the Museum
- Option 4 – A New Carriage Museum for Maidstone

- Option 3 was the preferred option as it provided a sustainable and realistic model for the future of the Carriage Museum. Volunteers would be used to open the Museum more regularly, starting with regular Saturday opening in the summer. This would contribute to the wider cultural offer of the Borough. Making space and improving the quality of the displays would create a more exciting and visitor-friendly offer. This option would require only a small spend, using some existing resources.

Members considered that Option 3 represented a realistic solution at the present time and indicated that they would like all elements of that option to be addressed in a timely manner. The Museums' Director confirmed that the first step would be to have the Museum open more often with the assistance of volunteers.

In response to questions, the Lead Member indicated that she was willing to look at the potential in the longer term to develop the Carriage Museum as a Transport Museum to reflect more generally the science and technology of vehicles and present a more STEM-based alternative to the main Museum. The Leader of the Council sounded a note of caution that, in the present economic climate, the priority was to focus on the delivery of objectives in relation to Maidstone Museum.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR LEISURE AND

ARTS: That all elements of Option 3 for the future of the Carriage Museum, as set out in the report, be adopted.

62. **FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH INTO DEMAND FOR EXTENDED OPENING HOURS AT MAIDSTONE MUSEUM**

Councillor Russell, the Lead Member for Leisure and Arts, introduced a report setting out how it was proposed to respond to the motion moved at the meeting of the Council on 28 September 2022 requesting that the Museum should open for an extra hour on one evening a week to allow access for those secondary school pupils unable to get there before it closes at 4.00 p.m.

Councillor Russell explained that there was no current evidence of what pupils would want, use, or expect from the Museum. It was therefore proposed to carry out a short survey of people between the ages of 11 and 18 in education to inform decisions going forward. It was noted that:

- The survey would ask questions about:

The current accessibility of the Museum in terms of opening hours, whether homework or course work required visiting the Museum and whether Saturday was a suitable day to visit for this age group;

The appetite for extended hours and how many hours/which days would be desirable; and

What other offers such as dedicated workspace, Wi-Fi, access to refreshments would encourage use.

- The survey and a link to an on-line survey would be disseminated via social media, directly to secondary schools and through other groups such as the Maidstone Youth Forum. The survey would be carried out during term-time to encourage participation.
- There would be no cost to the Council in conducting the survey.
- Using the results of the survey, staff would be able to identify what was really wanted and needed. They would then implement a solution to meet the needs of the audience in consultation with the Lead Member, with a target date for implementation of February 2023.

During the discussion, it was suggested that the matter be raised with the Maidstone Museums' Foundation which had links with local secondary schools.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

63. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023 - 2028

The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement introduced a report setting out the updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) explaining that:

- Before drawing up detailed budgets every year it was the practice to update the Council's five-year rolling MTFS. The idea of the MTFS was to show how the Council would deliver its strategic objectives in financial terms, paying attention to the economic context, which was challenging at present with high inflation and an impending recession. It was not yet known how exactly the Government would respond to the situation, but the position would become clearer with the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022.
- Given that uncertainty, as in previous years, several possible scenarios had been considered for the future. The draft MTFS attached to the report used Scenario 4 as the base case and it also included a worst case, Scenario 5. Under Scenario 4 there would be a budget gap of £2.5m for 2023/24 making assumptions such as a 2% Council Tax referendum limit, a staff pay increase of 5% and general price and contract cost inflation of 5%. Allowance had also been made for a higher than expected spend on the provision of temporary accommodation, which was likely to continue. An approach to addressing the budget gap was set out in the MTFS and detailed budget proposals would be brought forward in January 2023.
- The MTFS also addressed the Capital Programme which amounted to £230m over the next five years. With inflation, this £230m would buy less, so some prioritisation of schemes would be required.

During the discussion, the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement and his team were thanked for their work on the MTFS given the current economic situation and uncertainty.

RESOLVED:

1. That the issues and risks associated with updating the Medium-Term Financial Strategy be noted.

2. **TO RECOMMEND TO THE EXECUTIVE:** That the Medium-Term Financial Strategy be approved, and the proposed approach outlined to development of an updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2023/24 – 2027/28 and a budget for 2023/24 be approved.

Note: Councillor S Webb, a Substitute Member and Member of the Executive, abstained from the voting on this item.

64. **SECOND QUARTER FINANCIAL UPDATE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT 2022/23**

The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement introduced a report setting out the financial and performance position for the services reporting into the Committee as at 30 September 2022 (Quarter 2). It was noted that:

- For this Committee, an overspend was currently projected against the Revenue Budget for this financial year. This was because there were potential areas of overspend relating to the Innovation Centre, the Business Terrace and Lockmeadow Market.
- In terms of the Capital Budget, there was a projected overspend in relation to the Mote Park Visitor Centre, but this was partly offset by an underspend on the Mote Park Lake dam works which were now complete.
- For the Council as a whole, a balanced position was projected for the current financial year with underspends elsewhere offsetting the overspends by this Committee.
- Performance indicators showed that footfall in the town centre and unemployment rates were still failing to achieve targets. However, there was now a different approach to measuring footfall, using mobile phone data, which was showing an improvement on the last quarter and the same quarter last year.

During the discussion, concerns were expressed about the accuracy of footfall figures calculated using mobile phone data.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 2 for 2022/23, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted.
2. That the Capital position at the end of Quarter 2 be noted.
3. That the Performance position as at Quarter 2 for 2022/23, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted.

65. **DURATION OF MEETING**

6:30 p.m. to 8.20 p.m.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 DECEMBER 2022 TO 31 MARCH 2023

This Forward Plan sets out the details of the key decisions which the Executive or Lead Members expect to take and the non-Key decisions that the Executive or Lead Members expect to take during the next four-month period. The plan will be updated weekly for the relevant period and a new plan for a new four-month period, published monthly on the last Friday of the month.

A Key Decision is defined as one which:

1. Results in the Council incurring expenditure, or making savings, of more than £250,000; or
2. Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the Borough

The current members of the Executive are:

7	 <p>Councillor David Burton Leader of the Council DavidBurton@maidstone.gov.uk 07590 229910</p>	 <p>Councillor John Perry Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Corporate Services JohnPerry@Maidstone.gov.uk 07770 734741</p>	 <p>Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement LottieParfittReid@Maidstone.gov.uk 07919 360000</p>	 <p>Councillor Martin Round Lead Member for Environmental Services MartinRound@maidstone.gov.uk 07709 263447</p>
	 <p>Councillor Simon Webb Lead Member for Housing and Health SimonWebb@Maidstone.gov.uk 07878 018997</p>	 <p>Councillor Claudine Russell Lead Member for Leisure and Arts ClaudineRussell@Maidstone.gov.uk</p>	 <p>Councillor Paul Cooper Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure PaulCooper@Maidstone.gov.uk 01622 244070</p>	

Anyone wishing to make representations about any of the matters listed below may do so by contacting the relevant officer listed against each decision, within the time period indicated.

Under the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution, a Key Decision or a Part II decision may not be taken, unless it has been published on the forward plan for 28 days or it is classified as urgent:

The law and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key and part II decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in the Forward Plan.

Copies of the Council's constitution, forward plan, reports and decisions may be inspected at the Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ or accessed from the Council's website: www.maidstone.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Executive which are normally held at the Town Hall, High St, Maidstone, ME14 1SY. The dates and times of the meetings are published on www.maidstone.gov.uk or you may contact the Democratic Services Team on telephone number 01622 602899 for further details.

David Burton
Leader of the Council

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Maidstone Leisure Centre To decide the future of Maidstone Leisure Centre	Executive	Lead Member for Leisure and Arts	22 March 2023	Yes	No Part exempt	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee 7 February 2023	Maidstone Leisure Centre	Mike Evans mikeevans@maidstone.gov.uk

Agenda Item 13

Economic Regeneration & Leisure Policy Advisory Committee

6th December 2022

Maidstone Museums Governance

Will this be a Key Decision	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Lead Member for Leisure and Arts
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Victoria Barlow, Museums Director
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Maidstone Museums operate as an in-house council service but there are a number of trusts associated with the museums. The Council reviewed these governance arrangements in 2017, when it was decided by the former Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee to retain the current governance arrangements.

Given the elapse of time since 2017, it is appropriate to review these arrangements. This report sets out the current position and recommends that the existing governance arrangements continue in place, but with some minor modifications.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report asks the Committee to consider the following recommendations to the Lead Member on the Executive for Leisure and Arts:

1. That Maidstone Museum and Maidstone Carriage Museum (collectively known as Maidstone Museums) remain as directly provided services within Maidstone Borough Council.
2. That Maidstone Museums continue to work with the Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment Trust and the Bentrif Wing Trust.
3. That officers ascertain the intention of the Trustees of the Brenchley Trust in relation to the future of this Trust.
4. That arrangements with the Maidstone Museums Foundation and Kent Archaeological Society are formalised by means of Memoranda of Understanding.

