

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 16 November 2021
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Cannon, Cox, Forecast, Harper, Hinder, Naghi, Newton, Round
(Chairman) and S Webb (Vice-Chairman)

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

AGENDA

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| 1. Apologies for Absence | |
| 2. Notification of Substitute Members | |
| 3. Urgent Items | |
| 4. Notification of Visiting Members | |
| 5. Disclosures by Members and Officers | |
| 6. Disclosures of Lobbying | |
| 7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information. | |
| 8. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 19 October 2021 | 1 - 5 |
| 9. Presentation of Petitions | |
| 10. Question and Answer Session for Members of the Public | |
| 11. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any) | |
| 12. Committee Work Programme | 6 - 7 |
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| 14. Local Produce and Craft Market - Presentation | |
| 15. Maidstone Museum Capital Expenditure Update | 8 - 27 |
| 16. Development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy | 28 - 37 |

Issued on Monday 8 November 2021

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this meeting in person or by remote means, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 12 November 2021). You will need to provide the full text in writing. If your question is accepted, you will be provided with instructions as to how you can access the meeting.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 12 November 2021). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk. To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk.

Should you wish to refer any decisions contained in these minutes to the **Policy and Resources Committee**, please submit a Decision Referral Form, signed by **three** Councillors, to the **Head of Policy, Communications and Governance** by: **15 November 2021**

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19 OCTOBER 2021

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

Also Present: Councillor English

52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Cox.

53. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor R Webb was present as a Substitute Member for Councillor Cox.

54. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

55. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor English was present as a Visiting Member for Item 16 – Application for a Historic Plaque at Wrens Corner, Maidstone.

56. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

57. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillor Round had been lobbied on the following Items:

Item 15 – Historic Plaques Scheme Review

Item 16 – Application for a Historic Plaque at Wrens Corner, Maidstone

Item 17 – Maidstone Museums savings and restructure progress report.

58. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION.

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

59. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14/09/2021

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

60. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

61. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

62. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

63. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair informed the Committee that two items would be added to the Work Programme; firstly to review the economic development programme and the Council's role within partnership arrangements, and secondly to provide an update on the education and arts programme at Maidstone Museum.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

64. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

65. 1ST QUARTER FINANCIAL UPDATE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Head of Finance introduced the report, which looked back at the period to the end of June 2021. Regarding the revenue budget, a year-end underspend of £19,000 was forecast for the Committee, and an underspend of £144,000 for the Council as a whole.

The capital budget showed a spend for the first quarter of £543,000, the most significant spend being on the Mall Bus Station Redevelopment. The Mote Park visitor centre and estate services building was expected to be completed in 2022.

The performance monitoring report reflected the recovery from the pandemic. Although footfall in the town centre missed its target by less than 10%, it was the highest recorded since pre-pandemic and the Economic Development team expected to see this continue to rise. Number of youths unemployed missed its target by more than 10%, but the numbers were seen to be decreasing. House prices in Maidstone had seen a significant increase of 10.2% on average.

In response to questions, the Head of Finance explained that the amount allocated for the final round of funding under the sales, fees and charges compensation scheme was not likely to have a significant impact on the Committee.

The Chief Executive Officer advised that calculations would come forward comparing earnings to property prices as an indicator of the challenge faced in the borough with regards to accommodation. The Interim Chief Executive Officer of Heart of Kent Hospice had provided a report on the economic impact of Elmer's Big Heart of Kent Parade, and arrangements could be made for the report to be presented to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 1 for 2021/22, 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 1 be noted; and
3. The Performance position as at Quarter 1 for 2021/22, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted.

66. HISTORIC PLAQUES SCHEME REVIEW

The Museum Director introduced the report and explained the changes which provided more clarity to the administration of the Commemorative Plaques Scheme. The processing of the first two applications highlighted inefficiencies in the administrative process which the updates sought to address. A maximum of three applications would be processed per year, and research into the individual being marked would be carried out by staff to prevent reputational damage. A guide of six months from application to decision was added to allow time for the application to be administered and presented at Committee for decision.

In response to questions, the Museum Director explained that the responsibility for seeking consent to attach a plaque to a listed building would sit with the applicant, who would also be responsible for any repairs or replacements.

RESOLVED: That the proposed updates to the Commemorative Plaques Scheme be approved.

67. APPLICATION FOR A HISTORIC PLAQUE AT WRENS CORNER, MAIDSTONE

The Museum Director introduced the report and outlined the application made by Golding Homes for an historic plaque at Wren's Corner, the former Kent County Constabulary headquarters. The applicant had acknowledged their responsibilities under the scheme, including the

permission to affix a plaque to a listed building, and felt the building was significant to Maidstone's local history.

It was requested that additional wording was added to the plaque to further explain the significance of the site as the first county-wide police force.

RESOLVED: That the application to erect a Commemorative Plaque at Wren's Cross be approved, subject to the inclusion of additional wording, to further explain the significance of the site as the first county-wide police force, to be formulated by the Museum Director in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

68. MAIDSTONE MUSEUMS SAVINGS AND RESTRUCTURE PROGRESS REPORT

The Museum Director introduced the report which reviewed the first six months of the new service arrangements at Maidstone Museum. Amendments had been made to the opening hours of the museum and the staffing to achieve the savings target. To increase the museum's capacity for the May to September 2022 season a dedicated group of volunteers would be recruited and trained, in addition to those currently volunteering at the museum.

The Chief Executive Officer explained that the report on capital expenditure at the museum would give the Committee an opportunity to look at enhancements that could be made, with resources that had already been secured. A visitors' survey would be included in the further report on the review of the revised opening hours and working arrangements which would be used as part of the evaluation of the changes. It was acknowledged that the current governance of the museum was complicated and suggested that could be revisited.

In response to questions, the Museum Director explained that the turnover of objects in museums tended to be slow, due to the time required to research and prepare for a new exhibition, and some artifacts were unsuitable for display. The Transformation team had started to explore how the museum might use digital methods and technology to increase efficiency in the gift shop, and whether the gift shop could be managed by another organisation. A visit to Brighton Museum would be planned for Members to discuss with the curator the innovative ideas used to modernise the displays.

RESOLVED: That

1. The progress made in achieving the Medium Term Financial Strategy targets and restructure be noted;
2. Officers of the Museum be thanked for their efforts during the period of uncertain times;

3. The current operations of the Museum be reviewed against the Maidstone Museum 20 Year Plan and presented to the Committee for feedback;
4. A report be brought forward on the planned use of the £400,000 capital expenditure allocation; and
5. A report be brought forward on the museum's current governance arrangements, including options for simplification.

Note: Councillor Forecast joined the meeting during this item.

69. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 8.44pm.

2021/22 WORK PROGRAMME

	Committee	Month	Origin	CLT to clear	Lead	Report Author
Feasibility Modelling for Future Leisure Options (MMMA) - for noting	ERL	14-Dec-21	Officer Update	Yes	John Foster	Mike Evans
Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23-2026/27	ERL	14-Dec-21	Officer Update	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Fees and Charges 2021/22	ERL	14-Dec-21	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Q2 Budget and Performance Monitoring 2021/22	ERL	14-Dec-21	Governance		Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Economic Impact of Elmer's Big Heart of Kent Parade - Presentation	ERL	14-Dec-21	Cllr Request	No	Alison Broom	N/a
Recovery & Renewal - Maidstone Riverside Light Walk - <i>tbc by P&R</i>	ERL	14-Dec-21	Cllr Request		Alexa Kersting-Woods	John Foster
Maidstone Museum Education and Arts Programme	ERL	14-Dec-21	Cllr Request		John Foster	Victoria Barlow
Leisure Stakeholder and Consultation Interim Update (MMMA)	ERL	18-Jan-22	Officer Update	Yes	John Foster	Mike Evans
Carriage Museum Options Appraisal Report	ERL	18-Jan-22	Officer Update	Yes	John Foster	Victoria Barlow
Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Proposals 2022/23	ERL	18-Jan-22	Governance	Yes	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Future of Maidstone Leisure Centre	ERL	15-Feb-22	Officer Update		John Foster	Mike Evans
Q3 Budget and Performance Monitoring 2021/22	ERL	15-Feb-22	Officer Update	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Maidstone Museum Capital Expenditure	ERL	15-Feb-22	Officer Update		John Foster	Victoria Barlow
Review of Revised Museum Opening Hours and Working Arrangements	ERL	TBC	Cllr Request		John Foster	Victoria Barlow

