

# AGENDA

## REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING



Overview and Scrutiny

Date: Tuesday 27 April 2010  
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 April 2010**

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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 23 February 2010. 1 - 7**

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**8. Cabinet Member for Environment - Update on Progress 2009 - 10: 8 - 13**

Interview with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Mark Wooding.

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**9. Cabinet Member for Regeneration - Update on Progress 2009 - 10: 14 - 19**

Interview with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Councillor Malcolm Greer.

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**10. Gypsy and Traveller Sites. 20 - 24**

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**11. Draft Junk Mail Report. 25 - 27**

**Report to Follow**

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**12. Draft Disabled Facilities Grants Report. 28 - 29**

**Report to Follow**

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**13. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010 - 11. 30 - 31**

## MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2010

**PRESENT:** Councillor Sherreard (Chairman)  
Councillors English, FitzGerald, Paine and Hinder

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beerling, Ross and Thick

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

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

**93. Apologies.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beerling, Nelson-Gracie, Ross, Thick and Vizzard.

**94. Notification of Substitute Members.**

It was noted that Councillors English and Hinder were substituting for Councillors Vizzard and Nelson-Gracie respectively.

**95. Notification of Visiting Members.**

There were none.

**96. Disclosures by Members and Officers.**

There were no disclosures.

**97. 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.

**98. Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 January 2010.**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2010 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman.

**99. Economic Development Update.**

The Chairman welcomed the Economic Development Manger, John Foster and the Economic Development Officer, Keith Grimley to the meeting to

discuss the progress of the Economic Development Strategy that had been published in November 2008.

Mr Foster stated that the economy was fundamentally sound and that companies had shown a continued interest through Locate in Kent in Maidstone as a place to invest. However demand following initial inquiries had not been significant given the current state of the economy. Mr Foster highlighted that employment rates in Maidstone remained relatively low in comparison to South East averages, despite rising from 1.3% in 2008/09 to 2.8% in 2009/10. Employees in Maidstone continued to receive low wages and were predominately low skilled, with significant proportions of Maidstone's highly skilled residents commuting out of the borough for work. Mr Foster then outlined the progress made against the Economic Development Action Plan, highlighting the following:

- A report was being presented to the Local Development Document Advisory Group (LDDAG) as part of the Local Development Framework process to define a town centre boundary and to split the town centre into five sectors;
- A Local Strategic Plan sub group had been set up to monitor and review the Economic Development Strategy and the Sustainable Communities Strategy;
- The Media Tree network continued to be funded by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) and Kent County Council (KCC). ASB Law had recently joined the Media Tree Steering Group and this had given a new perspective on their work;
- A number of rural Maidstone businesses had received a total of £80–100,000 in grant funding;
- The implementation of the Tourism Strategy had been delayed pending the results of the Heart of Kent review because it had a significant role in the strategy;
- Maidstone was part of the Kent 2012 Olympics Working Group. The Maidstone Dream project to support local athletes continued to be successful, and Leeds Castle was supporting this by hosting a dinner party;
- A memorandum of understanding had been signed with Business Link, and a programme of tailored training opportunities relevant to the Maidstone economy had been agreed. This included topics such as licensing, planning and business rates;
- Mr Foster had been invited on to a Mid Kent College panel to help develop the Oakwood Park adult education curriculum;
- Locate in Kent was working with MBC to determine how to promote Maidstone's offer to businesses;
- A directory of businesses in Maidstone had been produced; and
- The vocational skills centre in Senacre Community Hall was larger than originally planned and would provide evening classes and youth activities. The vocational skills training was planned to correlate to job opportunities in Kent.

There was a policy in the regional plan to locate further education and investment opportunities together on a university campus. This was intended to enable opportunities to share knowledge between the two

sectors. The old Springfield site had been identified as a possible location given its proximity to local amenities and its accessibility. A number of Members were concerned that too much emphasis had been placed on Higher Education growth and that Further Education growth had been overlooked. The Committee was also concerned that too much importance had been placed on opportunities with UCA (University for the Creative Arts) and that opportunities with other education establishments were being overlooked. The Committee therefore agreed that these opportunities should be sought.

Mr Foster explained that MBC was working with KCC to address long term unemployment issues, with specific focus being placed on the public sector to take on new employees. The Committee queried what MBC was doing as an employer to help unemployed young people and was advised that MBC had an apprenticeship scheme and had facilitated work experience opportunities. The Committee felt that the Council could do more and agreed that it should explore employment of unskilled workers as trainees in vocational based vacancies. Members also felt that it was important that the needs of 18-24 year olds be explored to help promote further education and work opportunities to them.

