

# AGENDA

## REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING



Overview and Scrutiny

Date: Tuesday 27 October 2009

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Town Hall, High Street,  
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors: Sherreard (Chairman), Beerling,  
FitzGerald, Nelson-Gracie (Vice-  
Chairman), Paine, Ross, Thick and  
Vizzard

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Page No.

1. **The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast.**
2. **Apologies.**
3. **Notification of Substitute Members.**
4. **Notification of Visiting Members.**

**Continued Over/:**

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**Issued on 14 October 2009**

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**David Petford, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,  
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6JQ**

**5. Disclosures by Members and Officers:**

- a) Disclosures of interest.
- b) Disclosures of lobbying.
- c) Disclosures of whipping.

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

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**7. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 29 September 2009. 1 - 11**

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**8. Disabled Facilities Grants: The Role of Occupational Therapy: 12 - 17**

Interview with Ms Sue Stower, Kent County Council's Head of Service for the Maidstone and Malling Locality.

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**9. Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions. 18 - 26**

## MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2009

**PRESENT:** Councillor Sherreard (Chairman)  
Councillors FitzGerald, Nelson-Gracie, Paine, Ross,  
Moriarty and Vizzard

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies for absence were received from Councillor  
Thick and Beerling.

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

The Committee agreed to not web-cast Agenda Item 8, Disabled Facilities Grants, 'Interview with Maidstone Housing Trust', following a request from a witness. Due to a technical difficulty, the Committee agreed to only web-cast Agenda Items 9, 'Disabled Facilities Grants, Interview with Councillor Beerling' and 10 'Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions'.

**Resolved:** That Agenda Items 9 and 10 be web-cast.

**49. Apologies.**

Apologies were received from Councillor Thick. It was noted that Councillor Beerling had sent his apologies for the first part of the meeting as he had a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 8, Disabled Facilities Grants, and he would only be in attendance for Agenda Item 9 as a witness for the Disabled Facilities Grants review.

**50. Notification of Substitute Members.**

It was noted that Councillor Moriarty was substituting for Councillor Beerling.

**51. Notification of Visiting Members.**

There were no visiting Members.

**52. Disclosures by Members and Officers:**

There were no disclosures.

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

**Resolved:** That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

#### **54. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 25 August 2009.**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 August 2009 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman.

#### **55. Disabled Facilities Grants: Maidstone Housing Trust: Interview with Maidstone Housing Trust.**

The Chairman welcomed the Group Director of Operations, Ms Jillie Smithies, and the Property Services Manager, Ms Eileen Parrott, from Maidstone Housing Trust (MHT) to the meeting. The Committee received a presentation on Housing Adaptations, attached at Appendix A. This highlighted MHT's approach to housing adaptations, current issues, best practice, future plans, wider MHT initiatives, issues within the social housing sector and areas requiring further exploration.

##### Maidstone Housing Trust's Approach

It was agreed as part of the stock transfer that MHT would continue to deliver adaptations to its housing stock. This included the management of adaptations using its own technical staff, even if it had been funded through Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) or Communities and Local Government.

MHT's level of contribution for adaptations had been agreed as part of the transfer; it had been set at £126,000 per annum, with increments in accordance with the RPI (Retail Price Index) plus one per cent for the first five years and RPI thereafter. MBC had agreed to match this level of funding.

In 2008 all major adaptations were processed through the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) process. 2008/09 had seen a high level of adaptation to clear the backlog of applications; MHT delivered 219 minor adaptations amounting to £54,000 and 171 major adaptations amounting to £659,000. £415,000 of this had been funded through DFGs and the rest by MHT. If a bathroom or kitchen was being replaced as part of the MHT capital works programme, properties requiring adaptations were currently funded through this rather than through DFGs.

Bolt-on adaptations such as grab rails took approximately 5 days to process from receipt of approval for works. Minor adaptations requiring Occupational Therapist recommendations took an average of 28 days to process. Major adaptations carried out by MHT took approximately 9 months on average, which compared favourably with other providers/local authorities where they can often take up to 2 years. The oldest application currently awaiting work dated from February 2009. Levels of future demand were difficult to determine, however it was anticipated that MBC's Housing Needs Survey would help to predict them.

MHT's adaptations service was customer driven. MHT policy recognised this and also the need to achieve value for money. All viable alternative solutions were considered with the customer to fulfil their needs and to

provide value for money, particularly when significant adaptations were required. MHT was currently exploring how to make the adaptations process more transparent. It was therefore preparing guidance which would depict which adaptations were inappropriate in certain property types.

In 2007, the Audit Commission had found that MHT's performance was good. A recent internal audit had found examples of good practice and had highlighted areas for improvement.

### Current Issues

MHT had worked hard to develop its relationships with KCC's Occupational Therapy Department to ensure that the best recommendations for customers were achieved. This included being able to ask the Occupational Therapist (OT) whether another property was a better solution to meet the customer's needs rather than just making recommendations on the customer's existing property. OTs were responsible for making recommendations that met current and future needs over a five year period; this ensured the customer was able to continue living in their property for as long as possible without further requirements for adaptations.

