

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL



Date: Wednesday 18 September 2013

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Venue: Town Hall, High Street,
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors English (The Mayor), Ash, Barned, Beerling, Black, Mrs Blackmore, Brindle, Burton, Butler, Chittenden, Collins, Cox, Cuming, Daley, Garland, Mrs Gibson, Mrs Gooch, Greer, Mrs Grigg, Harwood, Mrs Hinder, Hogg, Hotson, Mrs Joy, Lusty, Mrs Mannering, McKay, McLoughlin, Moriarty, B Mortimer, D Mortimer, Moss, Munford, Naghi, Nelson-Gracie, Newton, Paine, Parvin, Mrs Parvin, Paterson, Pickett, Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, Ross, Sams, Springett, Mrs Stockell, Thick, Vizzard, Warner, Watson, de Wiggondene, J.A. Wilson, Mrs Wilson and Yates

Continued Over/:

Issued on 10 September 2013

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEBBIE SNOOK on 01622 602030**. To find out more about the work of the Council, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk

Alison Broom

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ**

AGENDA

Page No.

1. Prayers
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Dispensations (if any)
4. Disclosures by Members and Officers
5. Disclosures of Lobbying
6. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.
7. Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Borough Council held on 2 September 2013 1 - 9
8. Mayor's Announcements
9. Petitions
10. Question and Answer Session for Members of the Public
11. Questions from Members of the Council to the
 - (a) Leader of the Council
 - (b) Cabinet Members
 - (c) Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees
 - (d) Chairmen of other Committees
12. Current Issues - Report of the Leader of the Council, Response of the Group Leaders and Questions from Council Members
13. Oral Report of the Cabinet to be held on 11 September 2013 (if any)
14. Oral Report of the Audit Committee to be held on 16 September 2013 (if any)
15. Oral Report of the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 17 September 2013
16. Report of the Head of Policy and Communications - Overview and Scrutiny Annual Reports 2011-12 and 2012-13 10 - 36
17. Report of the Head of Policy and Communications - Appointment of Substitute Members of Committees 37 - 38

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, MAIDSTONE ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2013

Present: Councillor English (The Mayor) and
Councillors Ash, Barned, Black, Brindle, Burton,
Butler, Chittenden, Collins, Cox, Daley, Garland,
Mrs Gibson, Mrs Gooch, Greer, Mrs Grigg, Harwood,
Mrs Hinder, Hogg, Hotson, Mrs Joy, Lusty, McKay,
Moriarty, B Mortimer, D Mortimer, Moss, Munford,
Nelson-Gracie, Newton, Paine, Paterson, Pickett,
Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, Ross, Sams, Springett,
Mrs Stockell, Thick, Vizzard, Warner, Watson,
de Wiggondene, J A Wilson, Mrs Wilson and Yates

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Cuming, Mrs Mannering, McLoughlin and Naghi.

40. DISPENSATIONS

There were no applications for dispensations.

41. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Munford disclosed an Other Significant Interest in the question to be asked of the Leader of the Council by Mr Doug Smith. He explained that he was a Member of Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council and part of the question related to the payment by the Borough Council of costs incurred by the Parish Council in obtaining Counsel's opinion in relation to the calculation of the five year housing land supply and the treatment of windfalls.

42. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

All Members except Councillors Black, McKay, Paterson, Pickett, Warner and Watson stated that they had been lobbied.

43. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

44. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 JULY 2013

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed.

45. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that he wished to:

- Thank all those Members who had attended the Garden Party at Turkey Mill; and
- Remind Members to confirm whether they would be attending the reception for the Grenadier Guards on 24 September 2013.

46. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

47. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

It was moved by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Garland, that the meeting be adjourned for a short period to enable Members to receive a presentation by the Head of Planning and Development on the five year housing land supply methodology, and to ask questions thereon.

RESOLVED: That the meeting be adjourned for a short period to enable Members to receive a presentation by the Head of Planning and Development on the five year housing land supply methodology, and to ask questions thereon.

Following the presentation and questions by Members on the issues raised, the meeting re-convened at 6.55 p.m.

48. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions to the Leader of the Council

Mr Paul McCreery asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

Is the Borough Council aware that:

NPPF, paragraph 48, allows a windfall allowance to be included in the five year supply if there is compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply; and

Over the years 2006 to 2011 windfall completions averaged 332 dwellings per annum and were just about half (49%) of all completions; and

Based on the last five years figures KCC projected future annual windfall average is 332 dwellings per annum (or 1660 dwellings over five years). Based on the above figures, I agree with the KCC projection which would give Maidstone a supply of 7.5 years; and

Based on MBC figures there is a shortfall in the five year supply of 370 dwellings, with no windfalls included. That means that windfall completions would only need to average 74 dwellings per annum (370 dwellings over five years) for Maidstone to achieve a five year supply of housing land and no shortfall; and

The most recent completed Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for Maidstone is dated May 2009. Paragraph 6.1.12 (page 41) identifies a windfall capacity of 628 dwellings for 2013-2018 (125 dwellings per annum); and

The 2010-2011 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) at Table 3.2, page 20, predicts windfalls at a rate of 145 dwellings per annum for the years 2022/23 to 2025/26 (725 dwellings for a five year period); and

For the last two years 1/4/11 to 31/3/13 Maidstone Borough achieved annual completions averaging 751 dwellings (873 dwellings plus 630 dwellings). This is above the average level of completions for the previous five years. If nil windfalls are available how does the Borough Council explain that Maidstone has continued to achieve such high levels of completions; and

Based on the above data Leading Counsel has expressed an opinion that Maidstone has a housing land supply of between 5-7 years and no shortfall; and

I have lived and worked in Maidstone as a Chartered Town Planner since 1976 and that based on the above data it is abundantly clear to me without any shadow of doubt that a mistake has been made and that Maidstone does have a five year land supply at this time?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

Mr McCreery asked the following supplementary question of the Leader of the Council:

If Mr Lockhart-Mummery QC is right, based on the facts given in my question, and if the Council is allowed a separate windfall allowance, would you agree that Maidstone does have a five year land supply and no need to immediately release a large number of greenfield sites before they can all be assessed by Members in the production of the new Local Plan?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

Mr Ian Ellis asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

If there is an investigation and if that investigation concludes that Maidstone Borough Council does in fact have a five year housing land supply will the Borough Council:

Accept that the resolution to grant 110 houses at the Map Depot Site, Goudhurst Road, Marden (MA/13/0115) was made in error as a consequence of a legal misdirection (or misdirections); and

Accept that the Borough Council should not permit the Map Depot Site because there is a five year land supply (see NPPF paragraph 49) and the site is outwith the Marden village envelope; and

NOT sign any draft planning agreements and NOT issue the Map Depot Site residential planning permission during the course of the investigation; and

Reconsider the decision on the Map Depot Site after the conclusions of the investigation are made public (as required by planning case law) to consider whether in the light of all material planning considerations available at that future date it would be appropriate to refuse planning permission; and

Apologise to Marden Parish Council on the basis that an error had been made in relation to the earlier Map Depot Site decision as a result of a legal misdirection (or misdirections)?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

Mr Ellis asked the following supplementary question of the Leader of the Council:

Is the Leader of the Council aware of the further opinion of Mr Lockhart-Mummery QC on behalf of Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council dated 30 August 2013 in which he is highly critical of the note prepared by the Chief Executive of the Borough Council on the five year housing land supply issue. To quote: "The note strongly confirms my previous advice to the effect that Officers have seriously misunderstood policy in the NPPF, and, subject to a Council meeting on 2 September 2013, are leading Members to misdirect themselves in this important respect." If Leading Counsel for the Parish Council is right, can the Leader of the Council confirm that Maidstone does have a five year housing land supply?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

Mr Doug Smith asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

If there is an investigation and if that investigation concludes that Maidstone Borough Council does in fact have a five year land supply then:

Do you agree it would be possible to refuse the current application for 600 houses at Langley Park on the basis of prematurity; and

Can you please confirm that no decision will be taken on Langley Park (and other similarly potentially premature applications) until such time as the five year land supply situation has been reconsidered by the Borough Council as a result of the investigation; and

Would you agree that if a planning permission on the Langley Park application is issued and the decision is subsequently successfully challenged in the Courts and if that results in the Borough Council having to revoke the grant of planning permission and award compensation to the applicant (as normally happens in such cases) the individual Councillors in this room could be liable to personal surcharge as a result of continuing with a course of action when they were aware of an opinion from Leading Counsel to the effect that the course of action could potentially be subsequently challenged in the Courts because it has been made as a result of legal misdirection or misdirections; and

Will the Borough Council pay the reasonable costs of Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council arising from the production of the legal opinion which brought the legal misdirection (or misdirections) to light?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

Mr Smith asked the following supplementary question of the Leader of the Council:

Due to the complexity of this issue, and the fact that the Borough Council's own advice from Counsel was circulated at 6.00 p.m. this evening, do you agree that a proper investigation is required?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

Note: Having disclosed an Other Significant Interest in Mr Smith's question, Councillor Munford left the meeting whilst Mr Smith's questions were put and answered.