In response to a question, Mr Foster advised the Committee that the main piece of additional work required was the development of a greater consensus on how Maidstone was perceived to establish what its business offer was. He felt that more discussion was needed on how best to brand Maidstone to make sure its marketing was appropriate. The Committee agreed that this was an integral piece of work and that the Cabinet Member for Regeneration should make a commitment to developing this.

The Planning Policy Statement 4 (PS4) was implemented in December 2009 and had set out a framework for the Government's policy for planning for sustainable economic growth in urban and rural areas in a single Planning Policy Statement. This had given a more flexible definition of employment and a Member suggested that this may present further opportunities for Maidstone. Mr Foster advised that he had not explored if there were any potential policy problems resulting from PS4 as it had only been recently released and discussion was required with Planning Officers. A Member raised concern regarding the deliverability of office development as much of the strategy was linked into the core strategy. Mr Foster clarified that existing Council Policies and PS4 enabled the required investment opportunities. A Councillor noted the traffic and planning constraints on developments and felt that the PS4 presented an opportunity to the Council as the constraints may not apply to education establishments. The Committee therefore agreed that the accessibility constraints on developments be explored in light of PS4 to help identify possible new and existing sites.

A number of Members were concerned about the perceived lack of work being undertaken to develop and assist the rural economy. Members felt there may have been an issue with rural employment as business sites were being transferred to residential sites. Mr Foster advised the Committee that the number of businesses which employed people was

very small due to the nature of their work. Opportunities for funding for rural market towns from the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) had closed and a Member felt that opportunities had been missed by some areas and that some rural villages had been unable to bid for funding due to peculiarities in the defined rural boundary lines. In response to a question, Mr Foster advised that he hoped a vision statement would be produced as part of the Local Development Framework. The Committee was concerned about the delay in potentially producing a rural vision statement and agreed it was urgently required. Members also agreed that greater importance should be placed on the rural economy when the Economic Development Strategy was reviewed.

A Member felt that greater economic benefit for Maidstone could be achieved by ensuring that whole site planning briefs were delivered holistically, rather than piecemeal. Mr Foster explained that greater opportunities would be achieved through the Area Access Plan. The Committee was concerned that other local authorities had produced development briefs that were later discharged and it was therefore agreed that the Council should make a commitment to ensuring that they would be delivered in Maidstone.

The Committee considered the future demand for retail in Maidstone and was advised that it was difficult to forecast. Based on housing growth forecasts, it was anticipated that demand for retail would also grow. Mr Foster highlighted that the updated retail capacity forecasts had determined that capacity demand over the next twenty years would require a retail space of the size of Fremlins Walk.

The Committee thanked Mr Foster and Mr Grimley for an informative presentation and congratulated them on their progress.

**Resolved:** That the Cabinet Member for Regeneration:

- a) Undertakes a branding exercise to establish Maidstone's business offer;
- b) Explores opportunities for employment of unskilled workers as trainees in vocational based vacancies;
- c) Explores the needs of 18-24 year olds to help promote further education and work opportunities to them;
- d) Considers the accessibility constraints on new and existing developments in light of PS4 to identify possible sites;
- e) Develops a rural vision statement and places greater importance on the rural economy when reviewing the Economy Development Strategy;
- f) Ensures that Economic Development Briefs for whole sites and area developments are holistically delivered;
- g) Notes the importance of Further Education and seeks opportunities for additional Further Education establishments as well as for Higher Education; and
- h) Explores opportunities with other education establishments in addition to those with the University of Creative Arts.

## **100. Forward Plan and Future Work Programme.**

The Committee noted its future work programme and the Chairman highlighted that the gypsy and traveller site update would be brought to the meeting on 27 April 2010.

The Committee considered the draft junk mail scoping document (attached at Appendix A) and agreed to contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer with any suggestions or amendments. Members agreed it would be useful to visit the take away companies that posted menus to discuss the Committee's review and any possible alternatives. Furthermore, the Committee agreed it may be more appropriate to hold an informal workshop style meeting to undertake its review and that an additional daytime meeting may be required in order to cater for all possible witnesses.

**Resolved:** That

- a) The future work programme be noted; and
- b) Committee Members contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer with suggestions and amendments to the draft junk mail scoping document.

## **101. Duration of the Meeting.**

6.30 p.m. to 8.15 p.m.