2021/22 WORK PROGRAMME

	Committee	Month	Origin	CLT to clear	Lead	Report Author
Reopening the Town Centre - Arts and Cultural Activities	ERL	TBC	CLlr Request		John Foster	
Recovery & Renewal - 4-month review of Community and Skills Hub - <i>tbc by P&R</i>	ERL	TBC	CLlr Request		John Foster	John Foster
Economic Development Programme: Council's role within Partnership Arrangements	ERL	TBC	CLlr Request		John Foster	John Foster
Decommissioning Public Art Policy	ERL	TBC	Officer Update		John Foster	AnnMarie Langley
Pump Track Development	ERL	TBC	Officer Update	Yes	John Foster	Mike Evans

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Agenda Item 15

Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee

16 November 2021

Maidstone Museum Capital Expenditure Update

Final Decision-Maker	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Regeneration & Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Museums Director
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report updates Members on the options for capital expenditure in the Museum and confirms that the preferred option is to improve a gallery space which is supported by the Maidstone Museum Foundation and Kent Archaeological Society. However more work is needed to create proposals which reflect Member ambitions for a dynamic and changing museum providing high quality experiences for visitors and drive-up visitor numbers.

Purpose of Report

Discussion

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the report be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
ERL Committee	16 November 2021

Maidstone Museum Capital Expenditure Update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place • We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. 	Museum Director
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report supports the achievement(s) of the Heritage is Respected cross cutting objectives by ensuring an efficient and well-run museum.</p>	Museum Director
Risk Management	The report is for noting	Museum Director
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Senior Finance Manager
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Legal	This report is for noting only and therefore contains no legal implications.	Team Leader, Contracts and

		Commissioning, Mid Kent Legal Services
Privacy and Data Protection	The report is for noting only and will create no new data	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Equalities and Communities Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The report will have no impact on Crime and Disorder	Crime and Disorder Manager
Procurement	This report is for noting only	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
Biodiversity and Climate Change	Any refurbishments will consider energy efficient lighting and insulation measures in keeping with MBC's commitment to reduce energy and carbon emissions	Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer

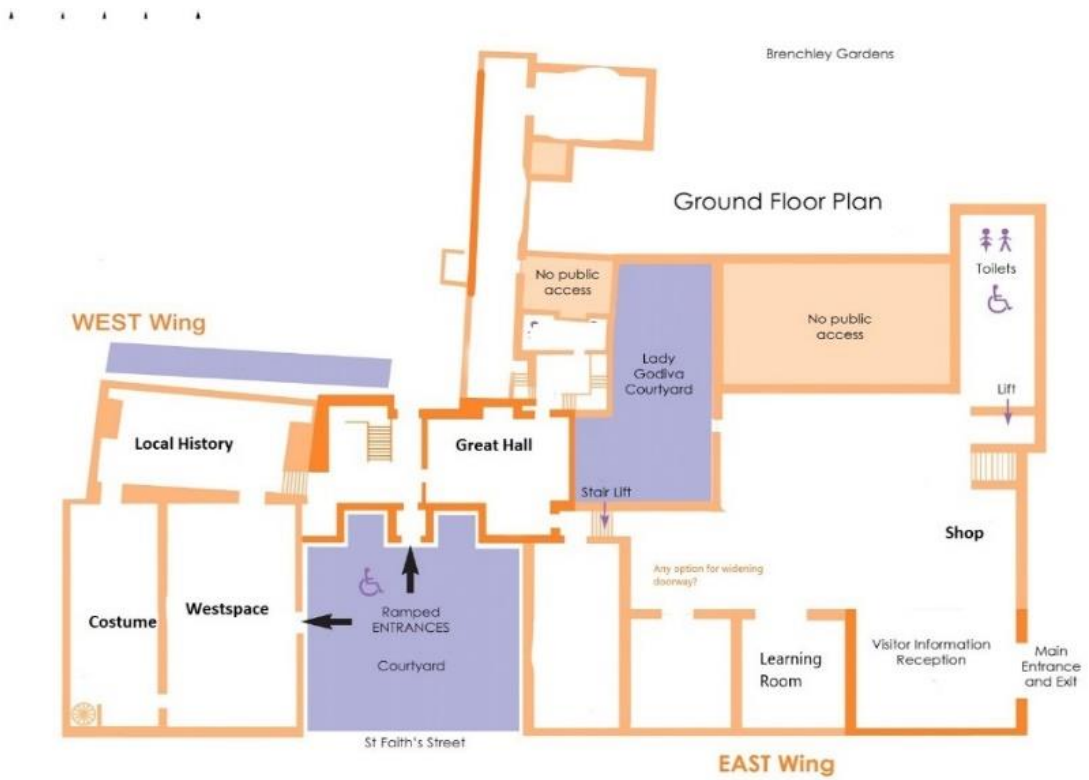
2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 In April 2021 ERL Committee considered a report setting out 4 options for the use of the existing capital allocation of £389,000 set out in the Council's capital programme. These four options were:

- Option1: Conversion of Westspace (the former café) into a temporary exhibition gallery
- Option 2: Conversion of Westspace a room for income generating events and external hire
- Option 3: The refurbishment of a display gallery
- Option 4: Minimal refurbishment of Westspace as an events and hire space and development of a new public gallery

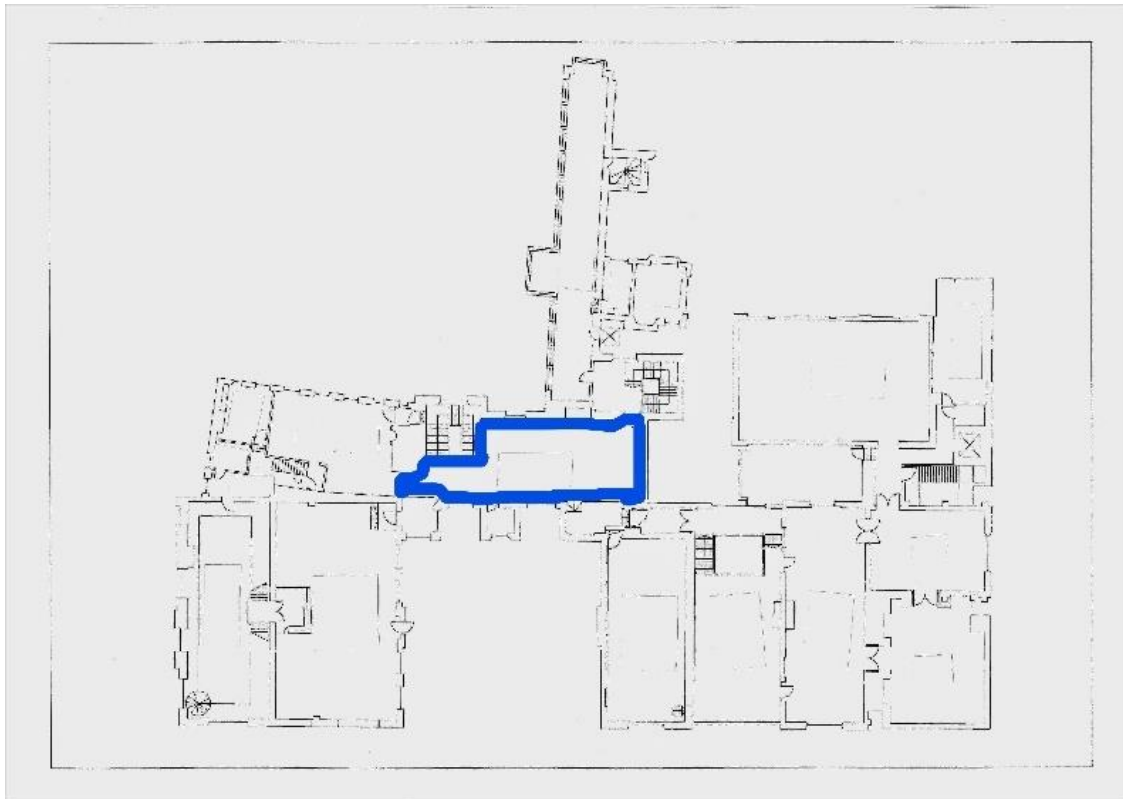
2.2 The pros and cons for each of these options were set out in the report and can be reviewed in Appendix 1 together with further information on costs.

