

Making Maidstone More Active Update

Final Decision-Maker	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	John Foster, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mike Evans, Leisure Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All wards

Executive Summary

An update report on the Making Maidstone More Active report, with information on how the project will be restarted following a pause for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Purpose of Report

Noting

This report makes the following recommendation to this Committee:

That the report be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	16 March 2021

Making Maidstone More Active Update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>The Making Maidstone More Active project materially improves the Council's ability to achieve A Thriving Place.</p>	Leisure Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The Making Maidstone More Active project supports the achievement of the Health Inequalities being Addressed and Reduced by further tailoring the leisure service to the needs of residents.</p>	Leisure Manager
Risk Management	Refer to paragraph 5.1 of the report	Leisure Manager
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

Legal	There are no legal implications from this update report.	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning
Privacy and Data Protection	Project data is held by the Council in line with our retention schedules.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	We recognise the project may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. Therefore we will complete a separate equalities impact assessment as described at paragraph 2.15.	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	We recognise that the project outcomes will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The project will not have a negative impact on Crime and Disorder.	Leisure Manager
Procurement	The Council will continue to follow procurement exercises and will complete those exercises in line with financial procedure rules.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Making Maidstone More Active (MMA) is the name given to the Council's sport and leisure review. It seeks to ensure:

- Physical activity and participation are used as drivers towards improved health outcomes
- The future of Maidstone Leisure Centre is maximised, from development, participation and financial points of view
- The Council's leisure service meets the needs, wishes and behaviours of residents
- The leisure service is attractive to visitors
- The needs of Maidstone's growing and ageing population are met
- Future infrastructure options aligned to the future population forecasts are explored

2.2 In March 2019 this committee agreed that the project could recruit a dedicated project officer. In September 2019 the committee agreed the delivery timeline for the project, which ran from September 2019 to April 2021. Work was progressing along this timeline when it was disrupted and eventually halted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

2019/2020 progress

- 2.3 A part-time project officer was recruited and they led on the delivery of the project as per the delivery timeline.
- 2.4 The MMMA survey was launched in autumn 2019 and it achieved 1,250 responses from across the borough. The results gave a good starting point for project planning and work continued on the design of project workshops, which were aimed at collecting qualitative data and responses from representative forums across the borough.

Covid-19 impact

- 2.5 The first block of workshops were planned for March 2020 but had to be cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The team were optimistic that the disruption would be short and the workshops could resume later in 2020.
- 2.6 In April 2020 The MMMA project officer was redeployed to the Community Hub and in May 2020 they left their post at the Council to begin employment elsewhere.
- 2.7 Covid-19 impacted on all areas of Council work, including Maidstone Leisure Centre. As the complexities of leisure centre closures were understood at a national level, Sport England made consultancy help available to local authorities; their role being to support authorities in their contract discussions with leisure trusts and leisure operators.
- 2.8 The Council was appointed Strategic Leisure Limited who have been working with the Council, Maidstone Leisure Trust and Serco Leisure on the resumption of services at the leisure centre. Through these discussions council officers shared the detail of MMMA with the consultants, who in turn shared news of the project with executives at Sport England.
- 2.9 Through a project meeting with Sport England representatives, officers shared further details of MMMA and Sport England were happy to support the project with funding for further consultancy support. Via this funding Strategic Leisure have completed a Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance Diagnostic for Maidstone. This is a review of where Maidstone currently sits with its sport and leisure provision, as a local authority and as a borough, and it recommends what further analysis is required before the authority commissions any changes to service delivery. The diagnostic provides a gap analysis of the Council's current strategic evidence base against Sport England's best practice guidance, and presents the information in a way that aligns to Sport England's strategic guidelines.

SOPG report findings

- 2.10 The draft SOPG report for Maidstone, still to be reviewed by Sport England, finds that:
 - A lot of work has taken place over the last four years working towards the Council's overall strategic vision to be desirable and

attractive place to live, work, learn and visit. Sport and leisure plays a key role in this concept.

- Maidstone has some strong policies and strategies surrounding health and wellbeing. It is clear on how important this is to residents and there is a joined-up approach across the authority
- The MMMA survey is a useful insight into behaviours, interests and influences pre-Covid and is a good basis for future consultation workshops involving cross-sections of residents
- The Local Plan Review is yet to be completed and the make-up and likely locations of the future population is not yet known.
- The most-recent analysis of the leisure centre's members and users has some gaps in terms of understanding customer behaviours and insight
- Technical aspects of Maidstone Leisure Centre, its remaining lifespan and architectural possibilities needs to be understood in more detail
- Maidstone has great potential in developing opportunities in the active environment

2.11 The diagnostic analysis is currently being reviewed by Sport England. Council officers are due to meet with Sport England representatives before the 16 March ERL meeting and can include further feedback on 16 March.

Project restart

2.12 One of Making Maidstone More Active's key questions centres on the future of Maidstone Leisure Centre. As mentioned in paragraph 2.10 the technical aspects of the asset and the plant and the potential redevelopment opportunities of the building are unknown. This is a key part of the project as it will determine the majority of the financial considerations that the Council has, and it will also determine the scope of any future procurement work.

2.13 Officers will soon be working with Sport England's technical team to understand in more detail the technical capabilities and shortcomings of the Maidstone Leisure Centre building.

2.14 In parallel with this work are the community consultation work which looks at the current population, and the Local Plan Review work that looks at the future population. A successful MMMA will blend all three aspects. Officers plan to work on progressing these three aspects, in collaboration with Sport England, leisure centre partners and planning colleagues.

2.15 The consultation workshops will be developed for online audiences. This work was not done in 2020 because officers had to prioritise other projects and there was also an aspiration that pre-Covid normalities would resume. Twelve months on, an online workshop will complement the project and add an additional engagement mechanism to the face-to-face workshops that will still be delivered. Residents will be able to engage via a face-to-face workshop or an online workshop, which will widen reach and give greater accessibility. The equalities impact assessment will be updated to include the online workshops, to ensure that they are delivered in a way that ensures Making Maidstone More Active workshops are as inclusive as possible.

2.16 The Local Plan Review and the new Local Plan is the third key aspect of the project. Officers are working together to ensure that the future service plans for leisure are tailored to the needs of the future borough. Officers will also be collaborating with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, who are working on a similar review of their leisure centre provision. It is important for Maidstone that our plans complement the plans of neighbouring districts and opportunities for collaboration are maximised.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 This report is presented as an update report for noting.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Paragraphs 2.11 to 2.16 detail the next steps for officers and the way in which the project will be amended in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

5. RISK

5.1 Having paused MMMA for 12 months, the main risk of not progressing the project now is that future opportunities for the sport and leisure provision in the borough are not maximised. The current leisure contract for Maidstone Leisure Centre ends in 2024 and the Council risks entering the next phase of leisure provision without a clear idea of what service it wants and needs to provide.

5.2 The risks have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 No consultation has taken place since the last report to committee.

6.2 Officers have increased dialogue with Sport England executives and are factoring their guidance into the project development.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 Officers will recommence the project using existing resources and staffing.

7.2 An all-Members briefing is scheduled for Thursday 8 April.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- None
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- *Future of Leisure Provision in Maidstone* Report – Economic, Regeneration and Leisure Committee, 5 March 2019
- *Delivery Programme for the Sports/Leisure Review* Report – Economic, Regeneration and Leisure Committee, 3 September 2019