

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2018

Present: Councillors Fort, Harper (Chairman), Hastie, Joy, Lewins, Perry, Mrs Ring, Spooner and Mrs Wilson

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Cuming, Hinder, Mrs Hinder and Fermor.

38. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that the following were present as Substitute Members:-

Councillor Mrs Ring for Councillor Cuming
Councillor Mrs Joy for Councillor Fermor
Councillor Spooner for Councillor Hinder
Councillor Perry for Councillor Mrs Hinder

39. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

40. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

41. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

42. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors Harper, Hastie, Lewins and Mrs Wilson stated that they had been lobbied on Agenda Item 17 – Draft Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies.

43. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

44. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 JULY 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

45. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

46. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

47. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Committee Work Programme for 2018/19.

The following changes were made to the Work Programme:-

Joint Heritage Bid – dependent on the progress of the All Saints Church Heritage Bid for a new roof, a report would come to the Committee at a future date to be confirmed.

Details of Significant Anniversaries – this would be incorporated into the Festivals and Events report due in October.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted subject to the changes made by the Committee.

48. NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Committee considered the nomination received from Cllr Kimmance to be appointed as the Council's representative on the Maidstone/Beauvais Twinning Association.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Kimmance be appointed as the Council's representative on the Maidstone/Beauvais Twinning Association.

Voting: For: unanimous

49. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

The Committee considered the updates from Members on the Maidstone Twinning Association and Maidstone Sea Cadets outside bodies.

RESOLVED: That the updates be noted.

50. FIRST QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Miss Ellie Dunnet, the Head of Finance presented a report on the First Quarter Budget Monitoring 2018/19.

The Committee noted:-

- That there was an underspend against the revenue budget during the first quarter but this was expected to change to an overspend of £37,000 by the end of the year. However, this would be partially offset by the underspend at the Crematorium.
- Capital expenditure was £0.848m as at the end of June against a total budget of £4.527m. It was anticipated that there would be a slippage of £1.953m at the end of the year.

In response to a question from Members, Officers responded as follows:-

- Miss Dunnet advised that the Council does have a contingency budget but the issues relating to the flooding incident at the Mote Park Adventure Zone were subject to a ongoing insurance claim. The Officer undertook to advise the Committee by email once the insurance claim had been sorted out.
- Ms Hudd advised that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman receive fortnightly updates on the Mote Park Adventure Zone.
- Ms Hudd also advised that the budget for festivals and events had not been profiled to reflect the higher volume of events during the Summer months and this would be rectified for 2019/20.

The Committee expressed concern that savings had already been put forward for the Adventure Zone but there was no guarantee that works would be completed on time.

Councillor Fort arrived at 6.45 p.m. as this item was being discussed.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the revenue position at the end of the first quarter and the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted.
- 2) That the capital position at the end of the first quarter be noted.

51. **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR UPDATE QUARTER 1 HCL**

The Committee considered the report of Ms Anna Collier, Policy and Information Manager which set out the progress of Key Performance Indicators for Quarter 1 that relate to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

It was noted that there had been a very positive start, all five targeted KPIs achieved their target, compared to 60% (3) in Quarter 4 and 20% (1) in the same Quarter as last year.

Ms Collier advised that:-

- The Hazlitt Theatre had sold 71.2% of all available tickets during the quarter.
- Footfall at the Museum and Visitor Information Centre had increased and users of the leisure centre has increased.

In response to questions from Members, Officers advised that:-

- They would contact the operator of the Leisure Centre to ascertain if the activity data could be broken down in types of activities.
- That although the Market did not have a performance indicator, it was monitored closely through the budget monitoring process and any significant changes in its financial position would be reported to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the summary of performance for Quarter 1 of 2018/19 for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) be noted.

52. BEREAVEMENT SERVICES DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mrs Jennifer Shepherd, the Head of Environment and Public Realm presented a report on the Bereavement Services Future Development Plan along with Miss Sharon Smith, the Bereavement Services Manager and Mrs Lesley O'Reilly, the Senior Bereavement Services Assistant.

The Committee were reminded that in 2013 Bereavement Services produced its first five year business plan. The plan included the development of the existing service and the introduction of new services such as a pet crematorium at the Crematorium. However, in 2017 the plan was realigned and although the provision of a pet crematorium was deferred there had been a number of other improvements made at the Crematorium. These had included the expansion of the car park, refurbishment of the public toilets and energy recovery for heating the offices and Chapel.