Timetable	
<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
ERL PAC	06/12/22
Lead Member for Leisure and Arts	16/12/22

Maidstone Museums Governance

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council's overall achievement of its aims as set out in section 3.</p>	Victoria Barlow, Museums Director
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendations support the achievement of the Heritage is Respected objective by ensuring the future oversight of the museums by MBC .</p>	Victoria Barlow, Museums Director
Risk Management	See section 5.	Victoria Barlow, Museums Director
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for	Section 151 Officer &

	implementation.	Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Victoria Barlow, Museums Director
Legal	Maintaining the status quo in respect of the Maidstone Museum has no legal implications. A change in the relationship with any of the Trusts should be referred for further advice as there are complex governance issues to be considered. It is recommended that draft Memoranda of Understanding be shared with the Contracts team.	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
Privacy and Data Protection	Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The recommendations will not have a negative impact on Crime and Disorder.	Victoria Barlow, Museums Director
Procurement	No procurement is required	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Maidstone Museums consist of three museums: Maidstone Museum, Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment Museum (QORWK) and the Tyrwhitt-Drake Museum of Carriages (The Carriage Museum). Both the Maidstone Museum and the QORWK Regiment Museum are located in the Grade 2* listed museum building on St Faith's Street, Maidstone. The Tyrwhitt-Drake Carriage Museum is located within a Grade 1 listed tithe barn, ten minutes walk from the main museum building. The museums operate as an in-house council service and are fully integrated with the rest of the Council services, with the staff employed by the Council.
- 2.2 The vast majority of the 650,000 items in the museums are owned directly by the Council. However, the museums also house collections associated with three separate charitable trusts.
- 2.3 Queens Own Royal West Kent Regimental Trust
- The Council is sole trustee of the Regimental Museum Charity. The Trust's assets have transferred to the Council, but the Council retains responsibility for managing, curating and insuring the collection.
- 2.4 The Brenchley Trust
- The Brenchley Trust was established to maintain, preserve and exhibit a collection of objects of Natural History, Mineralogy and Ethnography presented by J L Brenchley to the Maidstone Museum. The assets have transferred to the Council, but the Council is responsible for the care, management and accreditation of the collection.
- 2.5 The Bentrif Wing Trust
- The Bentrif Wing Trust was established in the nineteenth century to manage the then newly constructed East Wing of the Museum, including a collection owned by the Trust, and was endowed by the Bentrif family with funds for this purpose. Over the years these funds have reduced and the Council took over the day-to-day running and maintenance of the East Wing. When the Council decided to renew the East Wing in 2009, a Deed of Variation to the Trust was signed, giving the Council an obligation to conserve and store the Bentrif collection and to provide cleaning, maintenance, supervision and security for the Bentrif Wing and its collection. Curatorial services are provided by the Council, as are legal, minuting, and financial services. The Deed gives the Trust control of access and use of some rooms within the building.
- 2.6 In addition, the Museum is supported by the Maidstone Museum Foundation (MMF). MMF is an independent charity supporting the museum by raising money for projects and educational activities.
- 2.7 Finally, the Museum has, since the nineteenth century, leased space on the premises to the Kent Archaeological Society.

- 2.8 In March 2018 members voted to retain the existing governance arrangements of Maidstone Museums. A report to the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee at that time considered the options for finding a new method of governance for Maidstone Museums. In summary, the report found that, while transfer of all the activities into a single, overarching Charitable Trust could bring some, longer-term, strategic advantages to the museums, it would not benefit the council as a whole since financial investment would be required at a time when savings were being sought. Thus members elected to retain the museums as they were, but they requested that officers continue to monitor the museum sector, any changes to the status of charitable trusts and anything else that might cause the decision to be reconsidered.
- 2.9 Since 2019, the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent economic downturn has impacted all museums, but independent museums have been particularly hard hit with staff furloughed or laid off, income generation reduced and loss of core funding from local authority partners and Arts Council England. Those at risk have included The Royal Cornwall Museum, Metropolitan Police Heritage Centre and Fort Paul Military Museum.
- 2.10 One of the original drivers of the consideration of moving the museums to trust status was financial. Based on the available evidence, potential savings of £200,000 were identified.
- 2.11 In the event, without changing the governance arrangements, over £152,000 savings have been made since 2017 through restructuring the museum service. In addition, a successful Business Rates appeal reduced the museums' rateable value from over £200,000 to £56,000, creating more savings for the council.
- 2.12 In the meantime, the following steps have been taken to streamline the arrangements relating to the trusts associated with the museums.
- 2.13 Dissolution of the Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment Museum Trust has been considered, but by extinguishing the obligation to manage the associated collection, it would require its removal from the museum and disposal of the artefacts. The Trustees did not wish to take this step. Instead, they have agreed that the Trust will meet just once a year to receive a report from the Director of the Museum and the Head of Finance or their representative.
- 2.14 A similar move to dissolve the Brenchley Trust has been considered. In this case, as there are no particularly sensitive assets associated with the Trust, this is feasible. The process has been delayed because of the death of the Trust's Chairman and consequent lack of trustees. It is proposed to appoint new Trustees who would consider whether it is appropriate to wind up or continue with the Trust.
- 2.15 The Bentrif Wing Trust has no wish to dissolve itself, and indeed the Trustees are keen to work with Maidstone Museum to make their collection more accessible to the public. There are vacancies on the Trust and it is intended to work with the existing Trustees to recruit new Trustees who

have an interest in the collection and its historical context, and who share the Trust's aspirations. We therefore propose to continue working with the Bentrif Wing Trust as laid out in the legally binding agreement of 2009.

- 2.16 Memoranda of Understanding have been agreed with the two related organisations, Maidstone Museums Foundation and Kent Archaeology Society, in order to put the museums' relationship with them on a more formal basis. Advice will be obtained from the Contracts team to ensure that they are in line with the Council's Procurement Standing Orders.
- 2.17 In general, since members took the decision to retain control of Maidstone Museums, there have been no significant changes in the museum landscape or in charity law which would necessitate members reviewing their previous decision, especially as the financial target which was an element of the investigation into Trust Status, has now been met by other means and work to simplify other arrangements is well underway.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Executive Member endorses the earlier decision of the Heritage, Leisure and Culture Committee and continues to carry out the Museums' Five Year Forward Plan as agreed by the Executive Member in July 2022, with the Museums continuing to form part of Maidstone Borough Council, with the position to be reviewed after three years.
- 3.2 The Executive Member pursues the idea of transferring the Museums to an independent Trust.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is that the museums continue to provide a wide ranging service as part of Maidstone Borough Council as no financial or logistical benefit would accrue to the Council for a change at this time.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Previous reports approved by members of the then Heritage Culture and Leisure and Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committees are available.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 If the proposal is accepted, no action will be required at this time.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Agenda Item 14

Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee

6 December 2022

Future Options for Maidstone Leisure Centre

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure PAC	6 December 2022
Executive	21 December 2022
Economic Regeneration and Leisure PAC	7 February 2023
Executive	22 March 2023

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Executive
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mark Green, Director of Finance and Business Improvement Katie Exon, Head of Property and Leisure Mike Evans, Leisure Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive summary

Decisions are required about the future of Maidstone Leisure Centre, given the impending expiry of the current operator's contract, the condition of the building and the Council's commitment to promoting health and wellbeing. This report sets out the decisions to be addressed and provides an update. Further work is being carried out on developing proposals for minor practical improvements to the Leisure Centre (Option 3D in the officer report).

Purpose of Report

For noting

This report asks the Committee to consider the following recommendation to the Executive:

1. That the report is noted.

Future Options for Maidstone Leisure Centre

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve A Thriving Place and Homes and Communities. We set out the reasons other choices will be less effective in sections 2 and 4.</p>	Leisure Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendations support the achievement of the health inequalities and environmental sustainability cross cutting objectives.</p>	Leisure Manager
Risk Management	Refer to section 5 of the report.	Leisure Manager
Financial	As this report is for noting there are no financial implications at this stage.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement.
Staffing	We will continue to develop the options with our current staffing.	Head of Property & Leisure

Legal	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out in various pieces of legislation including the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules.	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Equalities	The recommendations could lead to changes in service, therefore equalities impact assessments will be completed alongside the plans as they are developed.	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	Ensuring leisure services continue to be available in the borough will have a positive impact on population health and that of individuals.	Housing and Inclusion Team Leader
Crime and Disorder	The recommendations will have no negative impact on Crime and Disorder.	Leisure Manager
Procurement	We will complete any procurement exercises in line with financial procedure rules.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are opportunities, through the options, to make positive impacts on biodiversity and climate change in the borough.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 It is timely to consider future options for the Leisure Centre for the following reasons.

- The current contract for operation of the Leisure Centre with Maidstone Leisure Trust and Serco Leisure Limited expires in 2024.
- The Leisure Centre building is over 50 years old and is becoming increasingly more expensive to maintain and is a negative contributor to the council achieving its net zero carbon ambitions.
- It is appropriate to consider whether the Council's service offer meets its overriding strategic priority of promoting health and wellbeing, within

the context of the wider leisure market and the financial pressures faced by the Council.

2.2 A sizable body of research and evidence has been accumulated by the Council over the last few years which can help inform this consideration. The imperatives described above mean that this information should now be evaluated and appropriate decisions made.

2.3 Depending on the direction the council chooses to go in, the decision-making process has a number of stages. These can be set out in the form of a decision tree, as follows.