2.3 For east of reference the Westspace is the former site of the museum café as shown here on the museum plan.



2.4 Option 3 concerns the Withdrawing Room which currently houses the British Archaeology displays. The area is marked below in blue.





Museum 1st Floor

- 2.5 Of the four options outlined, option 3, the refurbishment of a display gallery, was recommended. It was proposed that the British Archaeological Gallery be renewed in partnership with the Kent Archaeological Society, who own many of the display pieces at the Museum. It was explained that this would deliver against the museum's 20-year plan, telling the story of Maidstone, and would aim to engage community groups in the construction and design of the gallery. However, ERL Members asked that further consultation be undertaken with the Maidstone Museum Foundation and Kent Archaeological Society before making a final decision.

3 Progress update

- 3.1 A letter of support for option 3 has been received from the Maidstone Museum Foundation and is promised by Kent Archaeological Society at the time of publication.
- 3.2 Option 1: It is clearer now that large scale, blockbuster exhibitions are increasingly beyond the financial reach of civic museums and the importance placed on sharing more of our own collections has led to a recognition that the current temporary exhibition galleries are the best place for such shows, already having in place the correct environment and lighting etc.
- 3.3 Option 2: The use of Westspace as a large-scale event space was predicated on redirecting audiences as a result of the then proposed changes to the operations of The Hazlitt Theatre and of the Adult Education Centre. The museum has the necessary space to offer a home to various groups and clubs based at the Hazlitt if that venue were not available. Equally, there are a number of courses and activities provided by the Adult Education

Service that would be equally popular with museum audiences. As far as officers are aware the Adult Education Service is to remain open and so the gap in services this option would have allowed the museum to fill, is no longer likely.

- 3.4 Option 3: There has been an offer by the William and Edith Oldham Charitable Trust (hereafter the Oldham Trust) of up to £100,000 on the condition that the money is spent on the refurbishment of the Archaeology Gallery and that match funding is found by the Maidstone Museums Foundation. This generous offer and opens up several avenues of opportunity for officers which they will need to consider very carefully and in consultation with the two Trusts, should the Committee finally agree that this is best use of the Museum's capital. The entire sum, including money raised and matched by the Oldham Trust, could be used to create an even higher standard of archaeology gallery but it may also be wise to retain part of the original capital funding in order to create seed funding for future spaces/parts of the story we have to tell.
- 3.5 Kent Archaeological Society have been, unsurprisingly, supportive of the option to refurbish the current archaeology gallery. A large part of the Society's collection is stored at the museum and they would welcome the chance to display more. The specialist period knowledge and expertise of the Society would be a valuable addition to the professional skills of the museum resulting in a popular but rigorous exploration of our early history.
- 3.6 Option 4: Carrying out a small refurbishment of both the Westspace (by removing the catering area and re-decorating) and a gallery with new labelling and information but without a full redisplay has generally been received with the opinion that it achieves neither one thing nor the other and is unsatisfactory.

4 Further Considerations

- 4.1 Members have challenged the museum to be more ambitious and introduce digital media in its work and to consider the future governance of both the museum and its associated Trusts. These considerations also need to be viewed in the context of the '20 Year Plan' and how the vision agreed previously can be achieved without the availability of a large capital grant. To give Members confidence that the gallery investment meets their ambitions further work and consultation with Members will be organised including a visit to Brighton Museum, which has recently and successfully invested in gallery spaces and other Museum's where appropriate.
- 4.2 **Ambition**
Members have made clear their desire to see ideas for a vibrant and ambitious museum with particular reference to a positive attitude to change, making accessible more of the museum's collections through, regularly changing displays. Officers are keen to work with members to define and fully understand that ambition and what it looks like in terms of service delivery. Some work will begin immediately and continue during the museum's winter closure, with previously un-displayed objects installed in

several areas of the museum, such as the Withdrawing Room, to create a changing experience for visitors even before the initiation of the final capital project agreed by members.

4.3 Digital Media

The increasing use of digital media in museums, as elsewhere, provides many exciting opportunities for how we tell the stories of our artefacts and the history of the borough. In addition to those areas staff have already entered digitally, such as remote teaching for schools, websites, social media and both video and digital gaming in the Ancient Lives gallery, opportunities for visitors to personalise and share their own experiences open up a whole new area of engagement. Virtual and Augmented reality offer new ways of seeing and experiencing the past. Officers will need to carry out more research on the most useful and cost-effective options for the museum. While staff do have experience in this area, it may be that more specialist advice is required. A visit to Brighton Museum will be organised for ERL Members and Officers to see what a new gallery can achieve.

4.4 Achieving the 20-year Vision

It is clear that large funders are unlikely to provide one large capital grant to carry out all the work envisaged in the Transformation Plan submitted to National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2019, but there are emerging new opportunities for support on a more local level. In all likelihood, the only practical option will be to carry out refurbishment and improvement on a step-by-step basis as funding opportunities became available. However, in order to do this in a structured way, officers will need to revisit previous plans to ensure that an overall plan allows for this sectional completion without losing the essence of the original vision and the interdependencies that each story has while acknowledging that major capital elements may have to be refined. The goal must be that visitors will be able to make sense of their journey around the museum during the period of transformation and won't have to experience each area in a piecemeal way.

4.5 Governance

4.6 Achieving the 20 year vision is complicated by the number of Trusts with collections in the Museum, and in the case of the Bently Wing Trust, their control over certain spaces and galleries. These spaces are marked in red below; on the Ground Floor, the Bently Library and on the First Floor, the two Temporary Exhibition rooms, the Art Gallery and landing. This gives them a right to approve or veto what takes place in these rooms.

