

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6 JUNE 2017

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

Also Present: Councillors English and Perry

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

7. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitutes.

8. URGENT ITEMS

It was noted that there was an updated recommendation for Item 13 – Bereavement Services – Developing Services.

9. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillors English and Perry were present as Visiting Members.

10. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

11. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

12. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

13. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 APRIL 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the amendment of the last word of Paragraph 2, Item 146 on Page 2, to read as follows:

The Committee noted that the design created a sense of arrival at Maidstone East Station and ensured that visitors would appreciate the history of Maidstone through the timeline placed on the **ground**.

14. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MAY 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed.

15. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

16. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

17. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Committee Work Programme for 2017/18.

It was noted that the annual report referred to in decision number 2 on Page 3 of the minutes, of the meeting held on 4 April 2017, had not been added to the Committee Work Programme.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the 'Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan' would likely be considered by the Committee in September.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

18. BEREAVEMENT SERVICES - DEVELOPING SERVICES

The Head of Environment and Public Realm gave a presentation to the Committee regarding the future development of Bereavement Services.

It was noted that, in June 2016, this Committee agreed to submit a planning application for a pet crematorium and car park expansion at Vinters Park Crematorium. This was based on a business case which was prepared prior to the original agreement by Cabinet in February 2015. A new business case had since been prepared because it was deemed appropriate to update it according to current market conditions. Using the data, it was projected that the Capital payback would be between 7 and a half and 12 years depending on the level of direct sales achieved, which presented a greater risk compared to the previous business plan.

The Head of Environment and Public Realm advised the Committee on options that were available to improve the cemetery, for both staff and the public. In response to a question raised by the Committee, the Head of Environment and Public Realm assured the Committee that there was still significant capacity at the cemetery and agreed to include the future capacity of the cemetery in the business case when it was presented to the Committee.

The Committee considered whether off site storage was an option for paper records. However, the Head of Environment and Public Realm advised the Committee that a large number of people came to the crematorium in order to speak with the Cemetery Officer and view the records there.

In response to questions from Members, the officers explained that:

- It was the storage area at the Crematorium that required fire proofing, rather than the records.
- The money allocated in the Capital Programme for the Pet Crematorium would be carried forward as this project was not sustainable at this time.
- It was not necessary to refer the issue for capital funding back to the Policy and Resources Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Pet Crematorium project be suspended and reviewed in 2020/21, or sooner if markets dictate or partnership opportunities can be identified.
2. That Bereavement Services will focus on the delivery and improvement of its core business.
3. That £220,000 set aside in the Capital Programme for the Pet Crematorium be invested in the expansion of the Vinters Park Crematorium car park and improvements to disabled access.
4. That £30,000 from the Capital Programme be used for heat recovery from the cremators and fire proofing the storage area for paper records held at the Crematorium.
5. That a business case be prepared and presented to this Committee seeking Capital funding for improvements at Maidstone Cemetery, specifically the repair and reopening of the Chapel and the dismantling of the disused Groundsman's House and extension of the Cremated Remains Section.

Voting: Unanimous

19. STRATEGIC PLAN PERFORMANCE UPDATE QUARTER 4 FOR HCL

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement presented this item to the Committee. The Committee noted that:

- 60% of KPIs reported this quarter achieved their target for quarter 4; and

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- 100% of indicators had shown an increase in performance compared to the same quarter last year, where comparative data was available.

The Committee raised concerns about the footfall at the Museum and Visitor Information Centre. The Museum Director concurred that the figures had been disappointing and that this was related to national trends. In order to increase the footfall at the Museum, the Museum Director informed the Committee that:

- The Museum was continuing to run a series of 'Museum Lates' in order to attract new audiences through word of mouth;
- There was an exciting new Ancient Lives Gallery opening in September; and
- The Museum was developing the relationship with Fremlin Walk in order to increase awareness of the Museum to those visiting the shopping centre.

RESOLVED:

1. That the summary of performance of Key Performance Indicators and corporate strategies and plans for Quarter 4 of 2016/17 be noted.
2. That no action needs to be taken nor amendments made to the Quarter 4 Performance Update report.
3. That Appendix II, the Quarter 4 Strategic Plan Action Plan Update, be noted.

Voting: Unanimous

20. **FOURTH QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING**

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement made a presentation to the Committee relating to budgets within the Committee's remit for the fourth quarter of 2016/17.

The Committee noted that:

- There was an overall underspend for services within the Committee's remit of £69,199.
- There was an overspend of £169,757 for the Mote Park Café due to higher than budgeted staff costs, but this figure was less than had been projected previously.
- The solar panels installed at Mote Park Leisure Centre were meant to provide a return to the Council, but as yet there had been no return as the mechanics of the calculation had not been established. A meeting had been arranged with SERCO to resolve this issue.

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- Cobtree Manor Golf Course had overspent by £36,917 for 2016/17 because the contract had ended with the operator. This meant that the Council had to pay the operator to run the Golf Course, rather than the operator paying the Council.

RESOLVED: That the financial position for services within the remit of the Committee at the end of the fourth quarter be noted.

Voting: Unanimous

21. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.08 p.m.