

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6 MARCH 2018

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

112. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies were received from Councillors Butler and Fort.

113. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Boughton was substituting for Councillor Butler.

114. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

115. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

116. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Mrs Wilson disclosed membership of the Museum Strategic Board but confirmed that this would not affect her ability to take part in the Committee and vote.

117. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

118. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

119. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

120. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

121. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

122. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee was informed that there were no items scheduled for the April meeting of the Committee.

123. THIRD QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Miss Ellie Dunnet, the Head of Finance, presented the Third Quarter Budget Monitoring Report to the Committee.

It was highlighted to the Committee that as of 31 December 2017, this Committee was showing an overall positive variance of £183,035 and the year-end position would decrease to an under spend of £48,000.

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

- The issue with the solar panels at the Leisure Centre, which did not appear to be working properly, was being dealt with by the Property Services team and there was an ongoing programme of works to address the problem.
- There had been a national decline in the performance of markets. The Lockmeadow Tuesday Market had suffered and therefore the income target would be adjusted in the 2018/19 budget setting process.

RESOLVED:

1. That the revenue position at the end of the third quarter and 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 the third quarter is noted.

124. HERITAGE, CULTURE & LEISURE QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Ms Anna Collier, the Policy and Information Manager, presented the Quarter Three Performance Report to the Committee.

It was highlighted to the Committee that:

- Four out of the five Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within this Committee's remit were outperforming their target.
- The number of contacts to the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) had not met the target this quarter. Changes would be made to this

KPI's target and methodology for 2018/19 using the baseline from this year and to reflect seasonality.

RESOLVED:

1. That the summary of performance for Quarter 3 of 2017/18 for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) be noted.

125. TOURISM DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Mrs Laura Dickson, the Visitor Economy Development Manager, updated the Committee on the Tourism Destination Management Plan (DMP).

It was highlighted to the Committee that:

- A successful stakeholder engagement event 'Maidstone is Great' was held on 20 November 2017.
- There was no additional budget for the DMP in 2017/18 or 2018/19. The annual tourism service marketing budget would be used to support work relating to the DMP.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mrs Dickson replied that:

- Without the DMP quite a number of the projects would not have gone ahead. Collaboration between partners had never happened in the same way as it had done through the DMP.
- The three year DMP Action Plan would be reviewed in September 2018. The DMP itself was a live document that would continue when the Action Plan was completed.

The Committee requested that the interface between Officers and Stakeholders was reviewed in order to ensure that the Plan was robust so that past considerations were not revisited if the membership of the DMP changed. The Committee also requested that the varying success rates of the four areas of the action plan be reviewed to see how performance could be improved and to look at who was involved in each area.

RESOLVED:

1. That the interface be reviewed to ensure that the DMP was robust.
2. That the varying success rates of the four areas of the Action Plan be reviewed.

Voting: Unanimous

126. MUSEUM FUTURE GOVERNANCE OPTIONS

Ms Victoria Barlow, the Museums Director, presented Museum Future Governance Options to the Committee.

It was highlighted to the Committee that:

- In April 2017 a consultant was commissioned to carry out an options appraisal of governance models for Maidstone Museum and Maidstone Carriage Museum. There were two parts to the work; an assessment of the options and then the development of the business case for the preferred option which could incorporate a minimum 20% revenue savings for the Council.
- This work had been carried out in parallel with the development of the Museums 20 Year Plan which was overseen by the Museums Strategic Board.
- The current budget for Maidstone Museums (not including depreciation) was £1,076,930 and this included £229,710 of recharges.
- The Council had recently lodged an appeal against national non-domestic rates (NNDR) return. The Museums' combined NNDR charge was circa £120,000.
- From projections it was noted that there were no opportunities to make immediate significant savings from the transfer to a charitable trust apart from an NNDR discount. In fact, for the first two years of the process there would be additional costs associated with the work of setting up, recruiting to and creating operational procedures for the trust.
- The trusts which existed in connection with the Museum were the Bently, Brenchley, Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment and Maidstone Museums Foundation and these were the subject of a second review which would be brought to this Committee in quarter two of 2018/19.
- Figure three considered the two most suitable options (status quo and create a new charitable trust and transfer full management and operational responsibility) against the objectives within the Museums 20 Year Plan.
- The report recommended that the Museums' governance options were revisited at a time when any uncertainties had been clarified.

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

- The consultant had been employed over an 18 month period.
- In order to make the Museums attractive to the highest calibre of trustees it would be best to transfer the Museums to a trust in the future and not now.

- The option of charging entry to the Museum had been considered many times. It was thought that the Museum did not currently have the offering to charge for entry. However, visitors were charged for certain temporary exhibitions.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms Barlow replied that the three year timeline until the next review of the Museums' governance options was required as Officers could review how similar Museums which had transferred to charitable trusts had performed. It would allow the national picture to become clearer and also allow for the initial phases of the Museums 20 Year Plan to commence without disruption.

The Committee requested that they receive an annual report on the Museums 20 Year Plan and an annual report on the Museum governance arrangements each year, which would alternate with each other on a six monthly cycle. This would enable the Committee to review the continuous work that was going on.

RESOLVED:

1. That the current governance arrangements for the Museum be retained.

Voting: For – 6 Against – 2 Abstentions - 0

2. That every year this Committee will receive an annual report on the Museums 20 Year Plan and an annual report on the Museum governance arrangements, which will alternate with each other on a six monthly cycle.

Voting: Unanimous

127. **BANNING OF CHINESE LANTERNS FROM COUNCIL OWNED LAND**

Ms Dawn Hudd, the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development, presented a report proposing the Banning of Chinese Lanterns at any event or activity held on Council owned land to the Committee.

It was noted that:

- Farmers' groups and animal charities had long pushed for the lanterns to be withdrawn from sale as the burnt out remains could endanger the lives of animals who find them.
- A blanket ban of Chinese lanterns would be unenforceable and would require a change in byelaws.

RESOLVED:

1. That the use and release of sky lanterns is banned from land and property owned or managed by Maidstone Borough Council at all

activities and events organised, supported, funded by (fully or partially) and/or licensed by this authority.

2. That an information campaign is launched to discourage the use of Sky Lanterns by residents and visitors.
3. That Parish Councils within the Borough are contacted to encourage them to produce similar ban on their own land and property.

Voting: Unanimous

128. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.27 p.m.