

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE REGENERATION & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 27 MARCH 2012**

PRESENT: Councillor Burton (Chairman)
Councillors Cuming, Beerling, Black, English, Mrs Joy,
Ross, Springett and Newton

116. The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast.

Resolved: That all items on the agenda be web-cast.

117. Apologies.

There were no apologies.

118. Notification of Substitute Members.

There were no Substitute Members.

119. Notification of Visiting Members.

Councillor Vizzard was in attendance.

120. Disclosures by Members and Officers:

Councillor Beerling disclosed a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 – Worklessness Stakeholder Event Update – as he was a Member of the Maidstone Locality Board and Chairman of the Switch Café.

Councillor Burton declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 – Worklessness Stakeholder Event Update – as he was Vice Chairman of the Marden Business Forum and a local employer.

121. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.

Resolved: That the items on the Agenda be taken in public as proposed.

122. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2012

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 February 2012 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman.

123. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2012

Minute 113 – Traffic Congestion Review

Councillor Mrs Joy raised a query with regard to the letter to Councillor Sweetland as to whether or not it was agreed to send the letter.

It was resolved that the Overview and Scrutiny Officer check the web-cast of the meeting and make an appropriate action if required.

124. Worklessness Stakeholder Event Update

Keith Grimley, Economic Development Officer, gave an update on the Worklessness Stakeholder Event held on 12 March 2012. The event included presentations from service providers who were involved in all aspects of back to work. An action plan was put together for approval by the Locality Board.

Councillor Black commented that he felt that more businesses should have been present at the event, however, it was pointed out that this initial event was to ensure service providers all knew what the other one was doing so they were all aware of what is available.

Councillor Black also mentioned that the event was aimed at 16-23 year olds and what about those who have been made redundant and perhaps need to learn new skills? The Committee was informed that the highest proportion of unemployment is in the 18-24 age group and most of the Government funding has been targeted at youth unemployment. Providers struggle to get funds for older people. The Agenda was set by the Locality Board and one of their targets was youth unemployment.

Councillor Joy enquired as to whether there was an attendance list. It was agreed that the attendance list would be circulated to Members of the Committee.

Councillor English enquired as to the course of action to be taken, what the timetable would be and what the strategy was for engagement with small and medium employers to deliver the outcomes. Mr Grimley stated that the draft action plan was due to go before the Locality Board the following day. Members felt it was appropriate for the action plan and recommendations of the Locality Board to be circulated to Members of the Committee after that date.

Councillor Burton suggested that the Economic Development team become involved in the marketing of these types of events to make them more attractive to businesses and help to encourage them to attend. Mr Grimley stated that it was important to identify the needs of our employers are that have the capacity to offer employment/apprenticeships.

It was resolved that:

- a) That the Economic Development Team are utilised for improving communications with Businesses.
- b) That action should be taken to identify the lack of skills in areas where there is a need by employers.
- c) That the Committee should be updated on the strategy in place for engaging with businesses, in particular small and medium sized employers to deliver the outcomes identified at the Worklessness Stakeholder Event.
- d) That the Locality Board considers other age groups affected by worklessness and those who have been made redundant.
- e) That the Worklessness Action Plan (from the event) and the presentations given are circulated to the Committee.
- f) That the Committee is provided an updated list of those who attended the Stakeholder event.
- g) That the Committee is updated on the progress of the employment database for young people, identifying the agencies involved and what they can offer.
- h) That consideration be given to the creation of jobs when addressing worklessness in the borough.

125. Maidstone Museums Business Plan 2011-19 Update

Simon Lace, Museums & Heritage Manager, was interviewed by the Committee on the Museum Business Plan 2011-19.

Mr Lace gave a brief introduction to the Business Plan, stating that they were taking a more commercial approach to how the Museums were run, trying to generate more revenue and reduce our costs and, in turn, reduce the Council's overall financial contribution to the Museums.

Members of the Committee aired strong views on the proposal to release the carriage museum building for other purposes. The Chairman commented that any proposals on the future of the Carriage Museum building should be brought to the Committee before any decision was made.

Councillor Beerling raised some queries regarding the financial figures in the plan and felt that there were some anomalies. Mr Lace said the information had been provided by Accountants but he would be happy to clarify the figures at the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor English felt the "purpose" defined in the Business Plan was rather short and should be expanded. Councillor Springett felt it needed more drive and to be dynamic.

Councillor English was concerned at the lack of analysis about the relationship between the Visitor Information Centre and the Museum and how this would be taken forward.

Councillor Newton commented that the Museum's marketing budget of £12,000 was inadequate. Members of the Committee agreed and felt it appropriate that the Cabinet Member and Director responsible for the Museum should attend the next meeting.

Resolved:

- a) That the strength of Members feeling against the inclusion of the statement 'the removal of the collection from the Archbishops Stables will allow for the building to be considered for sale or other uses beneficial to the Council' in the Museums Business Plan is noted;
- b) That clarification be given on the revenue forecasts in the Museums Business Plan;
- c) That the Museum's purpose as defined in the Museums Business Plan is expanded to reflect the diverse collections and exhibits at the Museums and their relationship to Maidstone's history;
- d) That the lack of a marketing budget is addressed to reflect the extensive investment made in order to generate an income; and
- e) That the Cabinet Member and Director responsible for the Museums, along with Laura Dickson, are invited to the Committee's next meeting to discuss the Museums in the context of Tourism and to address the recommendations made at this meeting.

126. Traffic Congestion Review

The Chairman informed the Committee that the amendments requested at the last meeting had been completed.

Councillor English raised the issue of parking standards and the 'Further Consideration' paragraph which he felt required some amendment.

It was resolved that the Traffic Congestion report be approved for submission to the appropriate Cabinet Member and external bodies.

127. Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee considered the future work programme.

It was resolved:

- a) That the appropriate Cabinet Member, the Director and Simon Lace be invited to attend the next meeting to re-consider the Museums Business Plan and the recommendations raised earlier in the

meeting and that a simplified version of the budget be circulated prior to the meeting; and

- b) That Laura Dickson be invited to attend the next meeting to discuss Tourism and the Visitor Information Centre based at the Museum.

128. Duration of Meeting

6.30 p.m. to 8.59 p.m.