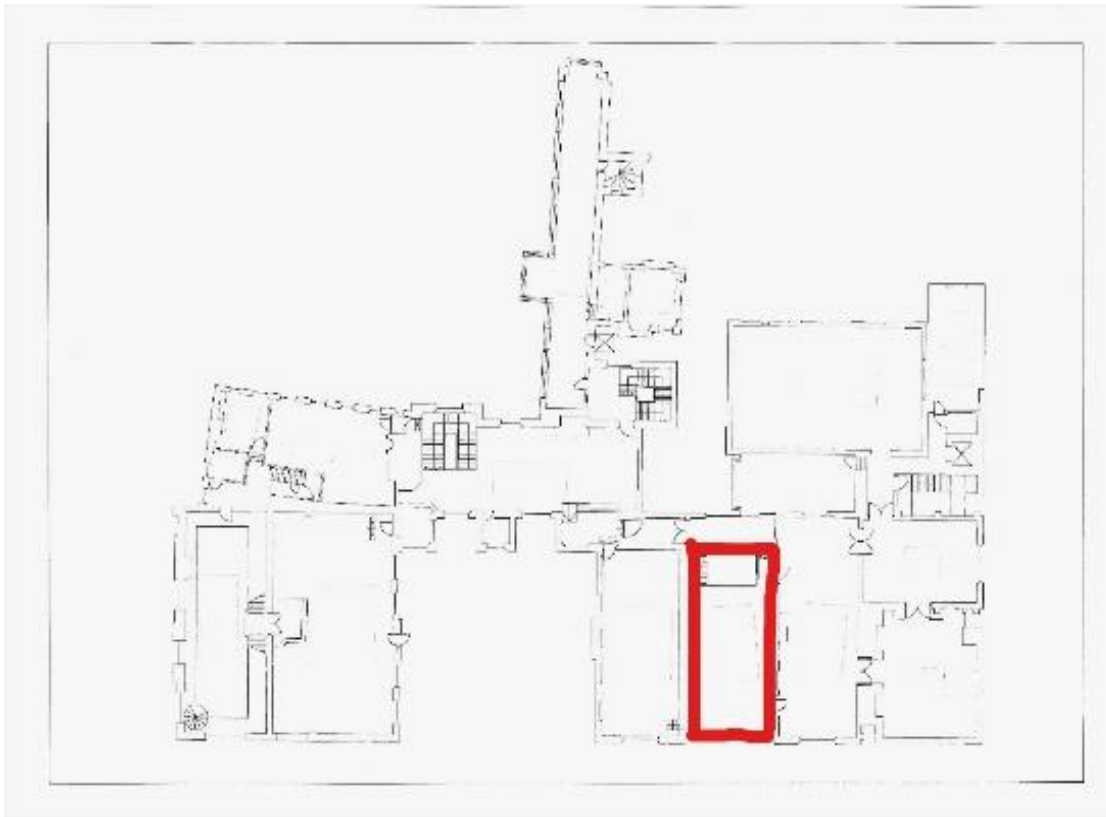


Fig 1: The Bentlif Library

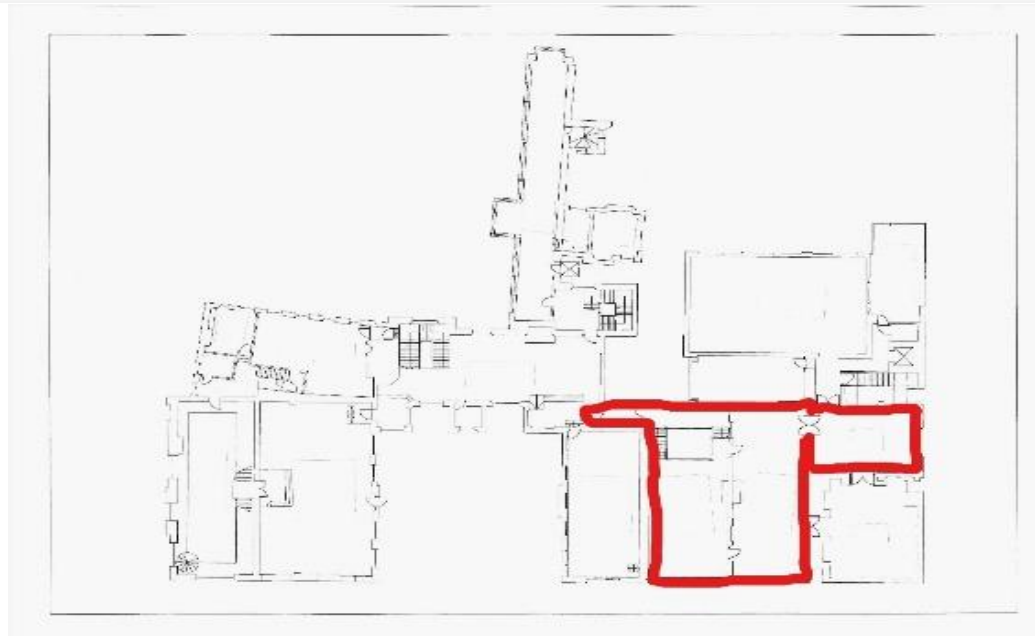


Fig 2: The Temporary Exhibition and Art Galleries

- 4.7 During the planning of the Transformation project which went to National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2019, The Bentlif Trust were involved in discussions at various stages of planning. At that time, Trustees felt unable to commit support for the project because in its current form it required permission to change the use of those spaces controlled by the Trust. Alternative offers put forward by officers to ensure a continuing Bentlif presence did not allay trustee concerns and no final decision was taken to accept or reject the museum's proposals. The Board have not met since.

- 4.8 There are three Trusts, besides MMF and Kent Archaeological Society, who are associated with the museum and the impact on, and of, these must be considered. See Appendix 2 for description of each Trust's role and current status
- 4.9 The issue of the museum's governance and relationship to the wider Borough Council has been raised by members, and officers will be revisiting the work carried out in 2016-18 on this subject. Whatever the outcome of that piece of work, it is the view of officers that the proposed capital expenditure remains appropriate as investment in galleries and collections and people is necessary for the continued success of the museum whether in the direct control of the Local Authority or under an arms-length agreement with a charitable trust or some other arrangement. Officers would welcome ERL Committee's view on this.
- 4.10 Further discussions will be needed with the Bentrif Wing Trust in any event. Without their support the 20 year plan cannot be implemented. It may be necessary to consider a revised plan, which scaled down the amount of major capital intervention in the museum, and respect the spaces controlled by the Bentrif Trust and retain them as they are now.
- 4.11 The current proposal to refurbish the Archaeology displays, has no impact on those areas under the purview of the Bentrif Trust.
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5 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with the Maidstone Museum Foundation and Kent Archaeological Society. Letters of support from these bodies can be found at Appendix 3. Previous Committee feedback is also set out in paragraph 2.5
-

6 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Officers will return in February 2022 with a more fully detailed proposal for members based on work carried out in the interim to address the considerations in Section 4.
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7 REPORT APPENDICES


- Appendix 1. Previously discussed options
Appendix 2. Details of Associated Trusts
Appendix 3. Letters of support


Maidstone Museum Capital Expenditure Update

Appendix 1 – Previously discussed options

1. Option 1: Creation of a new Temporary Exhibition Gallery in Westspace

- 1.1 A new Temporary Exhibition Gallery would require three major elements; a suitable and stable environment to preserve a range of organic and non-organic materials, flexible display equipment and a high level of security.
- 1.2 Conversion to a functioning gallery would require the following as a minimum:

OPTION- Exhibition Gallery	ESTIMATED COST
Removal of the current kitchen and making good	£3,000
Removal of access ramp and replacement with a wheelchair lift	Enabling works and demolition of the existing ramp £2,000 Short Rise Lift (Titan Lifts) £9-15,000 depending on spec and finish
Air handling or HVAC system to provide a stable environment with maximum cycling of 10% in band 50-65% relative humidity in a 24 hour period The space is currently one of the most unstable in the museum due to ingress of air under 3 different doors and the Victorian windows.	Mechanical and Electrical design Equipment and installation – Industry standards vary between £3,000 and £8,000 per square metre depending on the complexity of the required system
Museum quality display cases in a variety of styles each fully configured with internal lighting and dehumidifying cassettes) We only have a small number of cases (approx. 5) currently that meet museum standards	Click Netherfield no longer produce price lists because of the volatile market in materials at the current time and will only price specific requests.. However they have provided a rough estimate for a desk case (1200mmx600mmx1000mm with passive humidity control and dimmable LED lighting £5,350 with 10-15% of case price for delivery and installation <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> This means that tall cases are likely (based on previous comparisons of the two sizes) to be in the region of £12-15,000 each

	
Total covering of natural light sources	Board , installation, decoration £3,000
Installation of a flexible and dimmable lighting system able to achieve appropriate UV and Lux levels	Iguzzini track @ LED spotlights £15,000 Based on actual costs for lighting in museum Art Gallery, a slightly smaller space, in 2017
Storage area for unused equipment and packaging	Lockable . Minimum 3mx2m Shelving Construction and outfitting Labour £40.50 per m2 Materials per m2 £23.50 =£64m2 + shelving TOTAL £900
Wall hanging system or display board system for 2-d material	To be designed to fit over historic fabric
Close sealing door to front courtyard to prevent pests such as insects or mice entering from a planted area. If there was any intention to borrow items from national museums, the space would need to meet standards for the Government Indemnity Scheme (which means that the museum does not have to separately insure loan items) and, in particular, the requirement that a gallery must have two secure doors between the gallery and the exterior of the museum.	Architect's fees Doors/Shutter (subject to Conservation Officer approval)

1.3 Benefits

The space would be a new attraction which may attract new visitors and additional spend or donations
The conversion would give a clear purpose to a large, currently empty space
The gallery is accessible from the courtyard at the front of the museum and is therefore more visible to potential visitors

1.4 Risks

The major argument against this project is that it is not really required. We currently have sufficient space for Temporary Exhibitions upstairs. The recent staff restructure means that we will henceforth show only 2 exhibitions a year and they will be created in-house. It is unlikely we have material enough to create the larger exhibitions needed to fill this space. The current gallery also has level access via a lift which would need to be installed in Westspace.