<p><b>Topic: Junk Mail</b></p>
<p><b>What are the objectives and desired outcomes of the review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do we define as junk mail?;</li> <li>• What type and level of 'junk mail' is considered appropriate by residents?;</li> <li>• Is there evidence of the effectiveness of junk mail as an advertising tool?;</li> <li>• What alternatives to junk mail are available to local businesses as a cost-effective method of advertising?;</li> <li>• Establish whether any local authorities have had any success dealing with unwanted junk mail and make recommendations as appropriate;</li> <li>• Determine how junk mail is distributed nationally and locally;</li> <li>• Identify methods to prevent unauthorised mailings and make recommendations as appropriate; and</li> <li>• Explore the feasibility of a 'no junk mail sticker' endorsed by the Council and whether a 'code of conduct' can legally be agreed with distributors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which witnesses are required?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Royal Mail</li> <li>• Direct Marketing Association</li> <li>• Federation of Small Businesses</li> <li>• Town Centre Management</li> <li>• Maidstone Borough Council's Communications team</li> <li>• 'Stop Junk Mail' campaigners</li> <li>• Citizen Advice Bureau</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>• BBC Radio Kent interviews on 16/2/10</li> <li>• Unauthorised Mailings literature in Maidstone</li> <li>• Research on scams</li> <li>• Request feedback from residents using the local press</li> </ul>
<p><b>What information/training is needed?</b></p>
<p><b>Suggested time for review and report completion date</b></p> <p>1 meeting</p>
<p><b>How does the review link to council priorities?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A place to achieve, prosper and thrive</li> <li>• A place that is clean and green</li> </ul>
<p><b>How does this item deliver CfPS effective scrutiny principles?</b></p> <p>Enables the voice and concerns of the public</p>



**Any co-optees or expert witnesses?**

DRAFT

# Agenda Item 8

## MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 APRIL 2010

#### REPORT OF HEAD OF CHANGE AND SCRUTINY

Report prepared by Esther Bell

1. **Cabinet Member for Environment – Update on Progress 2009 - 10**
  - 1.1 Issue for Consideration
    - 1.1.1 To consider the report of the Cabinet Member for Environment on the progress made with the priorities set for 2009-10.
  - 1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Change and Scrutiny
    - 1.2.1 The Committee are recommended to consider the statement made by the Cabinet Member at the beginning of the year and ask questions with regard to progress that has been made on those issues highlighted as priorities.
  - 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation
    - 1.3.1 The Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for holding to account those Cabinet Members whose portfolios fall within the remit of the Committee.
    - 1.3.2 The Cabinet Members whose portfolios relate to the Committee are the Cabinet Members for Environment and Regeneration.
    - 1.3.3 The areas of the Cabinet Member for Environment portfolio that are relevant to the Committee are as follows:
      - **Parking** – to be responsible for the development, operation and enforcement of the pay and display car parks, and on-street waiting and parking restrictions in the Borough.
      - **Public transport** – to be responsible for transportation policy including the operation of the Park and Ride service and the development of public transport initiatives; to be responsible for the Council's Concessionary Fares Scheme.
      - **Highways** – to be responsible for seeking strategic highways improvements; to oversee the delivery of the local

(District) Highways functions; to be responsible for the Council's Environmental Improvement Schemes.

1.3.4 The Committee interviewed the Cabinet Member for Environment on 30 June 2009, the relevant extract from the minutes is set out below:

*" The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Mark Wooding. The Committee was reminded that many of the changes made by the Cabinet Member for Environment during the previous year were well known due to publicity within the press and his attendance at this Committee. During 2009-10 the Cabinet Member would be seeking short term benefits for the Council and setting some medium and long term direction.*

#### Parking

*Councillor Wooding highlighted a number of changes that had been made with regard to parking services within the previous year:*

- 1. Resident parking zones had seen the introduction of permit charges. Residents were able to obtain first and second permits at a cost of £25 and a third permit for £50. This decision had been made to manage increasing street parking demand, and prevent the parking budget from falling into deficit, as well as to cover the cost of producing the permits.*

*It was noted that the number of calls the council had received regarding these charges had been minimal.*

- 2. Changes had also been made to off street parking, most notably the introduction of Sunday charges. This had been operating for five weeks, and had so far provided revenue of £1800 - £2700 each Sunday.*

*Officers were undertaking a review of the volumes of traffic within the town centre now that these charges had been implemented and this was to be reported back to the Cabinet Member by August. The Committee was also informed that local businesses in the area were to be consulted in order to establish whether the charges had had any significant impact upon the number of people coming into the town on Sundays.*

*The Committee was informed that no major changes should be required within the forthcoming year although small amendments could be necessary in light of the economic climate.*

