

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3 JULY 2018

Present: Councillor Harper (Chairman), Councillors Cuming, Fermor, Fort, Hastie, Lewins, Perry and Mrs Wilson

Also Present: Councillor Newton

20. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs Hinder.

21. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was noted that Councillor Perry was substituting for Councillor Mrs Hinder.

22. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Chairman indicated that he wished to raise the issue of the underspend following the Reference sent to Policy and Resources Committee by this Committee at the end of the agenda.

The reason for urgency was that this Committee's refined bid needed to be submitted before the Policy and Resources Committee met on 24th July.

23. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillor Newton was present as a Visiting Member.

24. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

Councillor Cuming disclosed an interest in Agenda Item 13 – Nominations to Outside Bodies as he was a nominee. He advised that he would leave the room when that particular outside body was being discussed.

25. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

All Members stated that they had been lobbied on Agenda Item 15 – MBC Outdoor Sports Facilities Booking Process.

26. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

27. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 MAY 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

28. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

29. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

30. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public. However, Mrs Pauline Bowdrey, representing Boxley Parish Council, had been invited by the Chairman to make a Statement on Agenda Item 14 – Disposal of Open Space at Franklin Drive.

31. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Committee Work Programme for 2018/19.

The following changes were made to the Work Programme:-

- Museums 20 Year Plan Update – moved to October
- Festivals and Events Update – moved to October
- Nature Reserves - September

The following additions were made to the Work Programme:-

- 400th Anniversary of the Charter to Maidstone Borough Council for the ownership of the Swans – to come to Committee January/February 2019. This could also coincide with an exhibition on the Charters that Maidstone Borough Council have been given over the years through Officers working with the Kent History Centre
- Nature Reserves – following an email from Councillor Harwood for a report to be brought to the September meeting
- Long Term Maintenance of our Heritage Buildings – This should be looked at in terms of the budgets allocated to them.
- That the Cemetery Improvements report coming to the September meeting should include reference to the wellbeing facilities for staff.

In response to questions from Members, Ms Hudd advised that:-

- That a separate report would come to the November meeting (or at the latest January/February 2019) looking forward to key dates in the calendar, the potential for a Pride event will be included

although to date Officers have not been able to find any groups to liaise with that would be willing to take this forward. The report would include an outline 5 year rolling programme of key dates and events.

- That an email was sent to Members of the Committee shortly after the last meeting which provided an update on the Banning of Sky Lanterns – this confirmed that the Parish Liaison Meeting had not taken place but it was on the agenda for the next meeting. The Communications Team had also produced a light touch campaign on this.

It also advised that the £31,350 underspend on green spaces was related to a Health and Wellbeing Museum's Project that was being rolled out to schools in areas of deprivation, with the first activity having been held on 6 June.

- That the Committee had agreed last year to keep a watching brief on developments related to Headcorn Aerodrome's desire to have a Transport Museum. It was noted that the Museum's Director was on the Working Group to ensure she was kept fully informed.

It was suggested that when the Play Area Grant Scheme Update report is presented to the September meeting it should include all the play areas and should also provide some information to dispel the disquiet felt by Members that play areas would only come back to Committee when they are at the end of their usefulness.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted with the additions made by the Committee.

32. NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES - HCL

Mrs Caroline Matthews, the Democratic Services Officer presented a report on the nominations received from Members relating to outside bodies that are appointed by the Committee.

Councillor Cuming left the room when the nominations for the Maidstone Sea Cadets appointment was considered.

When considering the issue related to the Maidstone Sea Cadets outside body appointment, the Committee requested that Officers speak with the organisation to see if the Council could have a representative and a substitute.

The Committee also requested that consideration should be given to the terms of office in general so that there is a maximum term that a Member could be appointed for.

RESOLVED:

1. That Councillor English be appointed as the Council's representative on the Collis Millennium Green Trust for a period of one year.

Voting: Unanimous

2. That Councillor Harper be automatically appointed as Chairman of Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee and the other two vacancies be re-advertised.

Voting: Unanimous

3. That Councillor Cuming be appointed as the Council's representative on the Maidstone Sea Cadets for a 4 year period and that Officers make enquiries to the Organisation to see if they would accept a Substitute Member or another Full Member.