Ms Sara Evans asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

Is the Borough Council aware and does it accept the definition of windfall sites contained in the Glossary (Annex 2) to National Planning Policy Framework and on that basis if the planning application for 110 dwellings on the Map Depot Site, Goudhurst Road, Marden (MA/13/0115) were to be permitted would it be a windfall site?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

Ms Evans asked the following supplementary question of the Leader of the Council:

Given the complexity of this matter and in view of the differing opinions that are circulating, and some as late as 6.00 p.m. this evening, do you agree that an independent body of Members should investigate the situation without time constraints and with all available opinions to hand and the ability to seek advice from experts including Boughton Monchelsea's Counsel who is pre-eminent in his field before the Members who must be satisfied one way or the other make their decision?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

To listen to the responses to these questions, please follow this link:

<http://webcasts.umcdn.com/mbc161/interface>

49. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

There were no questions from Members of the Council.

50. NOTICE OF MOTION - FIVE YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

It was moved by Councillor Munford, seconded by Councillor Newton, that the following motion be adopted by the Council:

In light of the fact that Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council has obtained Leading Counsel's Opinion which states that:

1. Maidstone Borough Council does have between a 5-7 years land supply; and
2. Members were misdirected by using advice in the now cancelled PPS3 instead of the quite different advice contained in the NPPF and that if this advice was used in determination of planning applications, (to the effect that there is a lack of a five year supply), this would be a legal misdirection; and
3. The twin tests of paragraph 48 of the NPPF relating to windfall sites have been met and that windfall sites have consistently become available in the local area, and the clear evidence is that they will continue to provide a reliable (and indeed significant) source of supply; and
4. Members have been given information regarding the Langley Park Farm development which was a misdirection and misleading, and that any planning permission granted based on this advice would be liable to be quashed in the courts as it is clearly a departure from the Local Plan.

It is agreed that:

1. With some urgency, an all party investigation is carried out by Members to address the situation where we (the Members) are being given unsound advice (in the opinion of Leading Counsel) and that the investigation team has delegated powers, if necessary, to seek a further opinion from Counsel on this matter.
2. The investigation team should report back to full Council with its recommendations for future actions to be taken by this Council regarding this matter.

Amendment moved by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Garland, that the motion be deleted and the following inserted:

The issues of housing targets and how they are to be achieved in the short and long term futures are complex and of significant public interest.

It is therefore imperative that all the key stakeholders, in particular elected Members, the Maidstone community and the house building industry have confidence in the Council's housing policies, assessment of need and supply, and monitoring arrangements.

To confirm and make transparent the soundness of the advice given by Officers to Cabinet and Planning Committee under the terms of the NPPF relating to the construction of the five year land supply, it is agreed that:

1. Elected Members are provided with the opportunity to both scrutinise the methodology and judgements that need to be made in calculating the five year housing land supply through Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. The issues to be considered at a single item agenda of the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 September 2013 and Overview and Scrutiny Committee should report its findings to Full Council as soon as practicable and in any case should report the position it has reached to the Full Council scheduled for 18 September 2013.
3. In the meantime Officers should continue to keep the five year housing land supply under regular review in line with the requirements of the NPPF advising the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development of any incremental changes and reporting to Cabinet when there is a need to consider significant changes in the housing target or land supply.

AMENDMENT CARRIED

The substantive motion was then put to the vote.

SUBSTANTIVE MOTION CARRIED

RESOLVED: That:

The issues of housing targets and how they are to be achieved in the short and long term futures are complex and of significant public interest.

It is therefore imperative that all the key stakeholders, in particular elected Members, the Maidstone community and the house building industry have confidence in the Council's housing policies, assessment of need and supply, and monitoring arrangements.

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3. In the meantime Officers should continue to keep the five year housing land supply under regular review in line with the requirements of the NPPF advising the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development of any incremental changes and reporting to Cabinet when there is a need to consider significant changes in the housing target or land supply.

51. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.15 p.m.