*Several aspects of the decisions on monitoring on and off street parking demand had been deferred last year following consultation and reports were due in August on these. Councillor Wooding noted that these would fully consider concerns that had been raised by residents during the consultation process. There could also be further opportunity to develop car parks in order to generate further income, however this would also depend upon the economic climate and the availability of monies.*

*In response to a question, the Cabinet Member stated that the introduction of Sunday charges had been well publicised, and any car owners who failed to display tickets on the first Sunday the scheme was introduced were not penalised.*

### Highways

*Councillor Wooding informed the Committee that he had been working hard to establish good links with Kent County Council (KCC). A joint seminar with KCC had been held in December which the KCC Cabinet Member with responsibility for highways. KCC had agreed to work towards decreasing the number of people who were killed or seriously injured on the roads within Maidstone. The Cabinet Member had requested a review of progress now that six months had passed. It was the aim of the Cabinet Member to maintain a good relationship with KCC.*

*It was requested that the Committee receive an update on road safety issues from KCC.*

### Public Transport

*The Committee was informed that safeguarding the park and ride service was of paramount importance. However it was important that the subsidy which was required from the tax payer in order to facilitate the service was reduced. Changes last year had reduced this subsidy from £450,000 to £225,000. As a result no major changes would be required this year, however small adjustments could be necessary to reflect the economic situation.*

*Last year's tendering exercise had resulted in the renewal of the park and ride contract with Arriva. Some amendments had also been made to the schedule of services. It was recognised that this had caused some problems, as new routes had conflicted with road maintenance subsequently delaying some services. Customer surveys, however, particularly those of customers using the London Road park and ride site, had demonstrated*

*that the majority of customers were satisfied with the services which they had received.*

*The Committee was also reminded that there had been a 25% increase in the park and ride fares which may have had some impact upon the level of usage. It was noted however, that a decrease in the number of people using the service had been seen before the implementation of the fare increase and bus usage nationally was decreasing. This was being monitored.*

*All three sites were now manned by two mobile attendants and initial indications suggested that this was working well. Holiday and sickness were covered by members of the parking services team where necessary. A mobile phone number was available for customers at each site; however calls so far had been minimal. Maintenance work continued to be carried out by the attendants.*

*Long term targets with regard to park and ride included the consideration of additional park and ride sites. However, this was to be considered alongside the development of the Core Strategy and the Local Development Framework.*

*A member enquired as to whether Bluebell Hill was to be considered as a possible location for a new park and ride site. The Committee was informed that this location was still under consideration, and was being reviewed by consultants. It was requested that the Committee receive a copy of this report.*

#### *Concessionary Travel*

*The Committee was reminded of the assisted travel scheme which had been introduced during the previous year. Over 400 people had so far benefited from the scheme, in addition to 100 people who had companion passes. The Cabinet Member also noted that changes had been made to the availability of concessionary fares, from 9:30 a.m. to 9. a.m. Central Government was currently consulting on potential changes to the administration of the concessionary fares scheme, including a proposal to move this to county-level.*

*The Council continued to support the Stockbury and Lenham Community transport schemes which had been re-established following the removal of the post-bus service.*

#### *Rail Services*

*Pressure would continue to be exerted on Southeastern Rail with regard to the proposals to remove the fast service to Cannon Street service in December. Improvement of the rail service*

*was particularly important as Maidstone would have 11,080 new homes by 2026 as a result of its Growth Point Status.*

*Network Rail had released its Kent Rail Utilisation Strategy report, and the Cabinet Member would respond outlining a strong argument for Thameslink services to serve Maidstone and the benefits of the high speed shuttle running to Maidstone West.*

*In response to a question, the Committee was informed that Councillor Wooding had written to the Chief Executive of Southeastern three weeks previously, but had not yet received a response. This had, however been heavily publicised.*

**Resolved: That**

*a) an update be received from Kent Highways Services on road safety issues; and*

*b) the committee receive a copy of the updated consultant's report on the potential Bluebell Hill park and ride site when this was received by the Cabinet Member."*

1.4 Alternative Action and Why Not Recommended

1.4.1 The Committee could choose not to interview the Cabinet Member, however in doing so they would not be fulfilling the crucial role of holding the executive to account.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The Committee should seek to review whether the Cabinet Members achievements are aligned to the Council's corporate objectives as set out in the forward plan.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no risks involved in interviewing the Cabinet Member for Environment.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal


4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management


# Agenda Item 9

## MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 APRIL 2010

#### REPORT OF HEAD OF CHANGE AND SCRUTINY

Report prepared by Esther Bell

1. **Cabinet Member for Regeneration – Update on Progress 2009 - 10**

1.1 Issue for Consideration

1.1.1 To consider the report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration on the progress made with the priorities set for 2009-10.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Change and Scrutiny

1.2.1 The Committee are recommended to consider the statement made by the Cabinet Member at the beginning of the year and ask questions with regard to progress that has been made on those issues highlighted as priorities.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for holding to account those Cabinet Members whose portfolios fall within the remit of the Committee.