Property Advisors and Support Co-ordinators at MHT were able to use their expertise of supporting people who needed help through the adaptations process. A pilot project with InTouch was currently being undertaken whereby InTouch rather than MHT was supporting 20 residents through the DFG process, including help with completing application forms. It was anticipated that InTouch would support people across the county and that this would provide a consistent level of support to Kent's residents, whilst maximising opportunities for residents. It was also anticipated that this would speed up the application process as consistency in the input of paperwork would be achieved.

MHT had regular meetings with MBC to review any issues, current demand, performance and prioritisation. Applications were dealt with in date order, but dialogue with the Council ensured urgent cases were dealt with sooner.

There had been an issue with the variance of estimated costs and final costs. This had been solved by re-tendering the cost of bathing items, which had accounted for over 90% of cases. Demand for adaptations varied, therefore two contractors were used to meet demand.

### Best Practice

The following were determined as good practice:

- Clarity on the definition of the type of major/minor adaptations
- Clear processes with target timescales;
- Arrangements for ongoing maintenance in place;
- OT advice on all majors and some minors adaptations;
- Prioritisation;
- Support for residents on DFG applications;

- Joint MBC/MHT post inspection and satisfaction testing of adaptations;
- Regular liaison between OT/MBC/MHT;
- Adaptations as part of Planned Investment.

MHT was meeting many of these standards. Further work was required on key performance indicators and ensuring these were fit for purpose and measurable. Indicators currently measured included: end to end time scales; customer satisfaction; and views of service. Future indicators will aim to include more qualitative measurements such as the impact on resident's quality of life.

MHT staff will be trained as trusted assessors for minor adaptation requirements to speed up the process and allow OTs to concentrate on more complex cases.

#### Future

MHT was moving towards a needs-led service in adaptations for customers. It had also placed more importance in value for money of adaptations. Initiatives such as recycling aids had consequently been pursued. MHT tried to re-let vacant adapted properties to customers with similar needs to ensure both a better service for customers and continued value for money. If this was not possible, the adaptation was removed. In response to a question, Ms Smithies confirmed that the cost of significant adaptations and leaving a vacant property empty was weighed up. MHT did try to recycle removed aids as much as possible, however it was difficult and often more expensive than providing new aids. In response to a question regarding why items were removed from properties, Ms Smithies advised the Committee that the majority of adaptations were to meet bathing needs; this had meant removal of baths in many older properties which were later re-instated to meet the needs of families, irrespective of the quality of the adaptation. A Councillor queried whether a significant amount of aids were removed from properties and Ms Smithies agreed to supply estimated numbers of disabled enhancements removed from MHT properties over a 6 month period. Members also queried whether MHT was aware of many occasions of adaptations being removed by residents when they became surplus to requirements and were advised that MHT was not aware of any incidences of this, and tenants were required to seek advice or permission to make changes.

The importance of ensuring that the future supply of accessible homes was sufficient, built to Lifetime Home standards and available for housing association tenants was also highlighted to the Committee. Ms Smithies advised that it was more cost effective to build a home to the standard rather than to retro-fit it to the standard. The Committee requested further information about Lifetime Home standards.

#### Wider Initiatives

A Kent Housing Group sub-group was reviewing aids and adaptations in the County. MHT attended this group and felt it was a useful forum for contributing and learning from peers. MHT also considered Audit

Commission inspection reports to learn from initiatives across the country. The Committee agreed that these reports could also be used as background research to its review.

### Sector Issues

Government guidance on future approaches to adaptations was expected to bring standardisation across the sector and remove inconsistencies in levels of investment and thresholds of the minimum spend amounts for a DFG application. Some providers had thresholds of £1000 for major works in comparison to others with £2500, though the reasons for this difference varied.

Ms Smithies informed Members that DFGs could only be used on occupied properties. Flexibility in using a DFG to adapt a vacant property was not available, even if this was the cheaper and preferred option. Ms Smithies felt that this flexibility should be allowed if it was the best option to meet the customer's needs but currently seeks to use the Trust budget provision imaginatively to facilitate this type of solution.

Kent Home choice was looking at increasing its flexibility from an adaptation perspective to meet customer needs. It could enable residents to move into already adapted properties across the county. Conversely, as more choice was offered to the customer, the customer may elect to move to an alternative property and request DFGs to make the property suitable.

### Areas to Explore

Areas of work that MHT needed to explore further included identifying where to invest money in the rolling programme of works being undertaken to improve their existing housing stock beyond the current Decent Home Standard. This could include elements to move homes towards the Lifetimes Homes standard. Further work was also required to identify the funding for replacement adaptations and in publicising DFGs to residents.

In response to a question, Ms Smithies advised she was unsure what the total number of adapted properties in MHT's stock was; the way the data had been initially stored had made it difficult to manipulate this information for each property. MHT was planning to undertake a condition survey of all its stock and this would identify any adaptations made to properties.

42% of DFGs in Maidstone were distributed to MHT tenants. This was a lower percentage than in other districts, with some distributing 60-70% of their DFGs to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Ms Smithies explained that 42% was not a surprising proportion as RSLs had a higher percentage of vulnerable residents and these were the people more likely to need an adaptation. Members noted that DFGs were means tested and the ability to influence the proportion of DFGs to RSLs was therefore questionable. The Committee requested further information on the distribution of DFGs in other districts.