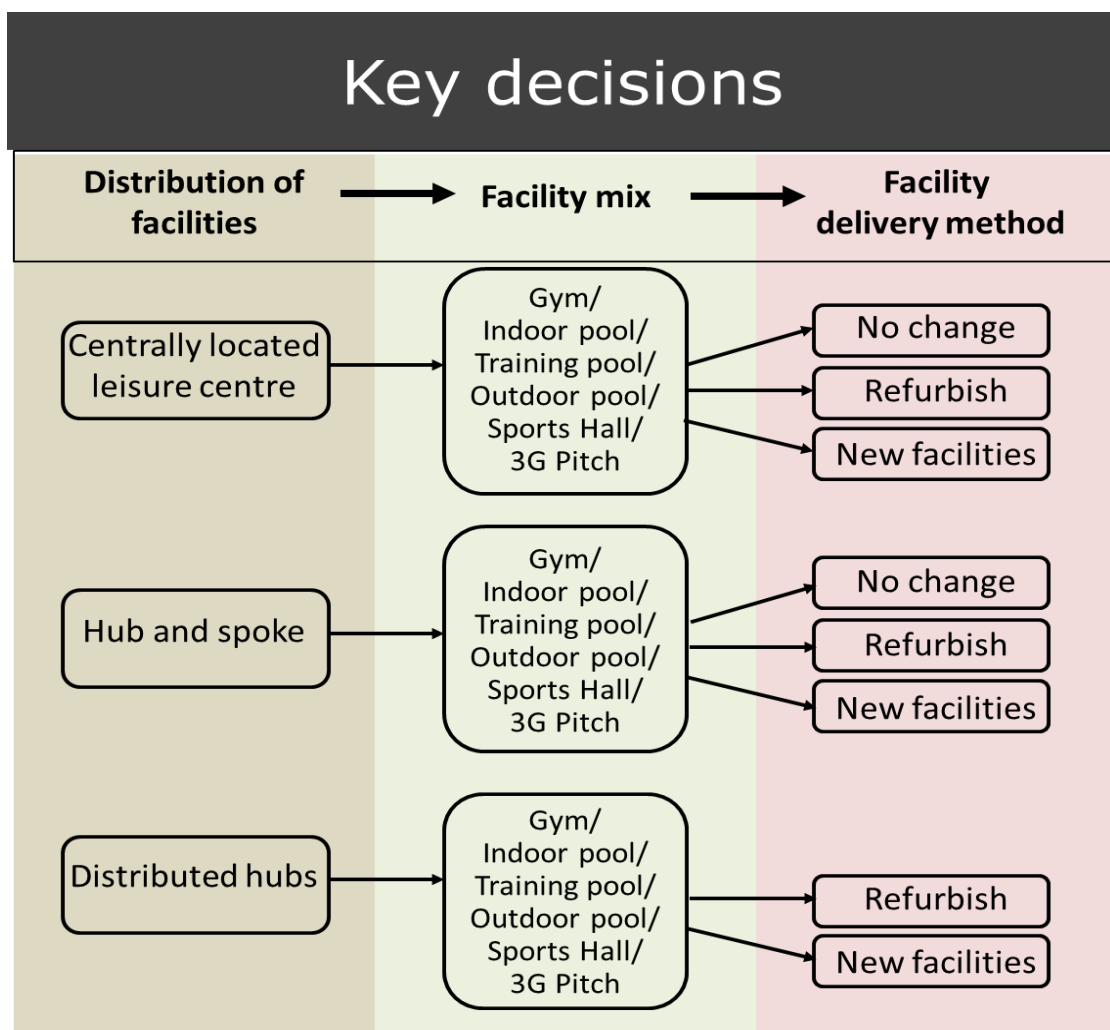


Figure 1: Key Decisions

2.4 A further set of decisions will be required subsequently, namely:

- Whether to extend the existing Serco contract to accommodate the decisions made, and if so, for how long
- What type of service delivery model is appropriate (in-house / contracted out / leisure trust)
- Commissioning decisions (eg service provider, leisure centre architects / designers, contractors)

The focus of this report is on the decisions set out in table 1, as these need to be resolved as a first step.

2.5 **DECISION 1: DISTRIBUTION OF FACILITIES**

There are three principal options, as follows.

2.6 **Option 1A: Centrally located leisure centre**

Maidstone Leisure Centre is currently the main leisure centre for the borough. It is located close to the centre of the borough's main urban area. It is also located within close proximity to areas of high deprivation, namely the neighbourhoods of Park Wood, High Street, Shepway North and Shepway South, which means that it is well-placed to serve areas that experience poor health outcomes. According to the Government's 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, all these wards fall within the 20% most deprived in the country and will have been impacted disproportionately by the Covid-19 pandemic and now by the cost of living crisis. Maidstone Leisure Centre is adjacent to Mote Park, 'the jewel in Maidstone's Crown', which receives more than a million visits per year and offers a wide range of outdoor leisure activities and facilities. The advantages and disadvantages of such a central location are summarised below.

Option 1A: Centrally located leisure centre	
For	Against
Convenient location for a high proportion of borough residents	Travel times for those not living nearby.
Good parking facilities at current site	Large land area currently occupied could arguably be better utilised in other ways, eg for housing .
More attractive to private sector operators	
Economies of scale across the facility mix	
Economies of scale with Mote Park Outdoor Adventure	

2.7 **Option 1B: Hub and spoke**

In this model, a central leisure and physical activity hub would be accompanied by an outreach service and/or separate provision in a number of rural communities covering a wide geographical distribution.

The advantages and disadvantages are summarised below.

Option 1B: Hub and spoke	
For	Against
Advantages of a central hub remain as set out in Option 1A above	Spokes likely to imply incremental increase in budgets
'Spokes' can be in many forms and can be flexible	Operations may be complicated, depending on level of flexibility

	given
Ensures leisure provision reaches all corners of the borough	

Focus groups were held recently in the south of the borough, which sought to establish the needs of local communities and hence the nature of the 'spokes'. A report of the results is included in Appendix 1.

2.8 Option 1C: Distributed Hubs

Leisure centre provision could reflect the population distribution within the borough. The advantages and disadvantages are summarised below.

Option 1C: Distributed Hubs	
For	Against
Ensures facilities and provision are closer to more people	Benefits of central location (above) are all inverted – no economies of scale, impractical for families, parking would be difficult
Achievable in smaller buildings	

2.9 DECISION 2: FACILITY MIX

Consideration needs to be given to the nature and standard of facilities required to meet the Council's strategic objectives. MBC's policies and strategies clearly demonstrate a commitment to improving the physical health and wellbeing of its residents, including Active Travel and the Active Environment. As a minimum, it must be assumed that the Council wishes to provide facilities open to all residents which offer swimming, fitness, a sports hall and space for community sport and leisure.

- 2.10 This is justified by the overall benefits to the community of a healthier population. Nationally, a more active population is not only healthier, but impacts positively on the current costs of social care, mental health, dementia and it is estimated to reduce GP visits nationally by 30 million a year. A healthier population will also support the local economy and labour market more adeptly. The 2019 study by Sheffield Hallam University for Sport England showed that for every £1 invested in sport, £3.91 of economic and social value is returned.
- 2.11 A more aspirational approach, based on Sport England's assessment of the borough's needs, is set out in the Maidstone Sports Facility Strategy update (2020), which identifies a future requirement in the borough for the equivalent of an additional two 4-court sports halls with full community access, one 25m x 6 lane pool and 230 health and fitness stations. Additionally, the Football Foundation's Maidstone Local Football Facility Plan for Maidstone (LFFP)2020 identifies a shortfall of two 3G pitches in the borough.
- 2.12 The table below sets out a split between what might be considered essential and what would be desirable. It is suggested that the final decision as to what is included will depend on the financial business case,

which as will be seen below, shows a net incremental cost versus current costs under all scenarios.

Option 2A: Essential	Option 2B: Desirable
100 station gym	All essential facilities
8-lane x 25m competition level pool	3G pitches
Spectator seating	Tag active space
4-lane x 25m training pool	Outdoor Splash Pad
Indoor splash pad	Outdoor pool
100 Station fitness suite	Community space
3 x studio spaces – one for spinning	
6-court sports Hall	
Soft play	
Café	
Associated admin, kitchen, change & storage	

- 2.13 Making improvements to the energy and carbon performance of the building and improving the customer experience of the building is also an essential deliverable of any project.

2.14 **DECISION 3: FACILITY DELIVERY METHOD**

Maidstone Leisure Centre's original pool was built in the 1970's and has been refurbished and extended over the years with the sports hall, gym and leisure water incorporated during the 1990's. The leisure facility is inefficiently designed, having been added to on a piecemeal basis over the years and offers poor accessibility.

- 2.15 The excessive corridors mean wasted space and poor accessibility for less-mobile visitors. The percentage of area devoted to different activities is not balanced with modern needs and this cannot be countered without large-scale remodelling of the building. The age of the pools means they do not include accessible access and they are also too dated to be suitable for retrofitting modern access platforms.
- 2.16 The orientation of the building is such that it does not take advantage of the views of the adjacent parkland and the entrance faces away from the park. The facility is also beginning to look tired and is showing signs of age.
- 2.17 Quite apart from the operational drawbacks of the building, its age will pose an increasingly severe financial challenge for the Council. A building condition survey undertaken in March 2022 highlighted that the mechanical and electrical plant are showing signs of age and the building fabric also has some challenges ahead. Costs will escalate significantly over the coming years. The total budget estimate for planned periodic maintenance for building services over the next 25 years is greater than £1m per year.

2.18 Assuming that the Council opts to retain a centrally-located leisure centre, the facility delivery method options can be summarised, generically, as:

Option 3A – No change

Option 3B – Refurbish

Option 3C – New facilities

Option 3D – Minor practical improvements

2.19 'No change' is the 'do nothing' option, but will involve the Council needing an increasing amount of additional expenditure simply to keep the existing facilities open. Surveyors were commissioned by the Council to provide estimates and this allowed the potential costs specified in paragraph 2.17 to be quantified.

2.20 In early 2022, headline cost estimates were obtained for refurbishment (£30 million) and new facilities (£35 million). Note that refurbishment is almost as expensive as new build, owing to the practical difficulties of using a leisure centre with 1970's and 1990's components as a starting point. Since being obtained these estimates will have been subject to inflation in the second half of 2022 and these costs need to be recalculated on a rolling basis.

2.21 Economic uncertainty and supply chain challenges have driven the capital costs for delivering this project beyond £35m. Industry assumptions suggest this cost will now be greater than £40m and could be higher. The recent rise in interest rates mean the borrowing costs to finance the project have also increased, adding additional financial challenges.

2.22 The new build and refurbishment figures are based on conventional building methods. A Passiv Haus construction would be more expensive initially, but would have the potential for lower running costs, which will be extra beneficial in combatting energy costs and the reliance in high amounts of energy for operation.

2.23 To combat the increasing costs of construction and increasing interest rates, a menu of minor improvements has also been compiled (Option 3D – Minor Practical Improvements). These changes would combat the energy costs and the negative carbon impacts of the centre on a small scale and would open up new activities for residents, which in turn would deliver additional revenue streams. This can be achieved by reconfiguring the reception area, the office spaces and the café terrace area. Reconfiguring these spaces can separate the pools from the indoor play areas, create a new space to extend the indoor play offering and make the reception and café facilities flow better for customers. Initial work on this possibility has been positive and more work is now needed to develop the business case.

2.24 A new leisure centre would deliver multiple benefits for the borough, however the Council is approaching this project at a difficult time. If a new centre were the preferred option, it would be a financial challenge to deliver it in the current circumstances alongside the Council's other strategic priorities.