1.3.2 The Cabinet Members whose portfolios relate to the Committee are the Cabinet Members for Environment and Regeneration.

1.3.3 The areas of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration portfolio that are relevant to the Committee are as follows:

- **Local Development Plan** – to be responsible for planning strategy for the Borough including detailed consideration of planning policy and guidance; to be responsible for developing the Local Development Plan alongside the Leader of the Council for submission to Cabinet and the Council for approval; to be responsible for the preparation of development briefs and informal guidance notes.
- **Planning** – to be responsible for all Executive planning matters, including Building Control.



- **Economic Development** – to be responsible for the implementation and review of an annual strategy that will foster the local economy and bring associated benefits to the wider community; to be responsible for the development, review and application of the Council’s Economic Development Strategy alongside the Leader of the Council.
- **Sustainability** – to guide, advise and provide a strategic overview on sustainability issues as they affect the Council’s internal and external activities; to ensure that the Council, the non-executive Committees, Cabinet and Cabinet Members are aware of sustainability issues when formulating policy; to make recommendations to Council on sustainability issues arising from Council policies, and promote proposals to be adopted as Council Policy; to maintain the environmental quality of the Borough.
- **Housing** – to be responsible for the Housing Strategy; to be responsible for the relationship with local Registered Social Landlord’s (RSLs); to be responsible for the development, operation and review of all the private housing functions of the Council and protection of private sector tenants, including the provision of the homelessness service.

1.3.4 The Committee interviewed the Cabinet Member for Regeneration on 30 June 2009, the relevant extract from the minutes is set out below:

*"The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Councillor Malcolm Greer, congratulated Members and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer on the production of the report regarding Section 106 agreements and stated that he had taken on board the report’s recommendations.*

*The Committee was informed that an Office Manager had been appointed within the Development Control Department. The Officer Manager assisted with the day to day running of the Department, this included computer systems updates, which would make the working of all departments, Development Control (DC), Building Control (BC) and Enforcement, more efficient and transparent. He highlighted that this was an ongoing process and that he would update the Committee at a future date. A Development Control Planning Manager had also been appointed to manage Planning Control and Enforcement. These combined duties within a single officer’s remit ensured that a more structured system was in place with respect to both areas. This change had already showed signs of benefit, with a significant reduction in live enforcement cases.*

*The recession has had a significant influence on the number of planning applications received, which had dropped to approximately 1700 last year. This has had a major affect on money streams, including that arising from pre-application advice. This had resulted in adjusting staffing levels to address the downturn or redeployment of*

*Officers to other areas, such as Enforcement, where the work load was greater and needed addressing. The Committee was informed that all areas and processes were monitored on a regular basis, with the performance of all departments analysed. Furthermore, the new system enabled Members and Parish Councils to receive by e-mail, the current status of Section 106 Agreements, Enforcement and Planning Applications. Further work was ongoing with respect to improving the presentation of information.*

*The Committee requested that a structure diagram be produced detailing how BC, DC and Enforcement interact, together with the contact details and where in the building the team members could be found.*

*A Draft Enforcement Policy had been produced by the Planning Manager. Members would be consulted on the completed final draft. The document was to inform Members and Parish Councils how the Council conducted work with respect to enforcement issues.*

*A Developers Forum had also been established and was proving to be successful. Two forums had taken place and a third was to take place in October. The main benefit had been that dialogue had been established between Developers and Planners which made systems more efficient and cost effective. One area that was identified as a concern was the time taken to address legal issues after an application had been approved. A Legal Charter was therefore being produced which would inform Developers of what was required, within a time line, which would assist in ensuring the contract was completed. A cost framework was also to be included as part of the Legal Charter..*

*The first Enabling Committee had been established with regard to the Sutton Valence Running Track. This helped solve potential difficulties and inform interested parties, including the Parish Council, of the work which was to be carried out in the foreseeable future. A committee of this nature was also to be established with regard to the new Clinic at Junction 7 and the proposed developments at Senacre.*

### Gypsy Sites

*The Consultants, Bakers, had recently been appointed to commence work on a Development Plan Document, which included the location of gypsy sites. A joint Kent County Council steering group was meeting on 17 July 2009. Councillor Greer would be representing Maidstone at the meeting. Councillor Greer confirmed that Parish Councils would be consulted as part of the process.*