The Chairman thanked Ms Smithies and Ms Parrott for their input into the Committee's review.

**Resolved:** That

- a) The Audit Commission's reports with regard to Disabled Facilities Grants be considered as part of the Disabled Facilities Grants Review;
- b) Ms Smithies supply the Committee with the estimated number of Disabled Facility Grant enabled adaptations removed from Maidstone Housing Trust properties over the last 6 months;
- c) The distribution of Disabled Facilities Grants to Registered Social Landlord tenants in other districts be circulated to the Committee; and
- d) Information regarding Lifetime Home Standards be circulated to the Committee.

#### **56. Disabled Facilities Grants: Interview with Councillor Beerling.**

(Councillor Beerling enters the meeting)

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Beerling to the meeting and asked him to talk about his experiences of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). Councillor Beerling informed the Committee that he felt that when he was assessed by an Occupational Therapist, he was offered a wide range of aids and adaptations that he did not feel he necessarily needed. He queried whether an alternative approach was available in determining a customer's needs. Members agreed it was difficult to quantify a need for improved quality of life and agreed to consider the whole process with regard to DFGs, including whether all adaptations offered were actually required.

Councillor Beerling advised the Committee that he felt it would be useful to consider the Council's approach to DFGs, whether it was needs-based, whether the level of influence by social services was appropriate and whether value for money was being achieved. He also felt that the Committee should investigate the feasibility of recycling adaptations given the cost of removing, storing and re-installing items. He felt that the relationship between Maidstone Borough Council and Registered Social Landlords could be improved and that this too could be explored as part of the review.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Beerling for sharing his experiences of DFGs with the Committee.

(Councillor Beerling leaves the meeting)

The Committee discussed the progress of its review and agreed that Maidstone Housing Trust should be asked to provide the stock condition data that was available with regard to DFGs. It also felt that it would be particularly useful to interview an Occupational Therapist with regard to adaptation needs and a representative from the Home Choice Project



Board with regard to the implications of Choice Based Lettings on Disabled Facilities Grants. Members agreed that the review explore:

- Whether all adaptations were actually required;
- The issue of adapted housing as part of new development requirements; and
- The quality of adaptations and whether they were aesthetically pleasing to prevent future residents requesting removal of the adaptations.

**Resolved:** That

- a) The Committee explore the following as part of its Disabled Facilities Grants review:
  - i. The need of all adaptations made;
  - ii. Adapted housing as part of new development requirements; and
  - iii. The quality of adaptations installed.
- b) An Occupational Therapist be interviewed as part of the review;
- c) A representative from the Home Choice Project Board be interviewed with regard to the implications of Choice Based Lettings on Disabled Facilities Grants; and
- d) Maidstone Housing Trust be asked to provide its stock condition data that was available with regard to Disabled Facilities Grants.

## **57. Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions.**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and agreed to receive the draft Consideration of Growth Point Revenue Expenditure report by e-mail. The Chairman advised the Committee that the decision regarding the Review of Contaminated Land Strategy had been delayed. The Chairman was meeting with the Assistant Director of Environmental Services to discuss the remits of the officers' review and the Committee's review to prevent any overlaps.

A Councillor highlighted the importance of the Road Safety Review and the Committee agreed it would be worthwhile to present the report to Full Council, as this was where the topic had been initiated.

The Chairman informed the Committee that Councillor Robertson had requested that it consider how Park and Ride was to be re-launched and how to ensure customer confidence in the service. The Committee agreed to consider this item at its meeting on 27 October 2009. Furthermore, Members requested that the market research on customer reaction to changes in the scheme, undertaken in response to the Committee's recommendation on 18 December 2008, be presented to the Committee in addition to information on how the service had been publicised. The Committee agreed to invite Councillors Garland and Wooding, the Head of Communications and the Public Transport Officer to the meeting. A Member believed that a survey was being sent to residents and queried

whether a question on Park and Ride had been included in this. The Committee asked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to investigate this.


The Committee noted that its December meeting was scheduled for 22 December and agreed that this meeting be cancelled unless urgent business arose.

**Resolved:** That

- a) Members of the Committee receive the draft Consideration of Growth Point Revenue Expenditure report by email;
- b) The Road Safety Review Report be presented to Full Council;
- c) Perceptions and usage of Park and Ride be considered at the Committee's meeting on 27 October 2009;
- d) The Overview and Scrutiny Officer determine whether a question regarding Park and Ride was being asked as part of any current survey work; and
- e) The meeting of the Committee on 22 December be cancelled unless urgent business arose.

**58. Duration of Meeting.**

6.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.