- 2.25 In the short term the Council can continue to operate the asset in its current condition, accepting there will be limitations in the service it can offer and risks in the routine maintenance it requires. From 2022 to 2030 the minor practical improvement option will deliver benefits if a viable business case can be developed for those improvements.
- 2.26 However, over the long term it will not deliver the financial, social and environmental benefits that a new build leisure centre will deliver so serious consideration needs to be given to long term plans. Having a long-term plan will also enable decisions to be taken in the short to medium term over the best way to prioritise resources.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The options are as described in the preceding paragraphs.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The age of the building means that at some point it will need significant investment or it will need replacing. The decision in 2022 is whether replacing the leisure centre needs to be done in the short to medium term or if it is a decision that can be considered in the future.
- 4.2 Economic uncertainty and supply chain challenges have driven the capital costs for delivering this project beyond £35m. Industry assumptions suggest this cost will now be greater than £40m and could be higher. The recent rise in interest rates mean the borrowing costs to finance the project have also increased, adding additional financial challenges.
- 4.3 A new leisure centre would deliver multiple benefits for the borough, however the Council is approaching this project at a difficult time. Financing a new leisure centre or a full refurbishment in the current circumstances alongside the council's other strategic priorities would be a significant challenge.
- 4.4 The minor practical improvements option 3D can deliver an uplift in services, increase energy performance and target new business opportunities in the medium term. A business case to achieve these aims needs to be developed fully in order that a decision can be taken in 2023 and is the preferred option at this stage.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 There are risks associated with all the options described in this report. The risks associated with each option concern the continuing management of a building that is more than 50 years old, and addressing these risks is weighed against the risks of continuing increases in construction costs and the rise in interest rates.

- 5.2 The options in this report seek to protect the Council from exposure to volatile construction costs and increased interest rates in the short to medium term. By developing the business cases further, the Council will be able to monitor these risks and consider future leisure centre recommendations.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Extensive consultation has taken place relevant to this report, including the following:

Focus groups, Spring 2022 (see Appendix 1)
Shepway Taskforce research, Autumn 2021
Consultation on future of Heather House, Spring 2019
Cross-borough Resident Surveys
Presentations to former Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee

- 6.2 The Sport England Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance process has also been completed. This includes consultation with sporting and health organisations who work across Kent and with clubs and voluntary groups who are based in the borough.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 A timetable for decision making is as follows:

ERL PAC – 6 December 2022
Executive Meeting - 21 December
ERL PAC – 7 February
Executive Meeting – 22 March

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Rural Leisure Focus Group Summaries
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Rural Leisure Focus Group Summaries

In spring 2022 Maidstone Borough Council conducted focus groups in each of the five rural service centres.

Representatives from sports clubs and community groups who use facilities in the rural service centres were invited to share their thoughts on the provision of sport and leisure in the area. The findings from each rural service centre are summarised here.

Harrietsham

A total of 11 representatives attended representing 9 local groups.

Activities represented by those attending included Tennis, Tai Chi, Cubs & Scouts, Bowls, Horse riding, aerobic fitness, and crafting.

What are the good things about sport in your area?

The Village Hall – This was highlighted as being accessible and having good parking facilities. One group considered this to be an attractive venue to local groups and those from outside of the immediate local area.

Recreational grounds – It was considered that the recreational grounds provided opportunity for many different types of activity.

Interest – There is good interest locally in attending clubs. Specific clubs/interests mentioned:

- Beginners to Runners
- Horse riding
- Bowling
- Beavers & Scouts

Communications – There is a Parish Magazine (Harrietsham Network Link) – this publication had previously ceased but is restarting. Previous versions have included details of local clubs and activities on the back page.

It was also outlined that the local area has beautiful scenery and good access to the countryside.

What do you dislike about sport in your area?

Membership – Some groups find it difficult to attract new members or volunteers (Scouts). There is currently a waiting list for Scouts due to a lack of available volunteers. It was also noted that covid had impacted group's ability to engage with people.

Venues – Many groups do not have their own venues and have to hire them. Participants noted the Village Hall can be expensive to hire and since covid last minute cancelations have increased making some groups less sustainable.

Facilities – Some felt there was a lack of facilities that were provided as standard (no need to join a group), such as pitches and tennis courts. It was highlighted that the village has no Youth Club or funding to provide one and there is not one nearby that the local population could use. It was also noted that there was no Active Retirement group locally with these activities seemingly based in Lenham. There were also comments about the lack of shared community outdoor facilities, with a note that the play area at Saxon Place requires replacing.

Resources – There was a feeling that resources are not distributed evenly amongst different groups, here S106 funding distribution was mentioned. Some groups mentioned the need to travel to access resources that some felt should be available locally e.g., tennis court and swimming pool. It was noted that the Culture Centre was in the Town centre.

Travel & Traffic– Travel to Maidstone Town centre by public transport is limited and often not at the right times, therefore there is no choice but to drive. However, it was noted that groups themselves can in inadvertently cause issues with traffic, with Station Road reported as being an issue when the Scouts meet.

New Developments – It was felt that new developments lacked open spaces.

What is missing or what would you change about your area?

Communication – Many groups lack funds to advertise, with some groups relying on word of mouth. Information available online is fragmented. It was felt that improved information sharing would benefit all groups. It was suggested that a network of sports and recreational clubs would assist in improving communications and help with join up, as well as possibly attracting new members. It was also suggested that the Parish Magazine would be a useful tool for advertising groups and clubs.

Facilities – There were requests for shared facilities, with comments that existing facilities or new facilities need to be bigger and flexible. It was noted that the local nursery does not have its own premises and currently uses the church hall which was unfit for this purpose. It was also commented that outdoor play equipment is required for the new developments. It was felt the pavilion should be replaced or updated, and that it could be a community hub that could be used by local groups. It was also highlighted that there is fencing that needs repairing by the Pavilion and recreational ground.

Travel – It was felt there was a lack of active travel options i.e., footways or sideways linking facilities and also a lack of bridleways. It was highlighted that there are existing footpaths and bridleways that require maintenance. However, comments were made that stiles are not accessible to all and are a barrier to people accessing the countryside.

Ground up approach – There was a feeling that local groups and clubs have little to no involvement in the decision-making process, with the Parish Council either making decisions or being consulted rather than clubs or groups having an input. It was suggested that a more joined approach is taken to spending funds to maintain benefits for all of the community.

What would make the biggest difference to your club/organisation right now?

Facilities – Participants said that the cost of hiring venues limited the availability of some activities. It was suggested that there should be a shared club house or an indoor facility that could offer activities regardless of the weather.

Parish Council – There was a suggestion that the Parish Council could be more approachable and provide greater support for local groups by helping identify funding for local groups.

Volunteers – Several participants outlined that they struggled to recruit volunteers, and that increasing the number of volunteers would reduce waiting lists for groups.

Communications – Several clubs mentioned they struggle with the cost of advertising. Some groups rely on word of mouth or Facebook.

Join-up – A more joined-up approach between groups would create efficiencies that would help maintain benefits.

Funding – Participants requested support in identifying funding that can be applied for to support providing activities to excluded or hard to reach groups. But also wanted more information about how funding allocated to the village was being spent. They felt that S106 money was not fairly distributed.

Headcorn

A total of 11 representatives attended representing 14 local groups.

Activities represented by those attending included Bowls, Football, Cricket, Badminton, Scouts and Horse riding.

What are the good things about sport in your area?

Activities – It was highlighted that there are a wide variety of groups and clubs in the village. It was noted that the Football teams locally were well attended and supported. Headcorn also has clubs for Tennis, Bowls, and Cricket within the village. In terms of other activities nursery groups, scouts, bell ringing and table tennis were mentioned as well as allotments.

Village Hall – Attendees were positive about the village hall, they noted that it has high ceiling which allows a table tennis club to operate there.

Communications – There is a Headcorn Magazine and website which is produced by the Parish Council. This features events going on in the Village

What do you dislike about sport in your area?

Activities for Young people – It was highlighted that there is no Youth Club locally, with the new developments in the area, attracting more families this was identified as a need.

Facilities – It was stated that there is no suitable facility in the village for the less popular or niche activities, it was felt this was a barrier to new start-up clubs or groups. A location for a nursery was also mentioned. There were some concerns about potential future damage and maintenance of facilities, statements that facilities were expensive to maintain and at risk of vandalism. It was noted that clubs locally are popular, and many cannot meet demand, or have the space to run activities locally. This results in facilities being hired outside of the village.

Football – It was commented that the local football club house is quite old and is running out of space. They are expecting three teams to be coming through but need more full-size pitches and adult volunteers to support the running of the club.

Swimming- Although the local Primary School has a pool facility it is not available to the general public. Therefore, if you want to go swimming you need to travel.

Transport – It can be difficult to access facilities within the village due to safety concerns about the traffic along the routes. It was mentioned that cycling in the village is dangerous and that there is a need to drive to get to the 'club house'. It was noted that there is no footpath to the tennis and cricket clubs. Traveling by train to use facilities in Ashford was also mentioned.

S106 Funding – Groups were aware of S106 monies being awarded to the Parish Council; however, attendees did not feel that it was being distributed appropriately in regard to sports and recreational facilities.

Communications – It was suggested that links between the local school and the clubs that are in the village could be improved.

Open Spaces – It was noted that the area is at risk of flooding (across the railway lines) and that drainage of pitches/grounds is expensive. Comments were made around the loss of open spaces for club use due to housing developments. It was stated that there is a waiting list for allotments and currently a lack of parking for these.

What is missing or what would you change about your area?

Multi sized sport club/hub – This would take pressure off the village hall. Participants considered it would need to be big enough to offer activities such as trampolining and dancing. There was a request to form a Youth club. Other specific facilities requested were 3G Pitches, Netball Courts, and a Skate Park.

Transport & Access – It was suggested that better links with groups that have transport, or a volunteer minibus service would improve accessibility. A footpath to the cricket and football clubs was requested. Maidstone Leisure Centre was mentioned as being hard to get to and difficult to hire.

