

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **RECORD OF DECISION OF THE LEAD MEMBER FOR LEISURE AND ARTS**

Decision Made: 14 April 2023

#### **Mote Park Kiosk**

##### **Issue for Decision**

The toilet block and kiosk in the northern section of Mote Park, near to the water sports centre, requires upgrading to provide services to Park users and to extend the life of the building. The upgrade offers the opportunity to deliver some key elements of the Council's vision for a sustainable future for Mote Park. Decisions are required regarding the facility mix and the delegations needed to progress the project.

##### **Decision Made**

1. That the option to proceed with the facility mix as depicted in the indicative design be approved.
2. That the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement be given delegated authority in consultation with the Lead Member for Leisure and Arts to submit relevant planning applications, lead a procurement process and invite tenders for the delivery of the works in accordance with the total project budget.
3. That after the completion of the tender process, delegated authority is given to the Head of Mid-Kent Legal Services to enter into such contracts as required to complete the contract award.

##### **Reasons for Decision**

##### **Introduction and Background**

The kiosk in Mote Park has remained unchanged for many decades. It was originally built with men's and women's toilets and a small refreshments kiosk. The kiosk was last leased in 2017 as part of the lease to the old Mote Park Café; however, the tenant did not use it as intended because of the age of the facility and the overheads associated with maintaining the property for only seasonal usage. Instead, the operator operated a mobile refreshments vehicle positioned in front of the building.

The toilets are traditional in design, in that they are arranged in one large room for men and one large room for women. In this location, the arrangement has been problematic because it can attract anti-social behaviour and any maintenance problems render the whole block out of action.

Toilet facilities are needed in this northern section of Mote Park and upgrading the block will allow provision to be made for the ever-increasing number of Mote Park visitors.

There are a number of other elements of the Council's vision for a sustainable future for Mote Park that can be realised by upgrading the block.

### *Water Sports*

The water sports centre offers a range of water-based leisure activities for beginners and serious paddlers but is lacking changing facilities. Feedback from the current operator and his users (schools) have shown that the Council needs to improve the current offer to include changing and WC facilities. The water sports centre is operated under a one-year rolling licence. With improved facilities, the Council can secure a new, longer tenancy and charge a commensurate fee.

### *Mote Park Fellowship*

The Mote Park Fellowship, along with other community and volunteer groups, has a vital role in the Park. Members of the Fellowship volunteer in the Park and help with maintenance and various projects all year round. Their charitable status allows them to raise funding in a way that the Council cannot. It was originally intended that provision for the Fellowship would be made in the new Estates building in the Park but this has not proved possible. A designated space would be created in the kiosk for the Fellowship. The Fellowship would be good custodians for the building and would help dissuade anti-social behaviour.

### *Cygnets Model Boat Club*

This group operates in Mote Park Lake under a licence from the Council. Following works on the Mote Park Dam, this group currently has temporary arrangements for storing their equipment. Provision in the kiosk would provide an alternative. The Club's licence would be updated to reflect the Council's current vision for the Park and to provide them with suitable accommodation. If it is not possible to agree a new licence, the space in the kiosk designated for the Model Boat Club would be re-purposed.

The layout for the refurbished block incorporates the following features:

- Two individual unisex toilet units will be created. These will be easier to manage and maintain in this location and any problems will be confined to a single unit. They can be designed to modern building regulations and be fully accessible for all Park users. They will be step-free and suitable for those with mobility issues. They will each have baby change facilities and be big enough to take a pushchair inside.
- The kiosk section, no longer ideal for providing catering, would be repurposed. Electrical outlets can be provided so that mobile catering can be deployed from this location on a temporary basis without the need for generators. This is a much more sustainable and environmentally friendly way of providing catering in this area of the Park.
- The space saved by repurposing the kiosk and reducing the overall floor plan of the public toilets can be used to create changing rooms for the water sports centre and community space for the Mote Park Fellowship and (subject to issue of a new licence) the Cygnets Model Boat Club.

## **Planning and Finance**

Pre-application planning advice is being sought on the indicative design and a planning application will be submitted in line with this decision.

£250,000 has already been agreed for this project in the capital programme. The total expenditure for the proposed option is expected to be within this budget.

## **Consultation Results and Previous Committee Feedback**

Stakeholder groups have been consulted and their requirements have been incorporated into the scheme.

This issue was considered by the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee at its meeting on 4 April 2023. The Committee supported the recommendations set out in the report subject to the delegation to the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement being in consultation with the Lead Member for Leisure and Arts. This is reflected in the decision set out above.

## **Alternatives Considered and Why Rejected**

### 1. Do Nothing - Rejected

Not progressing with the project will result in a defunct building overlooking Mote Park Lake and no welfare facilities along the northern bank of the lake. A project to reinvest in these facilities will avoid future costs and liabilities and provide much-needed facilities.

### 2. Repurpose the Building in Another Way - Rejected

In creating the indicative design thought has been given to providing an alternative mix of facilities but other variations are less desirable. Removing any facility type from the facility mix will create additional pressures to provide it elsewhere or via other means.

For example, refreshments space could be included in the building, but it requires ongoing maintenance and compliance to meet food standards and hygiene requirements, which is a considerable overhead for seasonal usage. Temporary mobile units can provide this in a much easier way and can also offer more flexibility in line with changing trends.

The number of changing rooms and toilets has been considered and those presented give the optimal operational flexibility. The community spaces are simple in design and can have many uses, which future proofs.

It is proposed to proceed with the facility mix as depicted in the indicative design. The facility mix proposed is the optimal arrangement. It provides regularised accommodation to Park user groups, it provides much-improved facilities to the public and it negates the need for any stand-alone welfare facilities to be brought into the Park. By investing in the assets the Council already has in this lakeside location, a hub of activity can be created around an under-utilised building and the Mote Park offer can be improved using available resources. Using capital programme resources in the Park at this time will ensure the funds benefit the

Park and prevent future liabilities from materialising.

**Background Papers**

None

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Member for Leisure and Arts – Councillor Claudine Russell

Full details of the report for the decision and any consideration by the relevant Policy Advisory Committee can be found at the following area of the [website](#).

Call-In: Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Proper Officer by: **5pm on 21 April 2023**