## HOUSING ADAPTATIONS

A Presentation to MBC Scrutiny  
Committee  
Tuesday 29 September 2009  
Jillie Smithies and Eileen Parrott




## What we will cover ...

- MHT Approach
- Current Issues
- Best Practice
- Moving Forward
- Wider Initiatives
- Sector Issues
- Areas to Explore



## MHT Approach

- What we do
- How we deliver the service – refer to flowchart
- What resources are used - internally/externally
- How much do we spend
- How long does it take
- What is the level of demand
- How has expenditure been accounted for since transfer
- Current Policy
- Our performance – internal and external audit assessment




## Current Issues

- OT assessments
- Pilot approach to 20 DFG applications
- DGF approvals 09/10: 16 with MBC for approval – 6 complete. 14 outstanding.
- Supporting residents effectively - now addressed via Property Advisors/Support Coordinators
- Variances in cost of works – retendered key standard components and Schedule of Rates. Split risk – 2 contractors



## Best Practice

- Clarity on major / minor split
- Clear process with target timescales
- Arrangements for ongoing maintenance in place
- OT advice on all majors and some minors
- Prioritisation
- Support for residents on DFG applications
- Post inspection and satisfaction testing – joint inspection with MBC on % sample
- Regular liaison with OT / MBC / MHT
- Adaptations as part of Planned Investment



## Moving Forward

- Process in line with other RP's
- Responding to common issues across the sector
- Needs led service
- Value For Money approach – reuse/recycle adapted properties, restrictions to future works, links to common allocations system, effective procurement
- Trusted assessor training to maximise effective use of OT resources
- Case studies as examples of proactive/imaginative work to secure effective solutions

## Wider Initiatives



- Kent Housing Group – Sub group reviewing A&A led by Tunbridge Wells
- Peer group comparison
- Learning from Audit Commission inspection reports – focus on delivery not strategy

## Sector Issues



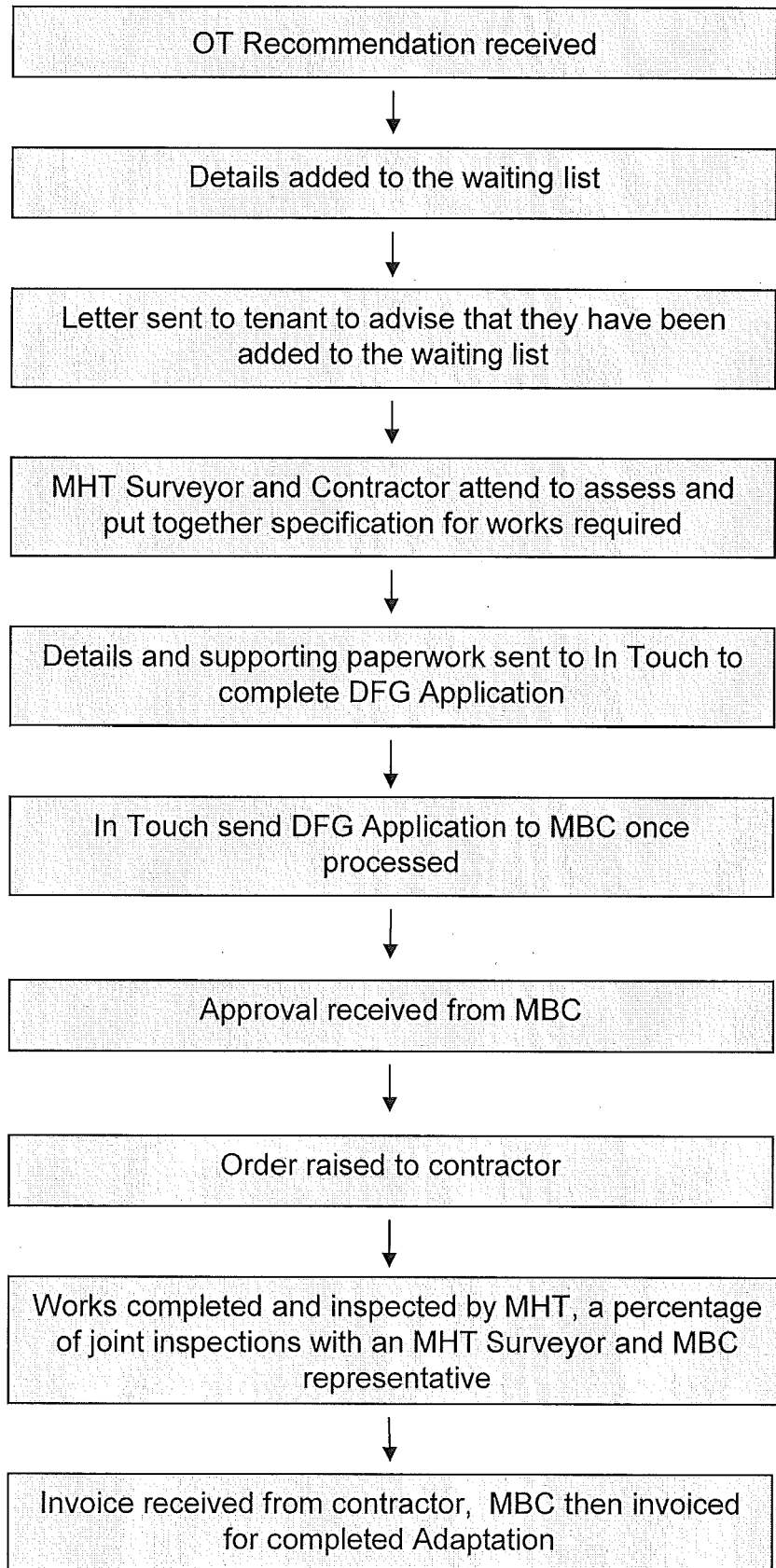
- Quality of life impact
- Inconsistency: level of investment; thresholds for major / minor
- Access to DFG – mandatory grant
- Profile of stock and customers
- Means testing for non DFG funded work? Top up?
- Developing new homes – full wheelchair standard doesn't necessarily respond appropriately to demand
  - Understanding demand – volumes/location/aspirations/bespoke adaptations
  - LA strategic housing role – ensuring sufficient supply of the right type or size in the right place
  - Provider role – meeting additional cost/design briefs
- Maintenance costs and service charges
- Lettings / Allocations policies
  - Flexibility for those needing adapted properties
  - Mobility – enhancements planned to CBL
- RP responsibility for external environment - Healthchecks