### Economic Development

*A judging panel had selected the concept design by Letts Wheeler as part of the High Street Regeneration Competition from the five short listed designs. It was envisaged that these improvements would encourage companies into the area and would have a positive impact on the surrounding locations. The Council was now in the consultation period with regard to the plans. This was scheduled to last for between six to nine months. In response to a question, Councillor Greer confirmed that local utility companies, along with other stakeholders and Disability Groups, were to be involved in the consultation process.*

*Small businesses were being supported by the Council, which offered advice clinics at the Gateway. 36 businesses had also received advertising within the Kent Messenger's 'Make it Maidstone' initiative.*

#### *General Maintenance Work*

*The Committee were informed that work was already underway to remove clutter, including excess signage and railings from the centre of Maidstone to make the area more aesthetically pleasing. Other areas of Maidstone were also being considered for de-cluttering.*

*Plans were also being discussed for the development of the river with the use of Section 106 monies.*

#### *Housing*

*The Committee was reassured that everything was being done to ensure the Council did not lose out on any potential money with regard to housing projects. Furthermore, it was particularly important to ensure the sustainability of all new developments, this included commercial development such as the Council's new Depot, which had been constructed to an extremely high standard. Councillor Greer highlighted the importance of attracting new businesses into the area in order to ensure the availability of high quality jobs.*

*A Member requested that the Committee be provided with a report regarding the development of Parkwood Industrial Estate and the possibility of attracting businesses to the area. The Committee was also informed that the Cabinet Member was working closely with the Town Centre Manager to ensure that empty shops were made to look more attractive by installing vinyl advertising to windows.*

*A Member raised concerns that Whatman Park may now be at a disadvantage in terms of parking due to the failure to agree to develop a ground for Maidstone Football Club.*

*Finally, the Committee was informed that, where feasible, devolution of power to Parish Councils would be looked into; however Councillor Greer was unsure as to whether the appetite for this existed.*

**Resolved: That**

- a) *The Cabinet Member develop a strategy for dealing with empty shop windows in Maidstone Town Centre;*
- b) *The Cabinet Member investigate options for the future development of the Parkwood Industrial Estate; and*
- c) *A structure chart for Development Control, Building Control and Planning Enforcement, including names and phone numbers for officers, be provided to the Committee."*

1.4 Alternative Action and Why Not Recommended

1.4.1 The Committee could choose not to interview the Cabinet Member, however in doing so they would not be fulfilling the crucial role of holding the executive to account.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The Committee should seek to review whether the Cabinet Members achievements are aligned to the Council's corporate objectives as set out in the forward plan.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no risks involved in interviewing the Cabinet Member for Regeneration.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
- 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement


9. Asset Management



# Agenda Item 10

## MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 APRIL 2010

#### REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OFFICER

**Report prepared by Esther Bell**

#### **1. Gypsy and Traveller Sites Written Update**

##### 1.1 Issue for Consideration

1.1.1 To consider the requested written update on Gypsy and Traveller Sites.

##### 1.2 Recommendation of Overview and Scrutiny Officer

1.2.1 That the Committee considers the written update, attached at **Appendix A** of the Spatial Policy Planning Manager, Michael Thornton and make recommendations as it sees fit.

##### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 At its meeting on 26 January 2010, the Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered its future work programme and agreed to receive an update on gypsy and traveller sites. The relevant extract of the draft minutes of the meeting are as follows:

“The Committee considered its future work programme and noted that it only had 3 meetings left in the municipal year. Members considered possible items it could review following the removal of the contaminated land review item and agreed to consider an update on ‘Gypsy and Traveller Sites’ at its next meeting.”

1.3.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Officer contacted the Spatial Policy Planning Manager regarding the requested update and was advised that more information would be available for Members if the update was postponed to a later meeting. At its meeting on the 23 February 2010, Members agreed to receive the update at its meeting on 27 April 2010.

1.3.3 In consultation with the Chairman, it was agreed that the Committee receive a written update as the anticipated progress had not yet been made and therefore only a limited update would be available.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The Committee could choose not to consider the update, however this could diminish knowledge of the work undertaken to develop gypsy and traveller sites.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The Council's Strategic Plan 2009-12 lists "improving communications and delivery of services to gypsy and traveller communities" as a key objective within the "Homes and Communities" topic.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no risks associated with the Committee considering the Gypsy and Traveller Sites Update.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
- 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management


1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

Appendix A – Written Gypsy and Traveller Sites Update



## Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010

### Gypsy and Travellers Sites Update

This note sets out some of the progress achieved over past months to develop the Council's strategy and make planning policy and site provision for Gypsy and Travellers.