Join-up – Discussions were had about the facilities that are available in the village. It was noted that join-up with other groups, outside of the village, would increase participation. There was a suggestion about join up with the school to allow sports facilities to be used outside of term time and another suggestion about local sports clubs opening up their facilities to other activities (not sports).

Volunteers – Participants mentioned a need to attract younger volunteers, often people are happy to participate but do not want to help support in delivering activities. There is also bureaucracy around engaging volunteers i.e., insurance and background checks. While there is an understanding of the need to have the correct processes in place, it places additional demands on the volunteers.

What would make the biggest difference to your club/organisation right now?

Communication - A central online platform to promote facilities through council website and clubs was suggested. This could be circulated in Headcorn so local residents are aware of what's available and those outside the village to bring users in.

Facilities- As outlined above a bigger, multi-use community hub was requested to enable different types of sports and recreational activities to take place in the village. For any new facility flexibility of use was important to participants. There was also a request for more space for football.

Safe access to Tennis and Cricket Clubs – This came up throughout the session, with the facility being open day and night with a lack of safe access without a vehicle. Participants mentioned the need for a footpath to alleviate this issue.

Volunteers - In addition to wanting to attract more volunteers, there was a request for more support to be available to volunteers.

Funding - Groups said that more access to funds would have a big difference on their groups. With requests for consultation around the spending of S106 monies as well as requests for guidance and signposting for relevant funding streams.

Diverse and Inclusive Groups – There were requests for a Women's club and a club for people with disabilities.

Lenham

A total of 10 representatives attended representing 7 local groups.

Activities represented by those attending included football, cricket, bowls, and karate. The local social club and parish council also had representatives that attended.

What are the good things about sport in your area?

Community Centre- The local community centre is reasonably large and has lots of rooms that can be hired for use. Other recreational groups use the Community Hall such as the Knitting and Crochet Club, the Dance School and Gardening Club. The Community Centre was considered accessible locally and participants commented they did not have much need to travel further than Harrietsham or Bearsted for activities.

Activities – Participants felt that the range of activities available in the village was quite diverse with football, cricket and bowls highlighted. It was noted that football plays a big part in the community and that there is an agreement with the parish council to maintain some pitches – this arrangement was mentioned as working well. It was also mentioned that the village is a popular hub for cyclists in the evenings and at weekends.

Facilities – Participants commented that the local 3G pitches were well used throughout the week and were available for partial hire i.e., Hire half a pitch. It was mentioned that three of the local play areas contained outdoor gym equipment and that there was access to a gym based at the school. All of these facilities were considered valuable assets to the village.

Communications – It was highlighted that Lenham Focus, the parish magazine, is delivered to households in the area and contains details of all the sports clubs and groups.

Schools – It was noted that the local schools have lots of sports facilities.

What do you dislike about sport in your area?

Hard court sports & Athletics – It was mentioned that there is a need to go outside of the village to participate in hard court sports such as tennis or netball. It was also highlighted that there is no place locally to do athletics or play squash.

Volunteers – Some participants said they found it difficult to recruit new members. It was noted that football had been turning people away due to a lack of volunteers (and space). A lack of support for volunteers was also highlighted with safeguarding and first aid highlighted.

Attracting New Members – The bowls team mentioned difficulties in attracting new members, in particular younger people.

Cost of facilities – The cost of participating in some spots was considered to be expensive with football and bowls specifically mentioned. It was noted that there is not shared sporting facility.

Improvement to existing facilities – It was mentioned that the football teams have issues with parking and need more space, it was also mentioned that the Bowls Green could be improved.

Join up – Participants commented that there is a lack of join up or co-ordination between groups.

What is missing or what would you change about your area?

Facilities - More space was highlighted as missing, with additional facilities requested including more pitches, hard courts for tennis, netball and basketball and storage space for equipment. An indoor multi use space was highlighted as a need to allow activities to take place in the winter and provide large meeting space (50-100 people). It was commented that a lack of available space to hire contributes to people not being able to participate.

School Facilities – Sporting facilities are available at the local school; however, they cannot be used during the day. It was suspected that this leads people to go outside of the area such as Ashford for activities.

Costs – It was mentioned that the cost of community gym was on par with that of Maidstone Leisure Centre and is not affordable for all.

Youth Club – It was noted that there is no youth club locally and that there could be more activities for young people. Previous youth club was held at the school but now there is nowhere for teenagers to go.

Toilets – There are no public toilets locally. Certain toilets are only available when sites are in use.

Links – It was felt that there could be better join-up between the Parish, MBC, and local groups to support volunteers and help identify funding streams.

Demand & Availability – The availability of the 3G football pitches was highlighted. The school that controls them uses an external booking company and often they are booked up well in advance so clubs in the village are not prioritised. It was also noted that too much interest when there are no resources to deliver activities suppresses group expansion and leads to people going outside the area.

What would make the biggest difference to your club/organisation right now?

Volunteers – Participants said they need more volunteers in order to expand activities or allow for more members. Guidance and training on safeguarding issues for volunteers was mentioned as being required and possibly something

that could be undertaken with other groups across the borough, if they have aligning needs. This would also impact on costs of training which was highlighted as making a difference. There was a suggestion for a dedicated support team for volunteers either through MBC or the Parish Council, this team could identify funding, organise training and provide a contact point for volunteers.

Funding – To support the volunteers at clubs. This could help costs for equipment, volunteer checks, and first-aid courses. One participant also mentioned printer and printing costs. It was noted that access to administration support for volunteers was a barrier to volunteering and that sometimes small costs are passed onto the volunteer e.g., printing, petrol which can add up. There were also mentioned of support required in identifying funding streams.

Facilities - Access to school facilities during the day was requested as well as new tennis court, as the previous one had been developed for housing. There were also requests for more space that can be hired locally at reasonable rates.

Join-up – Participants mentioned that the links between local groups and the parish council could be improved. Although there is a community hall in the village participants were uncertain about the activities that go on there, stating that they don't see anything advertised.

Marden

A total of 19 representatives attended representing 17 local groups.

Activities represented by those attending included bowls, golf, yoga, cricket and hockey, other groups that were represented included the Motor Club, Dementia Society, the Horticulture Society, Marden in Bloom and the Local Parish Council.

What are the good things about sport in your area?

Variety– Participants highlighted a wide range of sporting activities that are available within the village including hockey, tennis, cricket, badminton, football, cycling and bowls. It was also noted that Marden has two private gyms and many play areas and open spaces. There is also a local scout troop and a bell ringers' group.

Accessibility – Some of the activities within the village do not require a membership fee and are free such as bell ringing and a weekly walk.

Communications – Local groups and clubs are active on social media and there is also a parish newsletter.

What do you dislike about sport in your area?

Access – Some participants mentioned the need to go outside the local area for certain activities. It was mentioned that the nearest swimming pools were in Tonbridge and Cranbrook. Restrictions due to availability of public transport were also mentioned by the participants as well as difficulties in accessing the co-located cricket, hockey, and tennis clubs for those who do not drive. It was also noted that the bowls team rely on street parking when they meet.

Memberships costs – Although there are some free activities in the village most require a subscription or membership fee and often there is no pay as you go options which could be a barrier to larger families and those on lower incomes.

Facilities – There is no dedicated sports hall or large area to bring the community together and it would be difficult to expand existing facilities.

Activities- Some activities within the village have ceased to be available. It was noted that the darts club had stopped and the clubs/groups that operated from the library have stopped.

Join-up – Participants highlighted that most of the groups and clubs work in silo, and that there could be opportunities for shared efficiencies.

Communications – Although there are two local magazines (Church & Parish) that are published locally however sometimes it can be difficult to identify and contact group administrators with queries or interest in joining. Social media is used locally to communicate with a weekly email mentioned.

Capacity – It was mentioned that yoga and Pilates were at full capacity and that there is a waiting list for scouts (due to lack of volunteers).

What is missing or what would you change about your area?

Access – There were requests for a footpath to improved access to the co-located cricket, hockey, and tennis clubs. Improved public transport with more frequent buses that go straight to Maidstone Town Centre.

Facilities – Participants mentioned skate park, toddler gym/soft play, swimming pool, sports club, football pitch and spectator facilities as being missing within Marden. An expansion to the scout hut was mentioned as being needed as well as a need for allotments that are accessible to people with mobility and sensory issues.

Communication – It was suggested that magazine editors could include the contact details for groups in their publications and there could be more consultation with groups over accessing and providing facilities. It was suggested that both publications could increase the amount of space given to details about sports and leisure groups in the village.

What would make the biggest difference to your club/organisation right now?

Volunteers – Bowls, Hockey and Scouts have a shortage of volunteers and coaches. It was noted that the Bowls team had advertised on social media for new members and was planning a leaflet drop.

Space – Participants requested a bigger hall, purpose built, for community activities.

Administration Support – There were requests for support in undertaking checks and training of volunteers as well as support in raising the profiles of the groups in particular online presence.

Access – For the joining up of the co-located hockey, tennis, and cricket club via a footpath from the village.

Staplehurst

A total of 14 representatives participated representing 8 local groups.

Activities represented by those participating included football and golf. The local Horticultural Society, Girl Guides and Parish Council were also represented.

What are the good things about sport in your area?

Variety - Participants commented that the variety of sports and leisure activities available in Staplehurst was good. Sports included football, cricket, badminton, boxing, horse riding and running. It was noted that the skate park and football attracts visitors from outside of the village. In addition, various recreational and leisure groups are active in the village including WI, Bridge club, Horticultural club as well as a variety of church groups.

Communications – There are several publications that are circulated to villagers including a Parish Magazine that goes out three times a year and a school newsletter. It was mentioned that there was previously a local carnival which was good advertising for local groups and clubs.

It was also highlighted that a new Youth Group was being set up through the Parish Council.

What do you dislike about sport in your area?