## Areas to Explore



- Lifetime Homes
  - New development
  - DHS+ - is this affordable / deliverable
- Future demand informed by STATUS / Customer Profile Survey
- Publish named contact
- Update leaflet / Website
- Funding for replacement items
- Robust suite of KPIs
- Pre allocation of bespoke adapted voids – how to make this work in context of CBL

## Housing Adaptations Process – Major Works



# Agenda Item 8

## Maidstone Borough Council

### Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 27 October 2009

#### Disabled Facilities Grants Review –The Role of Occupational Therapy

**Report of:** Overview and Scrutiny Officer

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2009, Members agreed to carry out a review of disabled facilities grants. The relevant extract from the minutes of the meeting is as follows:

“The Committee agreed that clearance of contaminated land would be its major review of this year. It was noted that there were a number of sensitive issues with regard to this matter, and the Legal Team had been asked for advice on this. A smaller review would also be carried out with regard to disabled facilities grants.”

- 1.2 It was agreed, in consultation with the Chairman, to delay the Committee’s in-depth review of contaminated land to November 2009 as changes to the contaminated land strategy were being made and it was agreed prudent to await the outcome of this.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 25 August 2009, the Committee interviewed the Private Sector Housing Manager, Stuart White with regard to its review of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). The Committee agreed that the review should focus on: the distribution of DFGs to Registered Social Landlords, home owners and private sector tenants; what happened to adaptations funded by DFGs after installation; the impact of Choice Based Lettings; and whether all aids and adaptations were appropriate and necessary.
- 1.4 The Committee interviewed the Group Director of Operations, Ms Jillie Smithies, and the Property Services Manager, Ms Eileen Parrott, from Maidstone Housing Trust (MHT) and Councillor Beerling, a Council nominee on Maidstone Housing Trust’s Board of Directors, at its meeting on 29 September 2009. The draft minutes from this meeting can be found at Agenda Item 7.
- 1.5 At its meeting on 29 September 2009 the Committee agreed that it would be useful to interview a representative from the Kent County Council Occupational Therapy Service as part of its review. Ms Sue Stower, Kent County Council’s Head of Service for the Maidstone and Malling Locality will therefore be in attendance at the meeting to be interviewed by the Committee.
- 1.6 The scoping document for this review is attached at [Appendix A](#).

#### 2. Occupational Therapy

- 2.1 The Occupational Therapy (OT) Service assesses residents' needs for special equipment or adaptations to their home if they have difficulty with daily living tasks due to a physical disability or frailty. The Occupational Therapist or rehabilitation co-ordinator will then provide advice on possible solutions to meet the needs of the resident.
- 2.2 Possible resolutions may include, for example, the provision of bathing equipment or the installation of a stair rail that gives the resident safer access in their home and a greater degree of independence.
- 2.3 The OT Service provides:
- Assessments for grants available through district or borough councils to help with the cost of major adaptations to disabled peoples' homes;
  - Assessments for equipment and minor adaptations to enable people to live safely and independently;
  - Short periods of rehabilitation at recuperative care centres for older people who need to practice daily living skills; and
  - Information and advice for disabled people and their carers about sources of help.
- 2.4 In order for a resident to qualify for an assessment by the OT service, the disability must be significantly affecting the person's ability to carry out at least one of the following essential daily activities:
1. Accessing essential facilities within the home;
  2. Using the toilet;
  3. Getting in and out of a bed or chair;
  4. Preparing hot drinks and essential food;
  5. Maintaining personal hygiene; and
  6. Getting in and out of the home.
- 2.5 Equipment is provided by the OT Service, free of charge, by either KCC's stores or a joint council and NHS store. Residents are encouraged to let them know if they no longer need the equipment so that they may collect it. Basic items of equipment which are in stock will usually be delivered within seven working days. Non-stock items of equipment which have to be ordered or which may need to be manufactured specially will take longer to provide. All provided equipment remains the property of Kent County Council or the NHS and will be maintained as required and replaced if necessary.
- 2.6 Minor adaptations include the following:
- Fitting stair rails;
  - Fitting grab rails;
  - Adapting steps; and
  - Raising the height of beds and chairs.

These are usually carried out by KCC's own technicians and there is usually no charge for this service. Residents living in rented properties

may need to pay a small charge to their landlord if the work is carried out by the landlord's own technicians.