This option would leave the current temporary exhibition gallery empty and unused. This is wasteful and likely to cause complaint by the Bentrif Trust who have an interest in the room. Current figures suggest that just 8% of general visitors pay to visit temporary exhibitions and so it would take a significant length of time to gain any return on the capital investment

The current environmental conditions in Westspace are currently the least stable in the museum and significant investment in HVAC would be necessary to control this. We would need both a system able to both humidify and dehumidify the large space. As well as the initial costs of installation of such a system, the running costs in terms of maintenance and power are also significant.

In addition, it would take significant works to make the gallery Government Indemnity Scheme compliant. Previous plans included the closing off and re-purposing of the courtyard which would add significant costs for construction and gardening works. Although the Government Indemnity Scheme only covers national and DCMS-sponsored museums, many civic and regional museums have accepted its standards as a baseline for agreeing loans. Without it, our options would be limited in this area. The current gallery is already compliant.

1.5 Affordability

Figures prepared by Innes Architects as part of the Transformation project suggest that the construction work on the gallery and courtyard would cost up to £150,000 (exc fees) which leaves the residue to pay for the fit out, lighting, HVAC and equipment. Barring any unforeseen additional spend, the project could be completed within the budget but would need careful management to ensure this.

1.6 Timescales

The gallery is in use until July 2021 but the project could commence during the financial year 2021-22 and is likely to take 6-9 months to complete

1.7 Permissions needed

Planning Permission

Listed Building Consent

Consultation with Bentrif Wing Trust

1.8 Resources

This option would require capital funding to carry out the conversion work but an on-going concern would be the cost of maintaining air handling equipment. In

addition, its easy access to and from the main road and Fremlin Walk would require a staff member to provide security cover during opening hours and this would be very difficult to resource from proposed staffing.

2. Option 2: conversion of Westspace a room for income generating events and external hire

2.1 Currently the museum has two small spaces which it uses as venues for meetings and small events. The creation of a space capable of hosting events for a larger audience or small conference would seem to present an obvious opportunity for maximising the use of the space whilst generating new income.

2.2 Conversion would require the following as a minimum:

- Removal of the current kitchen and making good
- Removal of access ramp and replacement a wheelchair lift
- Improved central heating to enable longer use of the room which gets very cold
- Provision of fast, reliable WiFi at this end of the building
- Black out blinds for all windows
- Storage area for unused equipment and furniture
- Provision of a new toilet
- New seating in the form of individual chairs and tables alongside a retractable seating system (2 aisle 50 seat system is approx. £25,000)

2.3 Benefits

Potential hire income is increased. A larger room would allow us to expand our market into larger meetings and small conferences which in turn would increase income generation. A bigger, flexible space would allow us to provide a wider range of activities with greater income likely from ticket sales. This might mean we could accommodate local community group activities, school events or commercial hire for leisure activities such as yoga or weight watchers. If, as anticipated, the Adult Education Centre is closed in the next few years, it is also possible we could offer some of the activities currently provided by KCC and secure that income while providing a popular service. This diversity of activity would allow us to target under-resourced audiences and improve the Diversity and Inclusivity of our offer to new audiences. The availability for occasional museum activity would make collections work such auditing, decants and possible volunteer projects easier and more efficient to run.

2.4 Risks

The assumptions above in relation to increased audiences and spend have not been market tested so there is a risk of investing with no definite return. A growth in room hire could easily out-strip our ability to resource meetings, conferences or events properly. We are unable to offer in-house catering or dedicated front of house staff during such events. Our experience of meeting hire is that organisers frequently change plans with little notice or have unplanned requirements. A professional conference venue would have staff dedicated to addressing this. The museum is an attractive venue but must

provide a professional service to compete with hotels or other venues such as the Hazlitt Theatre. Larger, higher profile events would need wider marketing to attract audiences which potentially double current event crowds. We have very little marketing budget and rely on the Communications Team for all our services in this area. The current museum WiFi in this area will not be suitable for external hire. Reliable, fast internet is a given in today's market and coverage within the museum could best be described as patchy.

There is also a significant drawback in the layout of the room in the form of two columns on the west side of the room which limit usable space and affect sightlines. Any set up would have to be carefully designed to make best use of available space.

2.5 Affordability

Less construction work would be necessary for this option and so the Innes figure could probably be reduced by at least £50,000. Even with £25,000 for seating and, say £10,00, for table, chairs and other equipment, the whole project could be comfortably brought in under budget.

2.6 Timescales

The gallery is in use until November 2021 but the project could commence during the financial year 2021-22 and is likely to take 3 months depending on lead in times for equipment.

2.7 Permissions

Listed Building Consent

2.8 Resources

On-going staffing resources are a concern. Previously meetings have been facilitated by front of house staff and the administrator. Both of these roles have been reduced in the new structure and the capacity to react to the needs of hirers is lessened at the same time we would hope to grow the customer base with organisations expecting higher standards of service. It is unlikely that this gap could be filled with volunteers.

Changes to business post-Covid also pose a risk if businesses continue to meet online and there is less demand for room hire in general.

3. Option 3: Refurbishment of one of the museum's display spaces to tell the story of local archaeology

3.1 One of the drivers for the Vision adopted in the Museum Transformation Plan agreed by members in 2018 was the poor and outdated standard of some of the museum's galleries. The transformation of the Ancient Lives gallery provided a benchmark to judge our other galleries against and while data does not allow us to assert cause, there has certainly been a rise in visitor numbers of roughly 20,000 in the past few years aligning with its opening. We propose that the most appropriate gallery would be the British archaeology gallery on the first floor which has many issues with its current presentation but is at the heart of the building.

3.2 It must be said that the production of Ancient Lives was carried out to a timetable which fitted the requirements of the Property Services team and for a very small amount of money. Savings were made by the re-use of freecycled equipment and cases. Those cheaper options are unlikely to be available again. The proposed gallery would tell a much greater story in terms of scope and chronology and fill a much increased floor space.

3.3 The project would include:

- Definition of the stories being told, what periods are covered and what the narrative approach would be
- Research of the periods and the local picture
- Object research and documentation to discover what we hold that tells the stories and is viable for display
- Object conservation and preparation for display by an external specialist contractor
- Appointment of designers and work to create the physical experience including digital and interactive elements
- Activity Plan creation and implementation to ensure the involvement of groups and individuals (eg, Maidstone Archaeological Society, KAS, residents in significant geographical locations, partners with concern for specific elements such as disability access, marginalised stories etc)
- Decant and storage of current exhibition material
- Gallery fit out and replacement of Withdrawing Room floor by Property Services
- Marketing

3.4 Benefits

A new gallery would be a visible and popular addition to the museum attracting more visitors and increased spend. This option would continue the work of delivering the new museum vision without the need to involve major funders such as the National Lottery, the project can be carried out at a pace that is determined by MBC and not an external body. An exciting new project would revitalise the image of the museum among stakeholders, residents and staff. Community involvement with the development of the gallery would engage new groups and individuals in our work and their heritage.