Voting: Unanimous

4. That Councillor B Hinder be appointed as the Council's representative on the Maidstone Beauvais Twinning Association for a period of 3 years.

Voting: Unanimous

33. DISPOSAL OF OPEN SPACE AT FRANKLIN DRIVE

The Committee considered the report of Mrs Jennifer Shepherd, the Head of Environment and Public Realm in regard to the disposal of Franklin Drive Open Space by long lease to Boxley Parish Council.

It was noted that the Maidstone Play Area Policy was brought to this Committee in October last year. In that report it was agreed that non-strategic play areas would not be maintained in the future using the Council's resources but instead they would be offered to Parish Councils, Housing Associations and other Community Groups to take over the maintenance and running of them. Franklin Drive was one of the play areas considered to be non-strategic as there were two other play areas in the area.

Mrs Pauline Bowdrey addressed the Committee on behalf of Boxley Parish Council and stated that this was a good example of localism and partnership working to provide what was best for the community. She also emphasised that the Parish Council had secured external funding to replace and add equipment to the play area and were willing and able to take over the maintenance of this site.

The Chairman read out a statement on behalf of Councillor Mrs Hinder who was a Ward Member for Boxley who stated that the Franklin Drive open space was greatly used by local children due to its close proximity to the houses on Grove Green. It was also noted that the closest play area was a good 12 minutes walk away. Its loss to the local community would

have had a detrimental effect on the local community.

In response to questions from Members, Mrs Claudette Valmond, the Team Leader Property and Regeneration (Solicitor) advised that if as was being advised that the land in question was of relative low value (as it could not be used as anything other than a public open space) then it just needed a valuer to confirm that the rent of a peppercorn was the best consideration that could reasonably be obtained.

The Council was of the view that Boxley Parish Council taking over the maintenance of the open space would be the best outcome for all concerned. The reason the Council had leased it rather than handed over the freehold was due to a change in policy that was adopted by Policy and Resources Committee and it would ensure that it is used as a public open space.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That agreement be given to the disposal of Franklin Drive open space to Boxley Parish Council by a long lease (99 years) and that the land be declared surplus to operational requirements.
- 2) That the proposed disposal be advertised for two consecutive weeks in a local newspaper and consideration be given by the Committee to any objections that may be received in response.
- 3) That the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be authorised to negotiate, agree and complete the Lease and such other documents and to undertake such steps as are necessary and incidental to the recommendations in this report.

Voting: Unanimous

34. **MBC OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES BOOKING PROCESS**

Ms Hudd, the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development presented a report which set out the process for the booking of council sports pitches.

The Committee was informed by Ms Hudd that she was hopeful that a new electronic booking system would be put in within two weeks and would be in place for the new season.

In response to a question from a Member Ms Hudd undertook to speak to the Leisure Centre about extending the Wednesday cancellation rule to a later day in the week.

Ms Hudd informed the Committee that Maidstone Leisure Centre (MLC) would receive a management charge but the income from the booking of the pitches would still come to the Council and that a separate signed agreement would be used and would not form part of the main Maidstone Leisure Centre Contract. It was also noted that the agreement with the

Leisure Centre would be reviewed annually and did not commit the Council to anything long term should it decide to either reduce or increase the number of pitches provided.

Members requested that the data on the usage of sports pitches by type and park be sent to Members of the Committee by email.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that a separate signed agreement would be made with Maidstone Leisure Centre and would not form part of the Leisure Centre Contract.

Voting: Unanimous

35. HCL COMMITTEE UNDERSPEND

The Chairman advised that following the Reference to Policy and Resources Committee by this Committee on the underspend, Policy and Resources Committee decided to take an overall Council wide approach to the allocation of the underspend and would be asking the other Service Committees if they wanted to make any proposals for the underspend. All the proposals would be considered by Policy and Resources Committee on 24 July.

The Committee reaffirmed its request to retain some of its 2017/18 underspend and details would be delegated to the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

RESOLVED: That the Committee give delegated authority to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to provide the details to Policy and Resources Committee.

Voting: Unanimous

36. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8 p.m.