#### Presentation of the Council's case to the Regional Strategy EiP

1. A Partial Review of the new Regional Strategy – the South East Plan - is being undertaken. When complete this will provide a regional level planning policy for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and specify the number of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and for Travelling Showpeople to be provided in each authority in the region for the period 2006 to 2016.
2. The public inquiry in the form of an Examination in Public (EiP) was held by a Panel of Planning Inspectors during February 2010 in Reading. MBC made strong representation tot this and officers took part attending two sessions dealing with strategic regional matters (with KCC officers) and then the district level allocations within Kent & Medway.
3. The key issues on which officers presented the Council's case at the EiP were those that have particular significance for Maidstone BC's position:
  - The adequacy of the information about the current and future need for pitches revealed by the Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs) and the Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessments (TSAAs) that have been undertaken by the local authorities across the region.
  - The principle of redistributing pitch requirements more widely across the region. This principle has been strongly supported by MBC throughout the Partial Review process as a means of sharing responsibility, widening choice and exerting fair limits in making decisions on future provision.
  - Whether the pitch requirement for each authority should be expressed as a target figure or a minimum. MBC officers spoke strongly in favour of a target figure to give certainty to users of the policy and proper assessment of the implications of the figures given.
  - Whether the policy should explicitly provide for sites to be achieved through "windfall" development control decisions as well as through allocations in the Local Development Framework process.

Officers also worked with a representative from Headcorn Parish Council who also attended the EiP to present a valuable parish local perspective.

4. The Panel's Report is expected imminently and it's recommendations will be considered by GOSE and SEEPB and then published by GOSE for a final public consultation before formal adoption by the Secretary of State by the end of the year.

## **Maidstone LDF - Gypsy and Traveller Sites Development Plan Document and the Maidstone Core Strategy**

5. Following agreement by Cabinet and GOSE of a new LDF work programme in August 2009, a revised draft Core Strategy is being prepared which will include strategy for making provision to meet the target figure and a criteria for dealing with “windfall” planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller and Show People pitches/sites. LDDAG approved the content outline for the policies in February. The Gypsy and Traveller Sites Development Plan Document (DPD) is being prepared in such a way that it can be progressed urgently and formally published before the Core Strategy in order to help address this urgent issue. The DPD will allocate sites to provide the remaining necessary pitches for the period 2006 to 2016 to ensure delivery of the South East Plan Policy requirements (see above).
6. The setting of a clear strategy and specific sites to meet the outstanding need will give more certainty to both the settled and travelling communities, it will support the Council’s position when dealing with planning applications and enforcement issues, and it will also ensure that proper provision is made for this form of housing need. The strategy and sites DPD focus will consider whether there is need to identify a publically managed site(s) as part of the provision.
7. It is not sufficient for the DPD to simply identify land. The sites must be genuinely suitable for the use, be available (e.g. owned by a willing landowner) and be deliverable (e.g. will be available for purchase at a reasonable price). Therefore extensive work has been undertaken (in part using specialist planning and land consultants) as part of the DPD process. The form of the study has been fully “scoped out” and approved by Members and key stakeholders. Local landowners, parish councils, public sector landowners and planning and estate agents have all been contacted as part of several rigorous exercises to identify potential sites for objective assessment and been asked to provide information on potential sites for assessment. Further work is also being undertaken to identify additional sources of sites and the work is nearing a conclusion.
8. Reports to Members on the outcome of all this work will be made shortly, but regrettably I am not in a position to report on 27<sup>th</sup> April Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. I will be happy to update the Committee at the first opportunity from June onwards and I trust that this written response will be of assistance in the meantime.

Michael Thornton

Spatial Planning and Design Manager

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 27 APRIL 2010**

#### **REPORT OF HEAD OF CHANGE AND SCRUTINY**

**Report prepared by Esther Bell**

#### **1. JUNK MAIL REVIEW REPORT**

##### 1.1 Issue for Consideration

1.1.1 To consider the Junk Mail Review Report.

##### 1.2 Recommendation of Head of Change and Scrutiny

1.2.1 That the Committee considers and approves the Junk Mail Review Report and its recommendations for submission subject to any amendments made at this meeting.

##### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 At the meeting of the Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 January 2010, Members agreed to carry out a review of junk mail. The relevant extract from the minutes of the meeting is as follows:

"A Councillor suggested a one-off review on junk mail as a number of residents had made complaints regarding the amount of unsolicited mailings and menus they had received. The Committee considered the possible scope of the review, noting possible outcomes could include:

- A 'no junk mail' sticker scheme endorsed by the Council and supported by local businesses; and or
- Revisions to the Council's website to include information about opportunities to reduce unsolicited mails, such as advertising the Mailing Preference Service.

The Committee felt that it would be useful to interview business representatives, including; Town Centre Management and the Chamber of Commerce. Members also suggested that it may be useful to interview a representative from the Post Office to discuss

unaddressed mailings delivered by Postman. A number of Members felt that given the economic climate it was not prudent to introduce a costly scheme, however the Committee felt a cost effective scheme could be introduced, such as a tear off sticker below existing recycling stickers distributed by the Council. The Committee felt there was scope for a one off review and agreed to add it to its work programme. Members agreed to collate any junk mail they received in the next two months to inform the Committee's findings."

1.3.2 The Committee interviewed representatives from the Direct Marketing Association, Town Centre Management and Stop Junk Mail Campaign at an informal meeting on 23 March 2010.

1.3.3 The draft report draws together the evidence obtained at the informal meeting and in desktop research.

### **Report to Follow**

#### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The Committee could decide not to approve the recommendations within the Junk Mail Review Report, however these are based on evidence as outlined in the report.

#### 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The Council's Strategic Plan 2009-12 priority themes include "a place that is clean and green" and its Environmental Excellence and Climate Change three year objective includes 'supporting better cleaning, waste minimisation and recycling'.

#### 1.6 Other Implications

##### 1.6.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act


- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management


# Agenda Item 12

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 27 APRIL 2010**

#### **REPORT OF HEAD OF CHANGE AND SCRUTINY**

**Report prepared by Esther Bell**

#### **1. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS REVIEW REPORT**

##### 1.1 Issue for Consideration

1.1.1 To consider the Disabled Facilities Grants Review Report.

##### 1.2 Recommendation of Head of Change and Scrutiny

1.2.1 That the Committee considers and approves the Disabled Facilities Grants Review Report and its recommendations for submission subject to any amendments made at this meeting.

##### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 At its meeting on 30 June 2009, the Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to carry out a review of disabled facilities grants. The relevant extract from the minutes of that 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.”

1.3.2 During the course of the review, the Committee has interviewed a number of witnesses including representatives from Kent County Council, Golding Homes (formerly known as Maidstone Housing Trust), InTouch Home Improvement Agency and service users.

1.3.3 The draft report draws together the evidence obtained over the course of the review.

#### **Report to Follow**

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The Committee could decide not to approve the recommendations within the Disabled Facilities Grants Review Report, however these are based on evidence as outlined in the report.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The Council's Strategic Plan 2009-12 priority themes include "a place to live and enjoy" and emphasise the need for "Decent homes for vulnerable people" as a means to helping deliver the vision for Maidstone in the Sustainable Community Strategy

1.6 Other Implications

1.6.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management


# Agenda Item 13

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**27 APRIL 2010**

#### **REPORT OF HEAD OF CHANGE AND SCRUTINY**

**Report prepared by Esther Bell**

#### **1. Scrutiny Work Programme 2010-11**

##### 1.1 Issue for Consideration

1.1.1 To consider items for the Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2010-11

##### 1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Change and Scrutiny

1.2.1 That the Committee suggests items for next year's overview and scrutiny work programme.

##### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be meeting in June 2010 to agree their work programmes for the next municipal year. At each Committee meeting Members will consider work programme suggestions from officers, members of the public, Councillors and the 2009/10 Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

1.3.2 Topics for the work programme must not include individual complaints or have been reviewed in the two years previously. Reviews carried out by Overview and Scrutiny in the Municipal Year 2009/10 included:

- Railways
- Junk mail
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Mental Health Services (joint with Tunbridge Wells)
- Best Value Review of waste and recycling; and
- Overview and Scrutiny Function

##### 1.4 Alternative Action and Why Not Recommended

1.4.1 The Committee could choose not to consider items for 2010-11 however this would mean that a valuable opportunity to suggest items from experienced scrutiny members would be lost.



1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The Committees will consider whether potential items meet the council's corporate objectives as part of the formal work programme planning process.

1.5.2 The Strategic Plan sets the Council's key objectives for the medium term and has a range of objectives which support the delivery of the Council's priorities. Actions to deliver these key objectives may therefore include work that the Committee will consider over the next year.

1.6 Risk Management

1.5.1 There are no risks involved in suggesting topics for the work programme 2010-11.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management