This would be a key project in going forward with Kent Archaeological Society and regularising our relationship with them and the status of their collections. It would allow us to identify and agree long term loans for those parts of the collections we are interested in. This will set the scene for inevitable future negotiations should KAS plans for a new Collections Centre come to fruition. British archaeology of one kind or another is always on the history National Curriculum and so presents the most opportunities for learning opportunities, paid services to schools and interest from families and specialist audiences alike.

3.5 Risks

This would be, by far, the most expensive option and expenditure would have to be tightly controlled. There may be a possibility of further funding from local

sources including the Oldham Trust, but no fundraising campaign, on which the project is contingent, will be launched.

This would be a huge project to deliver on revised staff capacity. Although this might seem the most 'fun' option for staff because it is closest to what many went into museum work for, this work couldn't be delivered alongside a full programme of other work. It may be necessary to budget for extra staff resource (either individuals or hours) and would be critically necessary to reduce work in other areas and to allow a realistic timescale of activities.

The gallery is a major meeting point of routes round the museum and so works here would cause significant disruption but for a limited time.

This option still leaves Westspace empty in the medium term.

3.6 Affordability

The budget for the space available is not generous but is workable. The usable space in this gallery is 112 square metres and based on a budget of £350,000 this allows for £3,000 per sqm for fit out. Of course, that doesn't cover all other costs involved with research and preparation but could be reduced to, say £2,000, to help cover those other expenses.

3.7 Timescales

A project of this scale would take approximately 3-4 years

3.8 Permissions

Listed Building Consent

3.9 Resources

Staff capacity to deliver is the largest concern. There is an option to capitalise some staff costs which would be helpful and may be where potential donations are useful. If this project were to go ahead, there would need to be a firm agreement around the hours available and other priorities to be dealt with alongside this work. Future running costs of the gallery would also need to be discussed as part of the design of any gallery. However, a gallery such as this would provide many opportunities for volunteers and others such as archaeology groups to get involved in the day to day delivery of related activities.

4. Option 4 minimal refurbishment of Westspace as an events and hire space and development of a new public gallery

4.1 This option would combine elements of 2 and 3, bringing Westspace back into use at a manageable level whilst concentrating on the development of the archaeology gallery

4.2 Conversion would require the following as a minimum:

WESTSPACE

- Removal of the current kitchen and making good/minimal redecoration
- Removal of access ramp and replacement a wheelchair lift if financially viable

- Provision of fast, reliable WiFi at this end of the building if financially viable
- New blinds to windows
- New chairs and tables
- GALLERY
- As above

4.3 Benefits

This option combines the most essential elements of two other options, each of which has significant benefits

4.4 Risks

There is a not inconsiderable risk that splitting the available spend may mean that not enough improvement is made to Westspace to attract new hirers nor is the archaeology gallery sufficiently exciting and visually appealing to attract new users to the museum so that the whole investment is made for insufficient return

4.5 Affordability

This option would remove possibly £20,000-25,000 from the exhibition budget and would mean it is much more likely that some level of external funding is required but it would still be a relatively small amount.

4.6 Timescales

Whilst the Westspace work could be done any time after July, the whole project would still take approximately 36 months if both projects were able to commence concurrently and the work to Westspace required minimal museum staff input.

4.7 Permissions

Listed Building Consent

4.8 Resources

With the support of Property Services to deliver the Westspace element of this option, the concerns that remain would be those as detailed at Option 3 above

Maidstone Museum Capital Expenditure Update

Appendix 2 – Associated Trusts

1. The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Museum Trust (QORWKMT) is an independent Trust dedicated to the preservation of the collections related to the regiment and held at the museum. Trustees are all Council members and curatorial and administrative support is provided by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) officers. The museum is located within the St Faith's Street site and, whilst nominally an independent museum paying rent, it is managed as if it were a gallery of the main museum. However, the collections of the QORWKMT are held by the Trust and not by MBC. Work carried out in the past two years to streamline the operation and governance of the museum has shown that, because of the QORWKMT's founding constitution, the collections may under no circumstances be passed to MBC but instead only to the National Army Museum or to another independent trust. The National Army Museum has confirmed that it has no intention or desire to collect the material currently held. In light of this, officers will make recommendations in, January 2023, that the Trust meet only once a year to receive an annual report and financial information on the museum and its collection but otherwise carry out no other work. Museum staff will continue to curate the museum to current museum-wide standards.
2. The Brenchley Trust exists to ensure, as far as possible, that the artefacts which make up the Collections accumulated by Julius Lucius Brenchley, and given to Maidstone Museum for the enlightenment of the people of Maidstone, are maintained, preserved and exhibited. It is important to note that the collections mentioned belong to the museum, thanks to the bequest of JL Brenchley, and not to the Trust. Since Trustees are, in the majority, MBC members and officers, it was proposed in 2018 to request permission of the Charity Commission to dissolve the Trust as in practical terms, MBC was fulfilling the role of the Trust whilst also paying the costs, in staff time, of running the Trust. This action has been delayed by the effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic and by the sad death of the Chair of Trustees, Mr Philip Dodd but will be taken forward in the coming weeks.
3. The Bently Wing Trust (The Bently Trust) is responsible for the management and control of the Bently collection at Maidstone Museum and the use of the Galleries under their auspices. The board is made up of appointees independent of MBC. Under a Deed of Variation signed in 2009, MBC is responsible, in perpetuity, for the storage of the Bently collection of fine and applied art, its curation and administration. In addition, MBC must provide, free of charge, clerical and accountancy services for the Board. The Deed of Variation was also responsible for the transfer of ownership of parts of the museum to MBC from the Trust (which was responsible for building part of the museum in the 19th century) but it was agreed that the Trust would retain an interest in those spaces with a right to consultation and approval of activities taking place therein. These spaces cover a large area of the East Wing of the museum.



Maidstone Museums' Foundation

Registered Charity No. 802547

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5th November 2021

Dear Victoria

Maidstone Museums – Archaeology Gallery

The Board of MMF is aware that you are to present a briefing to Members of the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee meeting on 16th November 2021, on the subject of the best option for the current enhancement of the Museums. Knowing that, the Board of MMF wished to advise you (and Members of the Committee) of our thoughts on the subject.

We are aware that £380,000 has been identified in the MBC budget for Capital Project(s) at the Museums, and that the briefing looks at four options to utilise this opportunity – an opportunity which should be used to enhance part(s) of the Museums, lead to increased footfall of the galleries, and act as an additional Museums' attractor overall.

Of the options presented in the briefing, MMF favours strongly the refurbishment of an existing gallery on the topic of local archaeology.

We should say at the outset that this approach is consistent with the approach taken in the opening of the 'Ancient Lives' gallery in 2017 which improved interpretation, presentation and display of the Museums' collections of Ancient Egypt and Greece. These factors, and the increasing 'hands on' opportunities for young people and those with disabilities, led to better appreciation of these collections and increased visitor numbers. The profile of the Museums during the

development phase of the work was raised significantly at local, regional and national (and even international) level. There was much to learn from the exhaustive research undertaken, and the local scanning of the mummies (human and animal) captured people's attention in a powerful way.

Addressing, now, another gallery could have a similar impact on the standing of the Museums and their profile locally and regionally. It is, in our opinion, wholly at one with the agreed Maidstone Museums' Transformation project. Taking a step-by-step approach to modernising the Museums is the correct way forward in a post Covid environment. Furthermore, the emphasis on local archaeology will appeal to the residents of the Borough. It is also the view of the MMF board that improving the gallery will have huge educational benefits, by interpreting the Museums' archaeological collection to better state their importance and relevance to local people.