Facilities – It was commented that space for new activities is limited and that due to a lack of facilities some groups no longer operated in the village e.g., Trampolining and storage. The local community centre was said to be in a good location that made it walkable for older residents however, the facilities within were mentioned as being out of date and expensive to book. There were also comments about the availability of swimming, with participants stating that there used to be three swimming pools locally but now there are none.

It was highlighted that the drainage and condition of the outdoor grass football pitches was poor and that there were no 3G pitches in the village. The football team was said to be limited on space with the local teams needing to hire pitches.

Volunteers – It was commented that it tends to be the same people that volunteer and that it is difficult to recruit new volunteers.

Accessibility – Participants commented that traffic locally was heavy and that without any bridle paths horse riders were forced to use roads – which adds to congestion.

What is missing or what would you change about your area?

Facilities – Participants commented that indoor sports facilities are lacking e.g., basketball. It was suggested that the skate park could be expanded to include outdoor gym equipment and a park area for free running. There were also mentions of limited parking, a lack of wi-fi and a lack of toilets at the community centre.

Section 106 Funding - There were comments about the distribution of S106 funding. With comments that S106 monies should be distributed more fairly. It was noted that certain areas e.g., Jubilee field attract more attention than other areas of the village.

Accessibility – There were requests for more transport routes including footpaths and bridleways, to allow people to access facilities better without driving and increase the safety of pedestrians.

It was commented that Facilities alone will not increase participation, this should be demand led and that facilities need volunteer support to operate. Participants said that it was fair that parishes share facilities and for residents to travel for their leisure activities.

What would make the biggest difference to your club/organisation right now?

Facilities – There were requests for a multipurpose indoor facility as well as space/land for current groups to expand e.g., more football pitches. A roof for the tennis courts and a swimming pool were also mentioned. The Golf club said they had immediate pressure for toilets.

It was highlighted that all of these types of spaces need to be safe, clean and have adequate parking, toilets, and storage facilities.

Accessibility – There were requests for better infrastructure throughout the village, including bridleways and footpaths as well as measures to make the roads safer to encourage cycling and walking.

Economic Regeneration & Leisure Policy Advisory Committee

6 December 2022

Fees & Charges 2023-24

Will this be a Key Decision	Yes
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Executive
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2023-24 for the services within the remit of this committee. Fees and charges determined by the council are reviewed annually, and this forms part of the budget setting process. Changes to fees and charges agreed by the Executive will come into effect on 1 April 2023 unless otherwise stated in the report.

Recommendation to Economic Regeneration & Leisure Policy Advisory Committee

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the Executive be recommended to approve the Fees and Charges as detailed in Appendix 1.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Executive	21 December 2022

Fees & Charges 2023-24

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, the Council's policy on charging has been developed to support corporate priorities as set out in the strategic plan and the proposals within the report have been made with reference to this. 	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
Cross Cutting Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report recommendations support the achievement of the cross-cutting objectives by ensuring that costs of service delivery are recovered where possible, which enables services which support these objectives to be sustained. 	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is covered within section 5 of the report. 	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial implications are set out in the body of the report. If agreed, this income will be incorporated into the Council's medium term financial strategy for 2023-24 onwards. 	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendations do not have any staffing implications. 	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out within the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011. Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 permits best value authorities to charge for discretionary services provided the authority has the power to provide that service and the recipient agrees to take it up on those terms. 	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)

	<p>The authority has a duty to ensure that taking one financial year with another, income does not exceed the costs of providing the service. A number of fees and charges for Council services are set on a cost recovery basis only, with trading accounts used to ensure that the cost of service is clearly related to the charge made. In other cases, the fee is set by statute and the Council must charge the statutory fee. In both cases the proposals in this report meet the Council's legal obligations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where a customer defaults on the fee or charge for a service, the fee or charge must be defensible, in order to recover it through legal action. Adherence to the MBC Charging Policy on setting fees and charges provides some assurance that appropriate factors have been considered in setting such fees and charges. 	
Privacy and Data Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendations do not have any privacy or data protection implications. 	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment. 	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendations do not have any public health implications. 	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendations do not have any public health implications. 	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendations do not have any procurement implications. 	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
Biodiversity and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no direct implications 	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The council is able to recover the costs of providing certain services through making a charge to service users. For some services, this is a requirement and charges are set out in statute, and in other areas the council has discretion to determine whether charging is appropriate, and the level at which charges are set. All charges for services which fall within the remit of this committee are set at the council's discretion.
- 2.2 In recent years, the use of charging has become an increasingly important feature of the council's medium term financial strategy, as pressures on the revenue budget limit the extent to which subsidisation of discretionary services is feasible. Recovering the costs of these services from users where possible helps to ensure sustainability of the council's offer to residents and businesses, beyond the statutory minimum.
- 2.3 A charging policy (attached at Appendix 2 for reference) is in place for charges which are set at the council's discretion and this seeks to ensure that:
- a) Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well services for which there is potential to charge in the future.
 - b) Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.
 - c) Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.
 - d) Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.
- 2.4 The policy covers fees and charges that are set at the discretion of the council and does not apply to services where the council is prohibited from charging, e.g. the collection of household waste. Charges currently determined by central government, e.g. planning application fees, are also outside the scope of the policy.
- 2.5 Managers are asked to consider the following factors when reviewing fees and charges:
- a) The council's strategic plan and values, and how charge supports these;
 - b) The use of subsidies and concessions targeted at certain user groups or to facilitate access to a service;
 - c) The actual or potential impact of competition in terms of price or quality;
 - d) Trends in user demand including an estimate of the effect of price changes on customers;
 - e) Customer survey results;
 - f) Impact on users, both directly and on delivering the council's objectives;

- g) Financial constraints including inflationary pressure and service budgets;
- h) The implications of developments such as investment made in a service;
- i) The corporate impact on other service areas of council wide pressures to increase fees and charges;
- j) Alternative charging structures that could be more effective;
- k) Proposals for targeting promotions during the year and the evaluation of any that took place in previous periods.

Proposed Fees & Charges for 2023-24

- 2.6 It is important that charges are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain appropriate and keep pace with the costs associated with service delivery as they increase over time.
- 2.7 Charges for services which fall within the remit of this committee have been reviewed by budget managers in line with the policy, as part of the development of the medium term financial strategy for 2023/24 onwards. The detailed results of the review carried out this year are set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.8 Table 1 below summarises the 2021/22 outturn and 2022/23 estimate for income from the fees and charges which fall within the remit of this committee.
- 2.9 The overall increase in income if these changes are agreed and implemented as planned is expected to be £760 which amounts to a 0.4% increase in the overall budgeted Fees and Charges figure for this committee for the current financial year. We are reviewing the overall position as part of finalising the 2023/24 budget process, it may be necessary for further changes to be included in the budget proposals that will be considered by the Committee in January.

Fees and Charges

Service Area	2020-21 Outturn £	2021-22 Estimate £	Proposed change in income £	2022-23 Estimate £
Parks and Open Spaces - Leisure Activities	20,012	20,530	760	21,290
Economic Development (Jubilee Square)	175	3,500	0	3,500
Market	84,477	123,000	0	123,000
Museum	34,230	44,400	0	44,400
Total income from fees set by the Council	138,894	191,430	760	192,190

Table 1: Fees & Charges Summary (ERL)

- 2.10 Detailed proposals are set out within Appendix 1 to this report.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1

The committee could recommend approval to adopt the fees and charges as proposed in Appendix 1. As these proposals have been developed in line with the council's policy on fees and charges, they will create a manageable impact on service delivery whilst maximising income levels.

3.2 Option 2

The committee could recommend alternative charges to those set out within Appendix 1. Any alternative increases may not be fully compliant with the policy, would require further consideration before implementation and may not deliver the necessary levels of income to ensure a balanced budget for 2023-24. The impact on demand for a service should also be taken into account when considering increases to charges beyond the proposed level.

3.3 Option 3

The committee could recommend to do nothing and retain charges at their current levels. However, this might limit the Council's ability to recover the cost of delivering discretionary services and could result in the Council being unable to set a balanced budget for 2023-24.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 as set out above is recommended as the proposed fees and charges shown within Appendix 1 have been developed by budget managers in line with the Council's Charging Policy. The proposed charges are considered appropriate and are expected to create a manageable impact on service delivery whilst maximising cost recovery. Changes to fees and charges recommended by this committee will go to the Executive for approval and will come into effect on 1 April 2023 unless otherwise stated.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 No consultation has been undertaken specifically relating to the proposals set out in the report. However, the Council has undertaken a Budget survey of residents which will be used to inform wider decisions related to budget setting and spending priorities. The results of this survey will be considered as part of the budget process.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee will receive an overarching report of all fees and charges proposals on 14 December 2022.
- 7.2 Proposed changes to fees and charges will go to the Executive on the 21 December 2022 for approval as set out within Appendix 1 and will be implemented with effect from 1 April 2023.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- 8.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:
- Appendix 1: Current and Proposed Fees & Charges – ERL PAC
 - Appendix 2: Charging Policy
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24
Fees and Charges
Economic Regeneration Leisure PAC

