

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Economic and Commercial Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 26 AUGUST 2014

Present: Councillor Paterson (Chairman), and
Councillors Butler, Cuming, Mrs Hinder, Hogg, Powell,
Mrs Robertson and Vizzard

Also Present: Councillors Cox, Ells, Naghi and Newton

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

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be webcast.

24. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Nikki Fissenden.

25. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Cynthia Robertson was substituting for Councillor Nikki Fissenden.

26. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

Laura Case, Cultural Services Manager, was present for item 8: Events and Festivals Policy; Events Review SCRAIP update.

Councillors Martin Cox, Gordon Newton and David Naghi were present as visiting members for item 8: Events and Festivals Policy; Events Review SCRAIP update.

Councillor Simon Ells was in attendance as a visiting member for all items.

27. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

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

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

29. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29TH JULY 2014

Councillor Mike Hogg notified the committee that he could not agree the minutes of the previous meeting as he had not received an agenda. Therefore it was concluded that this item would be deferred to the next meeting.

30. EVENTS AND FESTIVALS POLICY; EVENTS REVIEW SCRAIP UPDATE

Laura Case, Cultural Services Manager, was invited to speak on item 8: Events and Festivals Policy; Events Review SCRAIP update.

Mrs Case made a presentation to the committee about the Events and Festivals Policy. Mrs Case explained to the committee that:

- The policy was developed in order to provide a consistent approach to events and festivals across the borough;
- The policy sought to utilise the Council's parks and open spaces to run events and to generate a profit for the authority;
- The policy proposed ways to measure the social, economic and cultural impacts that events may have on the borough;
- A separate evaluation questionnaire for smaller events was also being worked on as part of the policy;
- A toolkit for events would be included as part of the final policy, however this was currently in development. This toolkit had two purposes:
 - To set out expectations for event organisers; and
 - To assist smaller community and voluntary groups in moving through the event planning process.
- The policy sought to balance negative effects of festivals with benefits for residents and visitors to the borough;
- Further work was planned to develop a framework for major events. This work would be carried out in partnership with Licensing and Environmental Health.

Mrs Case summarised her approach to the Festivals and Events Policy by highlighting the opportunities in terms of revenue streams that festivals and events presented; but at the same time recognising, and mitigating, the negative effects that festivals and events can have on the borough's residents.

The committee enquired why rural areas were not explicitly mentioned, as they often held large scale and successful events. Mrs Case responded that the primary focus of the Events and Festivals Policy was those events and festivals that took place in council owned public spaces. Most of these were situated in the urban area of Maidstone Town, explaining why rural areas were not explicitly mentioned.

The committee enquired whether a debriefing session, mentioned in appendix f) in the SCRAIP response, happened after every event that took place in the borough. Mrs Case informed the committee that a debrief session happened for every event, whether it had received funding from the council or not. However it was sometimes problematic to arrange these meetings for smaller events.

The committee highlighted to Mrs Case the traffic congestion that could be caused by successful events. The committee suggested that prior warning for residents, as well as warnings on the day of the event, about potential traffic problems caused by events would be beneficial.

Mrs Case was asked whether there were any new budgets for festivals and events to go alongside the policy. Mrs Case replied that there was no new funding available however there was pre-existing funding from previous events. Mrs Case also explained to the committee that there would be a renewed focus on seeking funding from external sources, for example from public health funds, heritage lottery fund or from the voluntary and community sector. Mrs Case also gave the example of Joint Ventures with private sector event organisers that could make a profit for the council.

The committee considered the SCRAIP response that was attached at Appendix B to the report of the Cultural Services Manager. The committee suggested that the Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development should reconsider his rejection of the idea of enclosing an events pamphlet with the annual Council Tax bill. The reason for this was that the committee felt this was a valuable opportunity for some free publicity that was not being capitalised on.

It was suggested that Maidstone needed a signature festival, which Maidstone could become well known for. The committee was in agreement that this was a good idea.

RESOLVED: That

- a) The Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development be recommended to adopt the Festivals and Events Policy, subject to:
 - i. Due consideration being given to rural communities in the final policy;
 - ii. Advanced warning about traffic management being given to residents before events, specifically in the form of mobile road signs on the highway system, as well as traffic management advice being given on the day of an event;
 - iii. Work being undertaken to develop a signature event for Maidstone.
- b) Consideration be given by officers on how to feed back good news stories from events to the committee; and
- c) Further information be provided, by the Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development, to explain why recommendation k in the Events Review SCRAIP was rejected.

31. TWILIGHT ECONOMY REVIEW DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT

Sam Bailey, Research and Performance Officer, introduced item 9 on the agenda: Twilight Economy Review Scoping Document.

In terms of possible site visits for the review, the committee suggested that the following were aspirational areas in terms of the twilight economy:

- Croydon;
- Ashford; and
- Canterbury.

The committee asked Mr Bailey to carry out further research before the next meeting to identify suitable locations for site visits.

The committee agreed that they were satisfied with the following definition of the night time economy:

Economic activity that occurs in the town centre after ordinary shop and workplace closing times (around 5.30pm) but before the usual pub closing times (around 11.30 pm)

RESOLVED: That

- a) The definition for the 'Twilight Economy', set out in the report of the Research and Performance Officer, be agreed;
- b) Further suggestions for site visits for the Twilight Economy Review be brought to the committee for consideration at the meeting in September 2014; and
- c) The scoping document, set out in Appendix A to the report of the Research and Performance Officer, be endorsed.

32. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That

- a) The meeting of the 23rd September 2014 be moved to the 29th September 2014; and
- b) Following the development of the Council's Commercialisation Strategy it was agreed that a SCRAIP update on the Council as a Business? Review was no longer required and it should be removed from the committee's Future Work Programme.

33. DURATION OF MEETING

18:31 to 20:31