Thus MMF supports the preferred option that suggests the use of MBC's existing capital funds in improving the Museums, by refurbishing the gallery on the first floor of the Tudor part of the building on the topic of local archaeology. This will encourage greater access to collections by residents, use existing spaces to their best, and act as an attractor for secondary spend and increased donations.

MMF is also very encouraged by the financial offer made by the William and Edith Oldham Trust, for improving the archaeological gallery. This demonstrates a real enthusiasm and support for the preferred option presented in the briefing to Members. We are also aware that the generosity of the Oldham Trust is dependent upon MMF matching the offer made. MMF accepts the challenge here and in principle will work towards this goal, if agreed by Members of the Committee.

Finally, on the assumption that Members agree the Recommendation, we would urge the early production of an embryo project plan for the archaeology gallery together with an indicative budget. For MMF to approach Foundations for financial support a project plan and budget will be essential. We have much experience of raising financial support from grant-giving Foundations, and we can say that to embark on such an exercise without these key pieces of information will be futile. Thus, these are needed now.

Kind Regards

Yours sincerely

Mark Baker

Chairman of MMF

Agenda Item 16

Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee

16 November 2021

Development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Alison Broom – Chief Executive
Lead Officer and Report Author	Phil Coyne – Interim Director, Local Plan Review
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Maidstone Town Centre is the social and economic heart of the Borough, providing employment, leisure, retail and business/professional service facilities throughout the Borough and beyond, as part of its role as the County Town of Kent. The Town Centre and the wider urban area are also home to a very significant residential population. However, in recent years the town centre, like many others around the country, has experienced some challenges as a result of changes in retailing patterns, a shift in the nature of demand for offices, viability challenges in the delivery of new housing and difficulty in ensuring that important infrastructure keeps pace with the needs of resident communities, businesses and visitors. Again, in common with many other areas, these issues have been exacerbated over the last 18 months by the impact of the COVID19 Pandemic. This report is for the purpose of discussion around the preparation of a Town Centre Strategy which will be focused upon a 30 year vision to embed new investment in jobs, infrastructure, housing, leisure and culture within a framework which will seek to establish Maidstone as an exemplar of urban sustainability.

Purpose of Report

Discussion

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That feedback arising from this Committee be used to inform a further report to the Policy and Resources Committee with a more specific proposal on the scope and timing of the Town Centre Strategy.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee	9 November 2021
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	16 November 2021
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	30 November 2021

Development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p>Impact on Corporate Priorities</p>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>The Town Centre Strategy will contribute to all of these objectives by promoting good growth in the town centre which will impact positively on both the local and regional economies, whilst providing new homes and jobs within a greener, more legible environment supported by improvements to infrastructure - including sustainable transport and community services.</p>	<p>Interim Local Plan Review Director</p>
<p>Cross Cutting Objectives</p>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation is reduced and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>We envisage that a specific focus for the Town Centre Strategy will be around protecting and celebrating Maidstone’s heritage and protecting and enhancing biodiversity, for example through the establishment of green networks throughout the town.</p> <p>Initial thinking includes creating a Strategy which will also seek to take a new approach to the connectivity between inward investment and employment/training opportunities for local people which, coupled with integrating health and</p>	<p>Interim Local Plan Review Director</p>

	wellbeing objectives and infrastructure into our whole approach which will help to tackle health inequalities.	
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section.	Interim Local Plan Review Director
Financial	Provision has been made for stage one of the costs of preparing the Town Centre Strategy within the Council's agreed allocation of the Recovery and Renewal Funding (£176k); the medium term financial plan will identify further funding for future stages of work. These costs will need to be reviewed regularly as work progresses.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The scale and breadth of this work will require contributions and support from service experts across the Council, including at leadership and management level. It is also proposed that a project manager be appointed and that the Interim Director for the Local Plan Review will provide expert consultancy support and play a co-ordinating role.	Interim Local Plan Review Director
Legal	The Council's Strategic Plan (2019-2025) vision of "a vibrant, development prosperous, urban and rural community at the heart of Kent where everyone can realise their potential" is underpinned by 4 priorities including the borough being a "Thriving Place", "Embracing Growth & Enabling Infrastructure" and "Safe, Clean and Green". Best value is a statutory framework that ensures that councils are required to plan, deliver and continuously improve local authority services. Each local authority has a duty to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". The Council's Strategic Plan demonstrates compliance with the	Planning Team Leader

	<p>statutory duty and this report goes towards achieving that objective.</p> <p>The Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011 enable the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.</p> <p>There are no consequences arising from the recommendation that adversely affect or interfere with individuals' rights and freedoms as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998. In the formulation of the strategy and in the exercise of its functions in delivering the strategy, the Council will have to have due regard to its public sector equality duty in s.149 of the Equality Act 2010.</p>	
Privacy and Data Protection	No impact identified at this stage.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	We recognise the recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. An Eq.IA will be completed alongside the strategy.	Equalities and Communications Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	An integral aspect of the Town Centre Strategy will be the creation of a physical and social environment which helps to discourage crime and antisocial behaviour.	Interim Local Plan Review Director
Procurement	No impact currently identified but as the Strategy is developed and projects are taken forward the appropriate procurement process will be undertaken as necessary.	Interim Local Plan Review Director
Biodiversity and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An integral aspect of the preparation of a Town Centre Strategy will be to include climate adaption measures in order to increase green space, reduce pollution, enable active 	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

	<p>travel, increase pedestrian permeability, and to provide for the planting of trees and the encouragement of green walls to improve biodiversity and aesthetic enhancement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support green jobs, businesses and residents to prepare for the impacts of climate change, encouragement of circular economy business practices, and the enablement of electric vehicle infrastructure and sustainable travel. 	
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In common with town centres across the country, Maidstone Town Centre has experienced change over the last decade as a result of changing consumer trends within the retail sector together with structural changes within many aspects of the office and employment sectors. Over the last 18 months, these challenges have been accentuated and exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic and there are further risks arising from the potential impacts of post-Brexit economic rebalancing. Whilst, as members will be aware, the Council and other agencies have worked hard to provide support to both the businesses and residential communities during the pandemic, it is also now necessary to look at the recovery and 'reimagining' of the town in the short, medium and long term. For this reason, this report proposes a comprehensive Town Centre Strategy which would be capable of quickly building upon recent interventions and reinforcing these with a series of complementary strategies and actions designed to transform Maidstone Town Centre between now and 2050 in line with a new Town Centre Vision.
- 2.2 The Town Centre Strategy will be designed to establish, and provide clarity around, the Council's long-term vision for the Town Centre and to develop a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy and delivery plan to achieve this. The work will be underpinned by core principles which reflect the vision for both the County Town at the heart of Kent and a borough with vibrant and prosperous urban and rural communities where everyone can realise their potential and fulfil their aspirations.
- 2.3 The Strategy will help to create an ambitious overarching vision which in turn will guide investment by ourselves and others in regeneration, development, provision of infrastructure, and the use of our town centre spaces. In the short/medium term the strategy will guide the provision of support to town centre communities in responding to the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic and a post Brexit economy. In addition, it will seek to address the management of potential change resulting from the relaxation of planning rules around the transition of business premises between uses.

- 2.4 It is proposed that central to the approach will be the reinvention and renaissance of Maidstone Town Centre as an exemplar of sustainability with a strong focus around arts, culture, leisure and the visitor economy. This will assist in creating a place where people want to live, feel safe, and which places an equal emphasis upon a town centre which is relevant to, and to which all of the borough's residents can relate. Development of the strategy will be led by MBC and include engagement with the public, businesses and wider stakeholders including our public and community sector partners, landowners and investors.
- 2.5 Also central to the approach will be the prioritisation of the natural environment to create a healthier and a more sustainable town centre for the benefit of residents, visitors, businesses, urban wildlife and the ecology of the borough. An increased focus on urban planting and green spaces will help to reduce the impact of vehicle emissions, improve air quality and dampen traffic noise, as well as helping to address increasing urban temperatures as a result of the changing climate.