APPENDIX 1

Fees and Charges	April 2022- March 2023	* Includes VAT	Statutory Fee Discretionary F	Actuals 2021-2022	Current Estimate 2022-23	Current Charges 2022-2023	Proposed Charges 2023-2024	Change	+ / - Income 2022-23	Estimate 2023-2024	Comments
				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
Museum											
<u>School Education Activities</u>		x		21,173	24,300					24,300	
First workshop		x				90.00	90.00	7.14%			
Each Subsequent workshop		x				70.00	75.00	7.14%			Per additional class
Craft Sessions		x				70.00	75.00	7.14%			To raise interest
Object Inspired		x				40.00	45.00	12.50%			Self-led package
Lunch room hire						20.00	20.00	0.00%			School charged to use lunch room if on an unpaid for visit
<u>Outreach to schools</u>											
Children's holiday activities		x									
Out with 1 staff member											
1 workshop		x				180.00	200.00	11.11%			
2 workshops		x				250.00	275.00	10.00%			
3 workshops		x				325.00	350.00	7.69%			
3 workshops + Giant craft		x				475.00	500.00	5.26%			
4 workshops		x				400.00	450.00	12.50%			
Out with 2 CLA											
Loan Boxes to schools per half term		x				50.00	50.00	0.00%			
<u>Room Hire</u>		x		4,145	5,000					5,000	
Glass Room - Per day		x				135.00	145.00	7.41%			
Library - Per day		x				220.00	230.00	4.55%			
Museum out of hours (based on 4 hours))		x				600.00	650.00	8.33%			
<u>Events</u>				8,380	8,000					8,000	
Per Child minimum charge depending on activity		x				3.00	3.00	0.00%			
<u>Children's Parties</u>	*			0	5,000					5,000	
Per Child minimum charge depending on activity		x				12.50	13.00	4.00%			
<u>Carriage Museum Admission</u>				330	1,600					1,600	
Adult		x				3.00	3.00	0.00%			May be waived for special events
Child over 5		x				2.00	2.00	0.00%			
Family Ticket		x				7.00	7.00	0.00%			
<u>Collections enquiries</u>											
QORWK - enquiries		x		203	500	20.00	20.00	0.00%		500	QORWK enquiry £15 per family history enquiry. The fee is waived for collections based enquiries or where the museum gains research/information
Museum Total				34,230	44,400				0	44,400	

Fees and Charges	April 2022- March 2023	* Includes VAT	Statutory Fee Discretionary F	Actuals 2021-2022	Current Estimate 2022-23	Current Charges 2022-2023	Proposed Charges 2023-2024	Change	+ / - Income 2022-23	Estimate 2023-2024	Comments
				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
Parks and Open Spaces-Leisure Activities											
<u>Tennis - per court per hour</u>											
Adult - single hire	*	x		0	0	8.40	8.40	0.00%		0	
Adult -10 or more hires	exempt	x				7.00	7.00	0.00%			
OAP/Junior - single hire	*	x				4.60	4.60	0.00%			
OAP/Junior - 10 or more hires	exempt	x				3.80	3.80	0.00%			
<u>Bowls - Season - Adult</u>	*	x		0	0	80.00	80.00	0.00%		0	
- OAP/Junior	*	x				40.00	40.00	0.00%			
- per Green - Adult	*	x				6.00	6.00	0.00%			
- OAP/Junior	*	x				3.00	3.00	0.00%			
-Match fees	*	x				4.80	4.80	0.00%			
Use of Woods - per hour/match - Adult	*	x				3.50	3.50	0.00%			
- OAP/Junior	*	x				2.30	2.30	0.00%			
49 - per match - Adult	*	x				3.50	3.50	0.00%			
- OAP/Junior	*	x				2.30	2.30	0.00%			
<u>Rounders - Weekends</u>	*	x				53.50	53.50	0.00%			
- Evenings 5 - 9.30pm	*	x				41.50	41.50	0.00%			
<u>Use of Changing Rooms and Showers</u>	*	x				20.00	20.00	0.00%			
<u>Events</u>											
Fairs and circuses - per day (min. charge)	exempt	x				635.00	635.00	0.00%			
Big top show - per evening (min. charge)	exempt	x				430.00	430.00	0.00%			
<u>Hire of Parks</u>											
Fitness Classes (10-70 participants) - per session (min charge) B904		x		42	5,200	19.00	19.95	5.00%		5,200	
<u>All Events</u>											
Event day fee (min charge) per day				19,970	15,330				760	16,090	
- up to 100 participants	exempt	x				52.00	55.00	5.77%			
100 to 499 participants	exempt	x				100.00	105.00	5.00%			
500 - 899 participants	exempt	x				435.00	460.00	5.75%			
901+ by negotiation	exempt	x									
Booking and disruption fee (min charge) per day on site (including all event days and build days)											
Commercial and charity ticketed events - Mote Park		x				310.00	325.00	4.84%			Price point should be in mutliples of £5 for customer ease
Free events - Mote Park		x				67.00	70.00	4.48%			Price point should be in mutliples of £5 for customer ease
Additional hire fee for event parking per day (Mote Park on		x				310.00	325.00	4.84%			Price point should be in mutliples of £5 for customer ease
Commercial and charity ticketed events - All other Parks		x				155.00	165.00	6.45%			
Free events - All other Parks		x				62.00	65.00	4.84%			Price point should be in mutliples of £5 for customer ease

Fees and Charges April 2022- March 2023	* Includes VAT	Statutory Fee Discretionary F	Actuals 2021-2022	Current Estimate 2022-23	Current Charges 2022-2023	Proposed Charges 2023-2024	Change	+ / - Income 2022-23	Estimate 2023-2024	Comments
			£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
Filming companies -(min charge) per day										
- Mote Park	exempt	x			325.00	380.00	16.92%			in line with small one day event
- Brencley Gardens	exempt	x			215.00	230.00	6.98%			
- others by negotiation										
Commercial medical units - per day		x			145.00	145.00	0.00%			
Hot air ballooning (per flight/landing) - Private	exempt	x			115.00	115.00	0.00%			
Mooring Fee										
PER VESSEL (20 feet length)										
per Night	*	x			8.00	8.00	0.00%			
per Week	*	x			40.00	40.00	0.00%			
per Month	*	x			140.00	140.00	0.00%			
per Quarter	*	x			350.00	350.00	0.00%			
			20,012	20,530				760	21,290	
Market										
Office Rent C250										
Mon/Tue/Fri charge per month 1st April - 31st March	x		0	2,600	460.00	460.00	0.00%	0	2,600	This is per contract should not change
Tuesday & Saturday Market Pitches C223/C226			27,701	40,310				0	40,310	
Open Market										
Regular Rate Market Square										
Up to 10 feet - 1 April - 31 Dec	x				25.00	15.00	-40.00%			
Undercroft Rate - 1 April - 31 Dec	x				25.00	15.00	-40.00%			
Lettings-General C251/D358/C227			54,274	80,090				0	80,090	Based on last full year bookings.
Hire of Agricultural Hall										
Standard Hire - per day - casual hire	x				495.00	525.00	6.06%			Casual hire - once per month
Standard Hire minimum 3 hours	x				35.00	35.00	0.00%			£35.00 per hour / £105 per session to C251
Boot Fair -When in undercroft										
10' - pitch (£10 per each additional 10' pitch)	x				15.00	10.00	-33.33%			
Commercial Hire										
Per half day (maximum 8 hours)	x				550.00	550.00	0.00%			
Per day (over 8 hours)	x				1,050.00	1,050.00	0.00%			
Hire of chairs for events - per 100	x				50.00	50.00	0.00%			Charged pro rata
Farmers Market C253	x		2,501	0	0.00	0.00	#DIV/0!	0	0	
Every other Friday - daily rate										
April - March										
Market Total			84,477	123,000				0	123,000	

Fees and Charges	April 2022- March 2023	* Includes VAT	Discretionary F	Statutory Fee	Actuals	Current Estimate	Current	Proposed	Change	+ / - Income	Estimate	Comments
					2021-2022	2022-23	Charges	Charges		2022-23	2023-2024	
					£	£	£	£		%	£	
Economic Development-Jubilee Square												
Jubilee Square (EN40 B724)					175	3,500					3,500	
Use of premises licence		x					70.00	75.00	7.14%			
Use of electricity - 3 phase (incl Openreach call out)		x					80.00	85.00	6.25%			
Use of Electricity (Without Openreach call out)		x					20.00	25.00	25.00%			
Promotional/Commercial use inc admin fee		x					250.00	265.00	6.00%			
Events/Educational Promotion (min) charity / public sector admin fee		x					50.00	55.00	10.00%			
Economic Development Total					175	3,500				0	3,500	
GRAND TOTAL					138,894	191,430				760	192,190	

Maidstone Borough Council

Charging Policy

November 2017

Maidstone Borough Council

Charging Policy

1 Introduction and Context

- 1.1 At Maidstone Borough Council, fees and charges represent an important source of income which is used to support the delivery of the Council's objectives. Currently income from fees and charges constitutes just under a third of the council's funding.
- 1.2 The Council needs to ensure that its charges are reviewed regularly, and that they contribute towards the achievement of its priorities. It is also important to ensure that fees and charges do not discriminate against individuals or groups by excluding them from accessing council services.
- 1.3 Pressure on the Council's budgets has increased the incentive to make best use of charging opportunities and to recognise the importance of using this as a means of recovering the costs of delivering services.
- 1.4 Under the Council's constitution, responsibility for setting discretionary fees and charges is delegated to service committees and directors. Each committee will review the fees and charges for the services within its remit at least annually as part of the budget setting process to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate.
- 1.5 Where the Council has the discretion to set the charge for a service, it is important that the implications of this decision are fully understood, and that decision makers are equipped with sufficient information to enable rational decisions to be made.

2 Policy Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to establish a framework within which fees and charges levied by the Council are agreed and reviewed.
- 2.2 The Council must ensure that charges are set at an appropriate level which maximises cost recovery. Unless it would conflict with the Council's strategic priorities, other policies, contracts or the law then the Council should aim to maximise net income from fees and charges.
- 2.3 The policy aims to ensure that:-
 - a) Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well as services for which there is potential to charge in the future.
 - b) Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.