2.7 If the problems experienced by the resident cannot be resolved by the provision of equipment or minor adaptations, the OT may need to look at having major adaptations made to the property. Major adaptations can include the following:

- Changing the layout of rooms;
- Changing the use of rooms; and
- Extending the property if the available space within it is not adequate.

DFGs available from District Councils are means tested and may help with the cost of major adaptations.

2.8 Applications for these grants require the support of an occupational therapist. The work must be approved before it is undertaken, and the grant cannot be paid after the work has been carried out.

### **3. Disabled Facilities Grants**

3.1 Disabled Facilities Grants are a mandatory entitlement administered by local housing authorities to help fund the provision of adaptations to enable disabled people to live as comfortably and independently as possible in their homes. A grant is paid when the council considers that changes are necessary to meet disabled persons' needs, and that the work is reasonable and practical.

3.2 A grant can be used for adaptations to give better freedom of movement into and around the home and/or to provide essential facilities within it. Acceptable types of work for disabled people include:

- Widening doors and installing ramps;
- Providing or improving access to rooms and facilities - for example, by installing a stair lift or providing a downstairs bathroom;
- Improving or providing a heating system;
- Adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use; and
- Improving access to and movement around the home to enable disabled people to care for another person who lives in the property, such as a child.

An occupational therapist looks at the claimant's circumstances and will recommend the type of adaptation(s) needed.

3.3 The work must be considered "reasonable and practicable" bearing in mind the layout and condition of the property, and is assessed by an officer of Maidstone Borough Council. Maidstone Borough Council must also be satisfied that the works required are "necessary and appropriate" to meet the needs of the disabled occupant and to establish this will



consult with the Social Services Department of Kent County Council through their Occupational Therapy Bureau.

- 3.4 A further requirement is that the disabled person must live in the property for a reasonable period after the grant has been given.
- 3.5 The amount of grant paid is usually based on a financial assessment - a 'means test' - of the applicant's average weekly income in relation to their outgoings. However, there is no means testing for families with disabled children under 19. Depending on the outcome of this assessment the amount of financial assistance offered can vary from 0 to 100 per cent of the cost.
- 3.6 The maximum amount of grant that an English council is required to pay is £30,000 per application less any assessed contribution from the claimant. If the cost of the eligible works is more, the council can use discretionary powers to increase the amount.
- 3.7 The following Disabled Facilities Grant Allocations have been received by Maidstone Borough Council from Communities and Local Government since 2006:

2006/07	£210,000
2007/08	£237,000
2008/09	£270,000
2009/10	£405,000

- 3.8 Kent County Council also has separate funding to help vulnerable people to have 'a better quality of life by providing housing related support services'. This is provided through Kent County Council's Supporting People programme. The programme helps pay for the services that allow people to live independently in the community.

#### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 Sue Stower, Kent County Council's Head of Service for the Maidstone and Malling Locality, will be in attendance at the Committee's meeting on the 27 October 2009 to discuss: her views on DFGs; KCC's involvement with DFGs; how customers' needs are assessed; whether all adaptations are necessary; and what other aids and adaptations are available through KCC.
- 4.2 Members are recommended to consider the statements of Ms Stower and ask questions with regard to the Disabled Facilities Grants Review as they feel appropriate. Areas of questioning could include, but are not limited to:
- Best Practice;
  - The role of OT in the provision of Disabled Facility Grants;
  - Waiting times to receive assessments for Disabled Facilities Grants and how assessments are prioritised;
  - Number of Occupational Therapists in Maidstone assessing residents' needs for Disabled Facilities Grants;

- The appropriateness and need of aids and adaptations made to properties;
- How residents are assessed for Disabled Facilities Grants;
- The relationship between OT, Maidstone Borough Council and Landlords in providing Disabled Facilities Grants;
- What other assistance is offered to residents by Kent County Council;
- The responsibility of Registered Social Landlords with regard to making aids and adaptations;
- Does KCC provide aids and adaptations to all residents from the Equipment Store, including to Registered Social Landlords;
- What are your views with regard to awarding Disabled Facilities Grants on un-occupied properties, given that it may provide a suitable and cost effective alternative to adapting an occupied property?
- How residents find out about the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants.

<b>Disabled Facilities Grants</b>
<p><b>What are the objectives and desired outcomes of the review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine whether the distribution of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to home owners, private sector landlords and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) is appropriate;</li> <li>• Establish whether aids and adaptations to RSL properties are necessary, and make recommendations as required;</li> <li>• Determine what happens to the adaptations enabled by DFGs in RSL properties once those properties are vacated or the adaptations are no longer required by the disabled resident, and make recommendations as required;</li> <li>• Establish the impact of Choice Based Lettings on the use of adapted RSL properties; and</li> <li>• Investigate the plausibility of a RSL managing only disabled housing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which witnesses are required?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled housing tenants</li> <li>• Private Sector Housing Manager</li> <li>• Registered Social Landlords, including Maidstone Housing Trust</li> <li>• Kent County Council – Operational Manager of the Occupational Therapy Bureau</li> <li>• Mid and West Kent In Touch Home Improvement representative</li> <li>• Communities and Local Government</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other ways to seek evidence? E.g. site visits, involving members of the public</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible site visit.</li> <li>• Photographic evidence.</li> <li>• Best Practice at other Local Authorities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What information/training is needed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on DFGs for RSL tenants at other Local Authorities; and</li> <li>• Communities and Local Government guidance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Suggested time for review and report completion date</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 – 4 months</li> </ul>
<p><b>How does the review link to council priorities?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A place with efficient and effective public services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How does this item deliver CfPS effective scrutiny principles?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy makers and decision makers</li> <li>• Drives improvement in public services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Any co-optees or expert witnesses?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foundations, The National Body for Home Improvement Agencies Representative</li> </ul>

