

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 30 JANUARY
2018**

Present: Councillor Pickett (Chairman) and Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Butler, Ells, Fort, Hastie, Mrs Hinder, Lewins and Mrs Wilson

Also Present: Councillor Newton

96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

97. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

98. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

99. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Newton was present as a Visiting Member and indicated his wish to speak on Agenda Item 13 – Biodiversity Action Plan Update.

100. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

101. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

102. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

103. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed.

104. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

105. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

106. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme for 2017/18.

The Chairman assured the Committee that the Museum Future Governance Options would be presented to the Committee in March 2018.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme 2017/18 be noted.

107. STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-20, 2018-19 REFRESH

Mrs Angela Woodhouse, the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance, presented the Strategic Plan 2015-20, 2018-19 Refresh to the Committee.

It was noted that:

- The Policy and Resources Committee had approved the plan for circulation to each of the Service Committees in December;
- The top three priority areas would remain the same for 2018-19; and
- The two priority areas within this Committee's remit were:
 - Respecting the Character and Heritage of our Borough; and
 - Ensuring there are Good Leisure and Cultural Attractions.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mrs Woodhouse agreed to include the delivery of the biodiversity action plan under the priority area 'Providing a Safe and Clean Environment' as well as under the priority area 'Respecting the Character and Heritage of our Borough'.

The Committee agreed that the word 'Green' should be added into the title of the priority area 'Providing a Safe and Clean Environment' as it would demonstrate to residents that the Council was committed to creating a green environment in the Borough.

RESOLVED:

1. That the refreshed Strategic Plan attached at Appendix A be noted.

2. That the following amendment to the Strategic Plan 2015-20, 2018-19 Refresh be recommended to Policy and Resources Committee:
 - a. The word 'Green' be inserted into the title of the priority area 'Providing a Clean and Safe Environment'.

Voting: Unanimous

108. BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Mrs Jennifer Shepherd, the Head of Environment and Public Realm, presented the Biodiversity Action Plan Update to the Committee.

Mrs Shepherd highlighted to the Committee that:

- Maidstone's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) was adopted in 2011 to collate knowledge on priority species and habitats and to provide an action plan to conserve and protect them for the future.
- The LBAP had not been updated since 2014 and as the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan were adopted in 2017, it was appropriate to complete a refresh of the LBAP.
- Refreshing the LBAP would show the Council's future intentions and the importance it placed on biodiversity in the Borough.
- The cost implication of approximately £25,000 would be funded from the underspend from the Parks and Open Spaces 2017/18 budget.

Councillor Newton addressed the Committee on this item.

The Committee raised concerns about the cost of the LBAP refresh, in a time when budgets on frontline services were being cut.

The Committee noted that in order to impose stringent conditions on planning applications, to prevent the loss of ancient woodland for example, there needed to be robust policies in place and the LBAP would provide this.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mrs Shepherd confirmed that by refreshing the LBAP and finding out ways to encourage biodiversity, the cost to the Council of maintaining areas of land could decrease.

RESOLVED:

That a refresh of Maidstone's Biodiversity Action plan funded from the underspend from the Parks and Opens Spaces 2017/18 budget be agreed.

Voting: For – 8 Against – 1 Abstentions - 0

109. FEES & CHARGES

Miss Ellie Dunnet, the Head of Finance, presented the proposed fees and charges for 2018/19 for the services within the Committee's remit.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms Dawn Hudd, the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development, replied that:

- The cost to hire the Museum was being reduced because it was difficult to compete with venues in the Town Centre who were offering the service for free.
- The take up of school visits to the Museum had been affected by the closures of the galleries, but now the Museum was fully booked through to March.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed discretionary fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 to this report be agreed.

Voting: Unanimous

110. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY & BUDGET PROPOSALS 2018/19

Miss Ellie Dunnet, the Head of Finance, presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Proposals 2018/19 to the Committee.

It was noted that:

- The market operated by the Council at Lockmeadow had consistently under-performed on its income targets. It was considered that a reduction of £40,000 on an ongoing basis should be incorporated into the strategic revenue projections.
- Provision had been made in the budget for 2017/18 for a loss of budgeted income from the Mote Park Café of £96,000, following the poor performance of the Café in 2016/17. The operation of the Café had been contracted out and an additional income of £56,000 had been reinstated in the budget. This was in line with the additional amount expected to be received under the new contract.

The Committee noted that the Council would still be providing Christmas lights for the Town Centre in 2018.

RESOLVED:

1. That the revenue budget proposals for services within the remit of this Committee as set out in Appendix C be agreed for submission to Policy and Resources Committee.

2. That the capital budget proposals for services within the remit of this Committee as set out in Appendix E be agreed for submission to Policy and Resources Committee.

Voting: Unanimous

111. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.40 p.m.