Maidstone Borough Council

Charging Policy

- c) Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.
- d) Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This policy relates to fees and charges currently being levied by the Council and those which are permissible under the wider general powers to provide and charge for “Discretionary Services” included within the Local Government Act 2003 and Localism Act 2011. It does not cover services for which the council is prohibited from charging.
- 3.2 Fees for statutory services delivered by the council, but for which charges are set by central government, rents, leases, council tax, and business rates are outside the scope of this policy.
- 3.3 In general, charges should ensure that service users make a direct contribution to the cost of providing a service. However, there may be certain circumstances where this would not be appropriate. For example:
 - Where the council is prohibited from charging for the service (e.g. collection of household waste)
 - Where the introduction of a charge would impede delivery of corporate priorities;
 - Where administrative costs of charging outweigh the potential income;
 - Where the service is seen to be funded from Council Tax (i.e. services which are provided and delivered equally to all residents)
 - Where the government sets the fee structure (e.g. pollution permits and private water fees)

4 Principles

- 4.1 The following overarching principles apply for the consideration and review of all current and future fees and charges levied by the council:
 - Fees and charges should maximise cost recovery and where appropriate, income generation, to the extent that the Council’s legal powers permit, providing that this would not present any conflict with the Council’s strategic objectives;
 - Fees and charges should support the improvement of services, and the delivery of the Council’s corporate priorities, as set out in the strategic plan;

Maidstone Borough Council

Charging Policy

- Where a subsidy or concession is provided for a service, this must be targeted towards the delivery of strategic priorities, for example, by facilitating access to services;
- The process for setting and updating fees and charges should be administratively simple, transparent and fair, and for budgeting purposes, income projections must be robust and rational.

5 Process and Frequency for Reviewing Charges

- 5.1 The following arrangements for reviewing charges will be applied throughout the Council, for existing charges as well as those which in principle could be introduced.
- 5.2 In accordance with the Council's constitution, *'Discretionary fees and charges will be reviewed and fixed each year by the Committee responsible for the function or the Service Director as appropriate having considered a report from the Director or duly authorised Officer in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer, as part of the estimate cycle.'*
- 5.3 This annual review will ensure consistency with the Council's priorities, policy framework, service aims, market sensitivity, customer preferences, income generation needs and that any subsidy made by the Council is justifiable.
- 5.4 Heads of Service and budget managers will be asked to complete a schedule setting out all proposed fees and charges for the services in their area (including those which are not set by the council). This will usually take place in autumn for the following financial year and review the current year. By this means, any growth or savings resulting from fees and charges can be built into the budget strategy. The schedule will indicate:
- The service or supply to which the charge relates;
 - Who determines the charges;
 - The basis for the charge (e.g. units or hourly rates);
 - The existing charge;
 - The total income budget for the current year;
 - The proposed charge;
 - Percentage increase/decrease;
 - Effective date for increase/decrease; and
 - Estimated income for the next financial year after introducing the change.

An example schedule is provided at Appendix B.

- 5.5 Following this, the proposals will be collated by the Finance section into a report for each committee to consider the appropriateness of proposed fees and charges for the services within their remit. The report will clearly identify the charges for which the committee can apply

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discretion, and distinguish these from the charges which are set externally and included for information only. Policy and Resources Committee will then receive a final report which brings together the proposals from each of the three service committees, in order to assess the overall impact of the proposed changes, and consider the potential impact on customers and service users.

- 5.6 The timing of the annual review will ensure that changes can be incorporated into the council's budget for the forthcoming financial year, although changes to fees and charges may be made outside of this process if required through a report to the relevant director or service committee.
- 5.7 It is possible that the review may lead to a conclusion that charges should remain at the existing level. If this is the case, then the outcomes of the review, including the justification for not increasing the charge need to be documented and reported to the relevant service committee.
- 5.8 For the avoidance of doubt, periodic reviews of the rents and leases are not covered by the above. Individual reviews will be implemented by the relevant officer as long as market levels at least are achieved.

6 Guidance

- 6.1 A checklist of issues for budget managers and Heads of Service to consider when determining the level at which to set fees and charges is provided at Appendix A to this policy.
- 6.2 Below is a list of guiding principles intended to assist decision makers in determining the appropriate level at which to set fees and charges:
 - a) Any subsidy from the Council tax payer to service users should be transparent and justifiable.
 - b) Fees and charges may be used to manage demand for a service, and price elasticity of demand should be considered when determining the level at which charges should be set.
 - c) Fees and charges should not be used to provide subsidies to commercial operators.
 - d) Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern and a fair and consistent approach should be taken to ensuring the ensure recovery of all fees and charges.
 - e) Fees and charges should reflect key commitments and corporate priorities.

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- f) Prices could be based on added and perceived value, which takes account of wider economic and social considerations, as well as cost.
- g) There should be some rational scale in the charge for different levels of the same service and there should be consistency between charges for similar services.
- h) Policies for fees and charges should fit with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and, where appropriate, should be used to generate income to help develop capacity, to deliver efficiency and sustain continuous improvement.
- i) In certain areas, charging may be used to generate surpluses which can be used to finance other services.

6.3 Wherever possible, charges should be recovered in advance or at the point of service delivery. If this is not possible, then invoices should be issued promptly and appropriate recovery procedures will be followed as required. Use of direct debit should be encouraged for periodic payments where this would improve cost effectiveness and enable efficient and timely collection of income.

7 Cost Recovery Limitation

- 7.1 Generally speaking, charges should be set at a level which enables all the costs of delivering a service to be recovered, although there are some exceptions to this identified earlier in this document. This includes direct costs such as the purchase of goods for resale, as well as indirect costs such as management and accommodation costs.
- 7.2 For certain services, legislation prohibits the Council from generating surpluses through charging. The general principle is that, taking one financial year with another, the income from charges must not exceed the costs of provision. Examples where this applies include building control and local land charges.
- 7.3 Any over or under recovery that resulted in a surplus or deficit of income in relation to costs in one period should be addressed when setting its charges for future periods so that, over time, income equates to costs.
- 7.4 Councils are free to decide what methodology to adopt to assess costs. Maidstone Borough Council follows the Service Reporting Code of Practice definition of total cost, including an allocation of all related support costs, plus an appropriate share of corporate and democratic

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core and non-distributed costs. Further guidance and support on calculating the full cost of service provision can be obtained from the Finance section.

8 Concessions & Subsidies

- 8.1 The normal level of fees and charges may be amended to allow for concessions targeted at certain user groups to encourage or facilitate access to the service.
- 8.2 Where concessions are proposed or already in place they must be justified in terms of overall business reasons, or implementation of key strategic considerations e.g. community safety, healthy living.
- 8.3 Examples of concessions and the reasons why they are awarded are:-
- Reductions for older people or children to encourage different age groups to participate in the sport which is linked to the promotion of public health;
 - Free spaces for disabled drivers in Council car parks to support social inclusion;
 - Concessions for new casual traders at the market to stimulate new usage;
- 8.4 In some cases, it may also be justifiable to subsidise a service for all users, where it would support delivery of strategic priorities.
- 8.5 In some circumstances, it may also be suitable to implement a system of means testing for managing access to concessions and subsidies, in order to ensure that subsidy can be targeted appropriately.
- 8.6 A fair and consistent approach should be taken to the application of concessionary schemes, and decisions should recognise the Council's broader agenda on promoting equality, as set out in the Equality Policy. When considering new charges, or significant changes to an existing charge, the budget manager should complete an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA).
- 8.7 All decisions regarding concessions and subsidies should include consideration of the impact the Council's ability to generate income and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9 Introducing a new charge

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- 9.1 Proposals to introduce new charges should be considered as part of the service planning process and income projections should be factored into the Council's medium term financial plan.
- 9.2 Reasonable notice should be given to customers and service users prior to the introduction of a new charge, along with advice on concessions and discounts available.
- 9.3 Proposals should be based on robust evidence, and will incorporate the anticipated financial impact of introducing the charge, as well as the potential impact on demand for the service.
- 9.4 Performance should be monitored closely following implementation to enable amendments to the charge to be made if required, and the charge will subsequently be picked up as part of the annual review process.

10 Monitoring

- 10.1 Income levels will be monitored throughout the year and reported to committees through the quarterly reporting process. Significant variances may be addressed through an amended to charges, which will require approval from the appropriate Director or Service Committee.
- 10.2 The impact of changes in demand for services will be monitored through quarterly performance monitoring reports, where this is identified as a key performance indicator.

Appendices

Appendix A - Discretionary Fees & Charges Review Checklist

The below checklist may be used as a guide for managers when reviewing existing charges or implementing a new fee structure.

Have you considered the following?	Y/N/NA	Comments
1. How does the charge link to the Council's corporate priorities?		
2. Does the charge enable the council to recover all costs of providing the service?		
3. If the answer to question 2 is 'No', have you considered increasing the charge to enable full cost recovery?		
4. Has the impact of inflation on the cost of service delivery been reflected in the proposed charge?		
5. Do the administrative costs of charging or increasing the charge outweigh the potential income to be generated?		
6. Is the charge being used to deter or incentivise certain behaviours?		
7. Has there been any investment in the service to effect an increase in charges?		
8. If there is a market for the service or supply, has the impact of market conditions and competition be considered in setting the charge?		
9. How sensitive is the price to demand for the service? Is there a risk that an increase in charge could deter potential customers?		
10. If applicable, have consultation results been taken into account?		

Appendix A - Discretionary Fees & Charges Review Checklist

11. Could the charges or income budget be increased to support the delivery of a savings target?		
12. What would the impact of the change be on customers, and how does this affect the delivery of corporate priorities?		
13. Have any alternative charging structures been considered?		
14. How will the service be promoted? How successful have previous promotions been in generating demand?		
15. New charges only - are there any legal factors which impact on the scope for charging (e.g. an obligation to limit charges to cost recovery only)?		
16. New charges only - has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed?		
17. If applicable, have concessionary charges been considered on a fair and consistent basis?		

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Chargeable Service/Supply: _____

Job Title: _____

Department: _____

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Fees and Charges April 2017 - March 2018		* Includes VAT	Discretionary Fee	Statutory Fee	2016-2017 Actuals	2017 -2018 Current Estimate	Current Charges 2017-2018	Proposed Charges 2018-2019	% Change	2017-2018 + / - Income	2018 -2019 Estimate	Comments
EA31	Street Naming & Numbering											
					66,995	49,000				0	49,000	
	Name change						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Addition of Name to numbered Property						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Amendment to Postal Address						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	New Build - Individual Property						75.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Official Registration of Postal Address previously not Registered						50.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	New Development - Fee per unit/flat						40.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Creation of New Street						100.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Renumbering of Development or Block of Flats - Fee per unit/flat						20.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Street Naming & Numbering Total				66,995	49,000				0	49,000	