# Agenda Item 9

## Maidstone Borough Council

### Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 27 October 2009

#### Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions

**Report of:** Overview and Scrutiny Officer

#### 1. Future Work Programme

- 1.1 The Future Work Programme for the Committee is attached at [Appendix A](#); Members are requested to consider this to ensure that it is appropriate and covers all issues Members currently wish to consider within the Committee's remit.

#### 2. Forward Plan

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 February 2009, Members considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and agreed that "this should be a standing item on the agenda to ensure important issues were dealt with in a proactive, rather than reactive, manner." The Forward Plan will therefore now be included on each Committee agenda under the "Future Work Programme" item.
- 2.2 The Forward Plan for October 2009 – January 2010 contains the following decisions relevant to the Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
- Consideration of Growth Point Revenue Expenditure;
  - Adoption of Revised Model Standards for Caravan Site Licenses;
  - Review of Contaminated Land Strategy; and
  - South East Maidstone Strategic Link Road.

Reports with further details on these are attached at [Appendix B](#).

- 2.3 Members are recommended to consider the sections of the Forward Plan relevant to the Committee and discuss whether these are items requiring further investigation or monitoring by the Committee.

## Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### Work Programme 2009-10

Date	Items To Be Considered
27 May 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elect Chairman and Vice- Chairman</li> </ul>
30 Jun 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Regeneration Vision</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Environment Vision</li> <li>• Work Programme</li> </ul>
16 Jul 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCFA – S106 Agreement: Oakwood Hospital</li> </ul>
28 Jul 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Regeneration Statement</li> </ul>
25 Aug 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled Facilities Grants</li> </ul>
29 Sep 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled Facilities Grants</li> </ul>
27 Oct 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled Facilities Grants</li> </ul>
24 Nov 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled Facilities Grants</li> <li>• Contaminated Land (rec. 25 Aug)</li> </ul>
26 Jan 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contaminated Land ?</li> <li>• Potential Gypsy Site Locations Update (rec. 30 June)</li> <li>• Economic Development Update (rec. 30 June)</li> </ul>
23 Feb 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contaminated Land?</li> </ul>
23 Mar 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contaminated Land?</li> </ul>
27 Apr 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Members Progress</li> </ul>

#### Watching Briefs

- Gypsy and Traveller Sites
- Housing Survey
- Contaminated Land Decision (rec. 25 Aug)

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**FORWARD PLAN OF  
KEY DECISIONS**

1 October 2009 –  
31 January 2010

Councillor Christopher Garland  
Leader of the Council



## **FORWARD PLAN October 2009 – January 2010**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is the Forward Plan which the Leader of the Council is required to prepare. Its purpose is to give advance notice of all the "key decisions" which the Executive is likely to take over the next 4 month period. The Plan will be updated monthly.

Each "key decision" is the subject of a separate entry in the Plan. The entries are arranged in date order – i.e. the "key decisions" likely to be taken during the first month of the 4 month period covered by the Plan appear first.

Each entry identifies, for that "key decision" –

- the subject matter of the decision
- a brief explanation of why it will be a "key decision"
- the date on which the decision is due to be taken
- who will be consulted before the decision is taken and the method of the consultation
- how and to whom representations (about the decision) can be made
- what reports/papers are, or will be, available for public inspection
- the wards to be affected by this decision

### **DEFINITION OF A KEY DECISION**

A key decision is an executive decision which is likely to:

- Result in the Maidstone Borough Council incurring expenditure or making savings which is equal to the value of £250,000 or more; or
- Have significant effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in Maidstone.

### **WHO MAKES DECISIONS?**

The Cabinet collectively makes some of the decisions at a public meeting and individual portfolio holders make decisions following consultation with every member of the Council. In addition, Officers can make key decisions and an entry for each of these will be included in the Forward Plan.

### **WHO ARE THE CABINET?**



**Councillor Christopher Garland**  
Leader of the Council  
[chrisgarland@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:chrisgarland@maidstone.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01622 602683

**FORWARD PLAN  
October 2009 – January 2010**



**Councillor Marion Ring**  
Cabinet Member for Community Services  
[marionring@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:marionring@maidstone.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01622 686492



**Councillor Richard Ash**  
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services  
[richardash@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:richardash@maidstone.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01622 730151



**Councillor Mark Wooding**  
Cabinet Member for Environment  
[markwooding@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:markwooding@maidstone.gov.uk)  
Tel: 07932 830888



**Councillor Brian Moss**  
Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture  
[brianmoss@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:brianmoss@maidstone.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01622 761998



**Councillor Malcolm Greer**  
Cabinet Member for Regeneration  
[malcolmgreer@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:malcolmgreer@maidstone.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01634 862876

**HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?**

The Council encourages and welcomes anyone wishing to express his or her views about decisions the Cabinet plans to make. This can be done by writing directly to the appropriate Officer or Cabinet Member (the details of which are shown for each decision to be made).

