

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 13 JULY 2021

Present: Councillors Burton, Cannon, Harper, Hinder, Naghi, Newton, Perry, Round (Chairman) and R Webb

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cox, Forecast and S Webb.

18. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were present:

Councillor Burton for Councillor S Webb;
Councillor Perry for Councillor Forecast; and
Councillor R Webb for Councillor Cox.

19. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

20. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

21. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

22. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

23. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

24. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2021

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

25. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

26. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

27. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

28. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

An update on the cultural forum was to be added to the Committee Work Programme, in addition to an update of the work ongoing at the Innovation Centre and Business Terrace.

The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development highlighted that there were three large pieces of work for the Committee for this year, which were the leisure centre proposals; the Economic Development Strategy; and work around the regeneration of the Town Centre. In response to questions, it was confirmed that there was a full programme of events scheduled at Mote Park, and Parkwood Leisure were in a position to deliver their agreed contract.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

29. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

30. PRESENTATION FROM MAIDSTONE AREA ARTS PARTNERSHIP - KEN SCOTT

The Chair of Maidstone Area Arts Partnership (MAAP) delivered a presentation which explored the impact and importance of arts and culture on the community, the role of the voluntary sector and how the Council can support the maintenance of arts and culture in the Borough.

In response to questions, the Chair of MAAP explained the barriers facing voluntary organisations in subscribing to the social prescribing register, and the preference for some organisations to have an informal agreement in place with health providers.

The use of vacant commercial premises in the town centre for exhibition and workshop venues was discussed, and how barriers around event planning could be overcome. It was acknowledged that arts and cultural events could be targeted at either increasing footfall in the town centre or maintaining and improving the wellbeing of residents within the Borough, depending on the need identified.

There were two vacancies for Council representatives on MAAP and the length of term, currently one year, could be amended by the Committee.

This would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Committee when nominations to the vacant positions had been received.

31. 4TH QUARTER FINANCIAL UPDATE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT 2020/21

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced the report, which reviewed the previous year's financial performance. Although the pandemic severely impacted the Council's finances, the receipt of government grants and mitigation measures taken by the Council had resulted in an overall underspend of £1.2 million.

The Committee's revenue position showed an adverse variance, with a significant overspend incurred on the Leisure Centre due to the contractual obligation for the Council to compensate Circo for their losses during the pandemic. The capital position showed some slippage on the Mall bus station redevelopment, and the dam works had been completed and endorsed by the Environment Agency.

The Senior Business Analyst outlined the key performance indicators (KPIs) reportable to the Committee, and explained that four of the six KPIs for the fourth quarter missed their targets by more than 10% which was attributable to the national lockdown during this period. Unemployment within the working age population had increased to 5.3% however it was noted that the figure for May 2021 had dropped to 4.9%. The number of visits per month to Visit-Maidstone.com had achieved more than double its target.

This mirrored the annual performance figures, for which the same four KPIs had missed their annual targets, and the number of visits to Visit-Maidstone.com had overperformed.

In response to questions, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement confirmed that learning had taken place during the pandemic with regards to the financial impact of contractual obligations which would be reflected when entering into future contracts.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 4 for 2020/21, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted;
2. The Capital position at the end of Quarter 4 be noted; and
3. The Performance position as at Quarter 4 for 2020/21, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted.

32. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 8.15pm.