Scope of Strategy

- 2.6 The Policy and Resources Committee have given initial consideration to the scope of the strategy as set out below and feedback is now invited from this Committee. The scope currently envisaged includes:
- The reaffirmation of Maidstone as the county town of Kent through physical regeneration, cultural renaissance and the further development of diverse and high-quality employment, retail and leisure opportunities.
 - Consideration of future land/building uses and the achievement of high-quality and sustainable design that respects and celebrates Maidstone's heritage, whilst improving the quality and character of the town, its environment and its functionality.
 - Cross-cutting principles to ensure that the town centre is resilient to the effects of climate change and is a flagship of the Council's aspiration to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
 - A phased approach which continues to build upon current post pandemic recovery work, but also identifies short, medium and long term projects and interventions, including those around key factors such as environment and community safety.
 - Integration of the Council's commitments to a Maidstone Borough that works for everyone, incorporates reductions in deprivation and health inequalities and brings improvements in social mobility.
 - Ensuring the town centre and the wider urban area can continue to play a significant role in meeting the borough's housing need through the enablement of development, investment and support for the delivery of quality homes across the housing market to develop sustainable communities.
 - Tackling education and skills differentials across all sectors of the community, in order to ensure that local residents are equipped to compete for employment and training opportunities resulting from investment and reinvestment.
 - Promoting Maidstone as a 'smart town' by bringing together the use of new and emergent technologies and data capture techniques in tackling

a range of issues from traffic and air quality, to the efficient use of buildings and spaces and the ability of all stakeholders to reach target audiences more easily.

What will the strategy include?

2.7 Our Town Centre Strategy needs to comprise of a number of interrelated, interdependent and complementary workstreams; initial thinking is set out below and again feedback from this Committee is invited:

- A clear and ambitious vision
- A transport movement and infrastructure plan designed to facilitate the well-managed movement of traffic with minimum impact on pedestrian safety and air quality, together with safe and legible pedestrian routes throughout the town centre, attractive low carbon public transport options and cycle routes based on logical desire lines.
- A site assembly and implementation framework designed to assist strategic acquisitions by the Council and other partners, together with relocation strategies to ensure that investment and jobs are protected and opportunities for growth are fully exploited.
- An inward investment strategy based around a proactive approach to identifying investors, developers and end-users in order to ensure the realisation of the overall strategy.
- An economic development and visitor economy plan based around the current economic development strategy, and seeking to secure reinvestment from existing stakeholders in the town, along with the provision of opportunities for new investment in diversifying Maidstone's visitor offer through development in arts, culture, events and leisure opportunities.
- A sustainable town plan designed to ensure that all aspects of the town's transport system, built and natural/semi-natural environments make a positive contribution to the achievement of the boroughs 2030 carbon neutrality target.
- A housing and community plan to ensure that the town's housing stock is of a good standard and of a sufficiently broad nature in terms of both type and tenure to provide for existing and future residents.
- A skills and inclusive growth plan to ensure that residents from throughout the borough are equipped with the skills to compete for employment and training opportunities arising from the strategy, and that the skill base and training infrastructure across the borough becomes an integral part of Maidstone's inward investment offer.
- A smart town plan to ensure that technology and data capture is harnessed in the context of the easy movement of vehicles and public transport, improvements in air quality, and the ability of the business community and other stakeholders to maximise dwell time and spend capture in the town centre.
- A marketing and communications strategy designed to manage community business and stakeholder engagement in the process, whilst simultaneously marketing the town to investors, developers, occupiers and visitors.
- A plan for the Council's role in investment and direct delivery.

- 2.8 At the appropriate point, consideration will be given to the preparation of a new Development Plan Document (DPD) if it is felt that this is necessary to enable the more effective and efficient delivery of key projects or other elements of the Strategy. Equally, and dependent upon the timing and content of new guidance anticipated around the national planning system, it may be more appropriate for the Town Centre to provide a key focus for the Borough's first Local Plan prepared under the new system.
- 2.9 The Town Centre Strategy will be the key to achieving the Council's recently adopted Economic Development Strategy and action plan (agreed by this Committee in September 2021), in particular Priority 5: Destination Maidstone town centre – which highlights the need to reimagine Maidstone's town centre as a vibrant, mixed use destination and modern county town and proposes actions to:
- Boost local consumer demand and confidence by attracting footfall, tourists and spending back to the town centre
 - Support a thriving creative and cultural business base and visitor economy offer in Maidstone town
 - Repurpose the town centre as a cultural and leisure hub befitting a modern county town
 - Explore how Covid-19 has impacted and accelerated trends already underway pre-pandemic and coordinate a package of support and investment to re-imagine our town centre as a thriving economic hub

3. GOVERNANCE

Political Leadership

- 3.1 At the outset, political leadership of the strategy will be via the Policy and Resources Committee. As the strategy develops and projects are identified, it is anticipated that these will be managed via the appropriate service committees and reported back to Policy and Resource Committee as appropriate. This approach will need to be adapted in the context of the already agreed principle of changing the Council's governance system to a Cabinet structure from May 2022. The details of the new Constitution are currently being drafted and yet to be agreed.
- 3.2 Whilst many of the activities which will be pursued as part of the Town Centre Strategy will be cross cutting between service committees, of specific relevance to this committee is the reflection of the priorities in the Economic Development Strategy – not only for the town centre specifically but also concerning priorities to be open for business, a greener and more productive economy and the promotion of inclusive growth. These are reflected in the draft scope set out above including the aim for the town centre to be a flagship of the Council's aspiration to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and production of a skills and inclusive growth plan to complement regeneration work and to ensure that residents from throughout the borough are equipped with the skills to compete for employment and training opportunities.

- 3.3 Some examples of the types of projects and roles which are likely to emerge under the remit of this committee would be;
- The establishment of an ambitious strategy to promote and attract new investment to the town centre.
 - The identification of opportunities to protect and enhance existing employment infrastructure.
 - The creation of opportunities to increase the 'added value' of the town centre employment base.
 - The promotion of new facilities, events and opportunities to broaden the arts, cultural and leisure base of the town centre.
 - Options around the introduction and role of 'Smart' technologies.

Stakeholder Engagement and Management

- 3.4 It is proposed that as an early action, work begins with elected members in the design of a governance framework to enable structured work with members on both strategic and town centre community matters and with our partners. This could include formation of a multi-agency Town Centre Partnership Board to work alongside the Council in developing and coordinating the strategy. Members views on this are invited.
- 3.5 It is also proposed that at both development and implementation stages, the strategy will include a comprehensive programme of community and stakeholder engagement in order to ensure the broadest possible input and influence from across the borough.

4. RESOURCES

- 4.1 The initial resources for this strategy were discussed and agreed at Policy and Resources Committee on the 20th October 2021; £176k has been allocated from the Recovery and Renewal Fund and consideration will be given to subsequent stages of the strategy work through the medium-term Financial Strategy. Resources will be monitored and reported in further detail as the project progresses.

5. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 5.1 Not applicable as this report is for discussion purposes only.

6. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Not applicable as this report is for discussion purposes only.
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7. RISK

- 7.1 The development of a Town Centre Strategy contributes to the mitigation of a strategic risk around achieving MBC's Strategic Plan. This risk arises due to economic restructuring, the accentuation of adverse trends by the pandemic and the pressures for services arising as a consequence of a growing residential population in the borough as a whole and specifically in and around the town centre.
- 7.2 As part of the governance framework for the strategy, risk registers will be compiled, monitored and managed for both the overall Town Centre Strategy and its component workstreams. These risks will be contained within the established risk appetite for council activities.
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8. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 8.1 The discussion at this committee is part of similar discussions with other service committees which will inform a further report to the Policy and Resources Committee.
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9. REPORT APPENDICES

None.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.