

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2015

Present: Councillor Newton (Chairman), and Councillors Ash, Ells, Fort, Hemsley, Mrs Hinder, Newton, Paterson, Pickett and Mrs Wilson

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Naghi, Perry, Mrs Ring, Sargeant and Vizard

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

33. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Mrs Wilson was substituting for Councillor Fissenden.

34. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman agreed to take the Report of the Head of Finance and Resources – Budget Monitoring 2015-16 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-17 Onwards as, in his opinion, it was an urgent item due to it having been produced after the agenda was published.

It was agreed that this item would be taken after item 10 - Questions and answer session for members of the public.

35. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillors Blackmore Ring reserved their right to speak on items 11 and 12.

Councillors Perry and Vizard reserved their rights to speak on item 11.

Councillor Naghi reserved his right to speak on any item on the agenda.

Councillor Sargeant was in attendance as an observer.

36. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

37. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors Ash, Ells, Paterson and Pickett disclosed that they had been lobbied on item 12 – River Festival.

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

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

39. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 AUGUST 2015

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Meeting held on 10 August 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed.

40. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

41. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

42. URGENT: BUDGET MONITORING 2015-16 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016-17 ONWARDS

The Head of Finance and Resources, Paul Riley, introduced the report and explained that there had been a budget overspend for the services that sit within Heritage, Culture and Leisure, and that greater efficiency of service would generate more income.

The Committee heard that under the previous governance system a budget working group was established to informally consider budgetary ideas before presentation to Committees.

During discussion the following was noted that:

- Income generated from the commercial activities planned for Mote Park would go towards resolving the budget for income, appointing an audience participation Officer, and supporting the medium term financial strategy.
- Until commercialisation projects were implemented on the ground they would not be included within projected income.
- The reasons for budget pressures were simple in some instances and complex in others. For instance, the crematorium had been affected by a target for income that was higher than service demand. In contrast, the Museum's budget was affected by multiple factors including the loss of financial support streams such as funding for educational programmes.

In response to questions it was confirmed that the background data was available for viewing and would be circulated to all Members of the Committee in advance of a meeting of a budget working group.

RESOLVED:

1. That the outturn for 2014/15 and the position for 2015/16 as at the end of June 2015 be noted;
2. That a reference be made to Policy & Resources Committee confirming agreement with the decision of the Policy and Resources Committee on the strategic revenue projection and the capital programme, in so far as it affects this Committee's budget;
3. That an informal meeting with relevant officers to discuss budget pressures and opportunities to provide savings to support the medium term financial strategy be arranged, and that the results of that informal meeting be reported to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration; and
4. That the potential capital projects be informally discussed at that meeting and that the results of that informal meeting be reported to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration.

For – 9 Against – 0 Abstain – 0

43. PLAY AREA CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME 2015/16-2017/18 - UPDATE

Jason Taylor, the Parks and Leisure Services Manager, presented an update report to advise the Committee of the progress of the play area improvement programme.

It was stated that:

- In 2009 a point system was brought in to evaluate the standards of play areas across the borough.
- Research conducted in 2012 identified that best use of resources would be to create a network of play areas, with residents able to reach their nearest facility within a 12 minute walk.
- The Play Area Strategy was produced, and funding for improvement agreed in 2015. Improvements would be rolled out over a three year period, with the first new equipment scheduled for installation in 2016.

In response to questions the following was explained:

- Play areas which were not improved would be offered to the community or closed. Areas that were closed would have equipment removed and remain as open or green space.
- The Play Area Strategy had not been agreed and so the proposed improvements for year one would be carried and a redrafted strategy would come to Committee.

RESOLVED: That the update provided on the Play Area Capital Improvement Programme be noted.

For – 9 Against – 0 Abstain - 0

44. RIVER FESTIVAL

The Head of Commercial and Economic Development, Dawn Hudd, spoke to a report setting out the history of the River Festival from the Council's perspective, noting that the River Festival had been organised by an independent committee and had not been a Council organised event.

Members made reference to the following:

The boating community had unofficially congregated for the past several years in a festival of boats to celebrate the river.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that the River Festival had been beneficial to food and drinks retailers, but detrimental to general town centre retailers.

Members were in agreement that Maidstone's cultural offering should be supported and its identity enhanced.

The Committee heard that the Council's newly adopted Destination Management Plan (DMP) included reference to promoting activities on the river. The DMP, in belonging to the whole leisure sector, included representation from several organisations as well as MBC Officers, and the Committee had a representative on the DMP Board. Update reports on the actions of the DMP Board would be brought to Committee by those Officers in attendance.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the Report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development be noted; and
2. That any proposal or decision to re-establish a Maidstone River Festival be taken to the Destination Management Plan (DMP) Steering Group which will now oversee the delivery of the DMP Action Plans.

45. DURATION OF MEETING

6.38 p.m. to 8.33 p.m.