Alternatively, the Cabinet are contactable via our [website](#) where you can submit a question to the Leader of the Council or any Cabinet Member on-line. There is also the opportunity to invite the Leader of the Council to speak at a function you may be organising.

Cabinet Roadshows are held 3 times a year in different wards. This is an opportunity for you to meet the Cabinet Members direct and discuss any issues that may concern you.



**FORWARD PLAN**  
**October 2009 – January 2010**

Title:	Consideration of Growth Point Revenue Expenditure
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration
This will be a "Key Decision" because:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It will result in the local authority incurring expenditure over the value of £250,000.</li> <li>• Have significant effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in Maidstone.</li> </ul>
Purpose:	To seek approval for growth point revenue expenditure
Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Proposed Date of Decision:	14 Oct 2009
Consultation and Method:	
Representations should be made to:	John Foster, Regeneration and Economic Development Manager <a href="mailto:johnfoster@maidstone.gov.uk">johnfoster@maidstone.gov.uk</a>
Representations should be made by:	2 October 2009
Relevant documents:	None.
Wards affected:	All
Other Information:	None
Director:	Alison Broom, Director of Prosperity and Regeneration
Head of Service:	Brian Morgan
Report Author:	John Foster

**FORWARD PLAN**  
**October 2009 – January 2010**

Title:	Adoption of Revised Model Standards for Caravan Site Licences(Residential Sites)
Portfolio:	Environment
This will be a "key decision" because:	The changes to the model standards used to determine the site licence conditions for caravan sites has the potential to affect any new and exiting sites within the borough which may affect all Wards.
Purpose:	To implement the revised standards recommended to Local authorities by Communities and Local Government.
Decision Maker:	CLlr M Wooding – Cabinet member for Environment
New Proposed Date of Decision:	December 2009
Original proposed Date of Decision:	October 2009
Reason for Delay:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To update and include information from the latest consultation from CLG which indicates significant proposed changes to the licensing regime.</li> <li>2. To allow sufficient time for consultation.</li> </ol>
Consultation and Method:	Contact through Parish Councils and the Web
Representations should be made to:	Ron Wallis – Environmental Health Project Manager
Representations should be made by :	End of November
Relevant documents:	New Model Standards Issued by CLG
Wards affected:	All potentially
Other Information:	Changes to legislation under the Regulatory Reform Order also require changes to be made.
Director:	David Edwards – Change and Environment
Head of Service:	Steve Goulette
Report Author:	Ron Wallis

**FORWARD PLAN**  
**October 2009 – January 2010**

Title:	Review of Contaminated Land Strategy
Portfolio:	Cabinet member for Environment
This will be a "key decision" because:	It relates to areas and sites across the Borough
Purpose:	To update and amend the current Contaminated Land Strategy
Decision Maker:	Cabinet Member for Environment
New Proposed Date of Decision:	Before 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2010
Original proposed Date of Decision:	Before 30 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
Reason for Delay:	The consultant appointed to update the raw data will not be available until October 2009. This is later than anticipated and delays preparation of the core data for the strategy and associated report.
Consultation and Method:	Direct consultation with identified statutory consultees
Representations should be made to:	Steve Wilcock, Pollution team leader <a href="mailto:stevewilcock@maidstone.gov.uk">stevewilcock@maidstone.gov.uk</a>  John Newington, Senior Pollution Officer <a href="mailto:johnnewington@maidstone.gov.uk">johnnewington@maidstone.gov.uk</a>
Representations should be made by :	31st December 2009
Relevant documents:	Contaminated land strategy 2001 Environment Act 1995 Environmental Protection Act 1990 Part IIA
Wards affected:	All wards
Other Information:	None
Director:	David Edwards
Head of Service:	Steve Goulette
Report Author:	John Newington

**FORWARD PLAN**  
**October 2009 – January 2010**

Title:	South East Maidstone Strategic Link Road
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration
This will be a "Key Decision" because:	It will have significant effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards
Purpose:	To seek approval for expenditure to begin the design, alignment and estimated costs for the SEMSL in the context of the work being undertaken for the Core Strategy
Decision Maker:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration
New Proposed Date of Decision:	Before 30 October 2009
Original Proposed Date of Decision:	December 2008
Reason for Delay:	Delay receiving a brief for the planned works from Jacobs
Consultation and Method:	Will feed into the Core Strategy consultation process. LDDAG advice.
Representations should be made to:	Michael Thornton, Spatial Planning and Design Manager <a href="mailto:michaelthornton@maidstone.gov.uk">michaelthornton@maidstone.gov.uk</a>
Representations should be made by:	14 September 2009
Relevant documents:	Cabinet report – 10 September 2008
Wards affected:	All Wards;
Other Information:	The testing of Core Strategy options will commence following an LDDAG workshop on 5 October 2009
Director:	Alison Broom, Director of Prosperity and Regeneration
Head of Service:	Brian Morgan
Report Author:	Peter Rosevear and Michael Thornton