Miss Smith advised the Committee that following a full review of the Cemetery a number of opportunities for improvement had been identified which included the refurbishment of the Chapel to bring it into use again, the demolition of the Gate Keeper's House which would provide additional space for cremated remains and the provision of new welfare facilities for the Cemetery staff.

The Committee noted that the proposals set out in the recommendation could be partly funded from Capital expenditure already set aside from the pet crematorium project but further capital funds would need to be sought from Policy and Resources Committee for the Phase 2 improvements.

Mrs O'Reilly informed the Committee that she had undertaken a survey with customers and funeral directors on what they would like to see at the Cemetery. The survey results demonstrated that there was demand for services at the Cemetery Chapel. Re-opening the Chapel would also give

the benefits of freeing up the Crematorium for more services and reducing traffic crossing town from the Crematorium to the Cemetery.

In the ensuing discussion the Committee declared its support for re-opening the Cemetery Chapel. The Committee also commented that a new welfare facility was long overdue and requested that Officers be thanked for providing such a good report.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Cemetery business case, including the two phased approach, be agreed;
- 2) That the capital budget previously set aside for a pet crematorium be used to fund Phase 1 of the cemetery business plan instead.
- 3) That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, to determine the most appropriate and cost effective method to deliver the staff welfare facility within the existing capital budget;
- 4) That a review be carried out to explore in detail charging at Maidstone Cemetery in comparison with other similar Cemeteries in Kent and South London to inform the Committee on a future charging strategy;
- 5) That the Officers be thanked for bringing this report forward and recognising the concerns of the Committee regarding the staff welfare facilities and the need to improve the Cemetery.
- 6) That further funding be requested from the Policy and Resources Committee for the Phase 2 improvements outlined in the cemetery business plan.

Voting: For: Unanimous

53. DRAFT SPORTS FACILITIES AND PLAYING PITCH STRATEGIES

Mr Mark Egerton, the Strategic Planning Manager and Mr Tony Ploszajski, the Consultant who produced the draft strategies, presented a report on the draft Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies. It was noted that the Strategies would form part of the Council's evidence base for the review of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

The strategies assessed the quantity, quality, accessibility and availability of the Borough's indoor and outdoor sports facilities and playing pitches.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Egerton and Mr Ploszajski advised that:-

- **Travel Times** - Catchment times were assessed for different facilities, for example sports halls and swimming pools were 20 minutes driving time which is the nationally recognised catchment but for other facilities the driving time could be longer.
- There should be a comparison for walking (distance from home to the sports facility) as not everyone has a car.
- **Football Pitches** - Adult football was in decline but youth and mini soccer was in high demand. This was complicated by the fact that the Council's football pitches were maintained to an appropriate quality for recreational football but there were more well maintained pitches by Parish Councils outside of the town which some clubs preferred to use. This was the reason why the use of Council pitches were falling.
- It was noted that the FA had stated that by next year they would like half of all youth and mini soccer matches to be played on 3G pitches which were better quality surfaces.

A 3G pitch would cost in the region of £0.75m and that re-surfacing needed to be undertaken on a 10 year basis which would cost around £200k. However, a good return could be made on the hiring out of these pitches.

- **Sports Facilities** - There were many School sites that had the appropriate facilities and opportunities to utilise these facilities where possible should be explored instead of building new facilities nearby.

There was a demand for an additional hockey pitch in the South Park area but not for a full pitch but the supply was elsewhere.

Should a sports facility be privately owned then the Council would not be liable for any expenditure.

- Facilities for running and cycling were not featured as these activities did not necessarily require dedicated facilities.
- **Moving Forward** - Consultation would be carried out with Councillors on facilities within their own Ward.

The Council needed to establish what its role was, a facilitator and/or a provider.

The Committee would be provided with a copy of the final report prior to its presentation to Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee on 8th January 2018.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the strategies that form part of the Council's evidence base be noted and the comments on the documents be referred to Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee for consideration prior to re-engagement with key stakeholders and all Ward Councillors;
- 2) That the Committee conduct an in-depth review of Sports Provision in the Borough once the new Leisure Officer has been appointed and the draft Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies have been finalised;
- 3) That the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee are recommended to expedite the consultation with Ward Councillors on the draft Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies;
- 4) That the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee are recommended to consider the accessibility and affordability of facilities in the borough.

Voting: For: Unanimous

54. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8:55 p.m.