Agenda Item 16

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

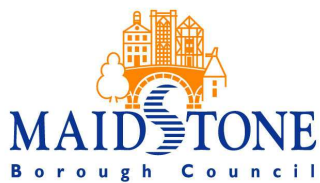
18 SEPTEMBER 2013

REPORT OF HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Report prepared by Orla Sweeney

- 1. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Reports 2011-12 & 2012-13**
 - 1.1 Issue for Decision
 - 1.1.1 To consider the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Reports 2011-12 & 2012-13.
 - 1.2 Recommendation of Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager
 - 1.2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Reports 2011-12 & 2012-13 be noted.
 - 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation
 - 1.3.1 The Maidstone Borough Council Constitution states "Overview and Scrutiny Committees may report annually to the full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate" (Part One, Article 6:03(d)).
 - 1.3.2 The attached reports summarise the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2011-12 & 2012-13 and highlights key issues going forward.
 - 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended
 - 1.4.1 The Council could choose not to receive the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Reports, however this could diminish knowledge of the work of the Committees and would fail to keep the full Membership updated on changes to the function.
 - 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives
 - 1.5.1 None.
 - 1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no risks associated with the Council noting the Annual Reports.



Keeping an eye on
Maidstone

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011-12



Chairmen's foreword



Councillor Fay Gooch

Chairman, Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2011-12.

Our first meeting of the 2011/12 municipal year triggered the consequent debate at full council on who should chair Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee: the best person for the job, or a representative from a political group not represented on the executive? The latter won the day, and so it was that I became Chairman.

Many of the Committee members were also fairly new to their roles. As their ideas for the future work programme flowed, they were unanimous in selecting their main focus for the year: 'The Council as a Business?' Given the enormous pressures on the Council to make ongoing savings, we felt this question would help us draw out how savings and income generation could be achieved in a more innovative manner by looking outside local government

Most unusually, a non-scrutiny member exercised his right under the Constitution to place an item on the Scrutiny agenda. Concerned by the lack of transparency in the sale of a council owned property, he asked that we satisfy ourselves that procedures had been correctly followed, which we did. What a pity that members tend not to exercise this right; I strongly encourage them to do so.

Key standard areas of work including the budget (for which a small working group was established), the complaints procedure and performance monitoring, were scrutinised. Of particular concern was the Government's Welfare Reform and its impact on Maidstone, and the freeze on Council Tax.

The Committee could not function effectively without the invaluable support of the Scrutiny Team, whom I thank most warmly.



Councillor Annabelle Blackmore

Chairman, Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2011-12.

For the 2011/12 municipal year waste was at the top of the list for the members of the Communities Committee. The waste contract was due for tender at the end of 2012 with the new contract coming into effect in August 2013. Members visited the Closed Loop plastics recycling at Dagenham, Maidstone prison,

Aylesford Print and also Allington MRF to assess the evolving technology of waste collection options and recycling which are currently available.

The Committee considered Park Wood Neighbourhood Action Plan which was created using the tool "Planning for Real". Representatives from Parents is the Word and R Shop came to the Committee and through the ensuing discussion it was clear Maidstone Borough Council could provide practical assistance to the group. Officers from Maidstone Borough Council have assisted with the design and production of the newsletter which is distributed to Park Wood residents.

The Committee received a presentation on the new Kent Policing Model which indicated an increase in the number of neighbourhood police staff. The crime performance statistics showed a small reduction; however anti-social behaviour and domestic violence may not be tackled by the changes and would need to be maintained



Councillor David Burton

Chairman, Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2011-12.

2011/12 was a busy year for the RED Committee. Our major investigation was to do with the issue of traffic congestion. As part of our call for evidence we asked members of the public for their views and ideas about the issues and we received an excellent response. This is surely indicative of the level of importance and priority of concern that the people of Maidstone attach to the subject. We also received a lot of media interest and coverage. No need to go into the details of the findings here as they are all well documented in the final report and evidence pack. Needless to say it is a complex subject with issues ranging from the advent of electric vehicles, parking strategy, road building, park and ride and modal shift being set to provide more than ample challenge to producing an 'Integrated Transport Strategy' for Maidstone.

Other work included reviewing the Museum Business Plan, a Call-In concerning Brunswick Street Car Park and looking at employment and skills training. My sincere thanks to all the Officers and especially the Overview and Scrutiny team for their support and to the Members of the Committee for their contributions throughout the year.

Introduction

Overview and Scrutiny has been established at Maidstone Borough Council for 11 years and during that time it has achieved an excellent reputation nationally. It has a responsibility, as part of the Council's governance arrangements 'to hold to account'. Committees are part of formal constitutional arrangements and are consulted on Budget Strategy and Policy Framework documents which includes the following:

Development Plan	Sustainable Community Strategy	Crime and Disorder Reduction strategy
Strategic Plan	Housing Strategy	Asset Management Plan

Overview and Scrutiny is an important sounding board for all council departments. It offers an opportunity to consult with a large proportion of backbench members who can help shape and develop bodies of work, offering input at an early stage which leads to an important 'buy in' to plans and strategies which will affect residents of Maidstone when delivered. Overview and Scrutiny is often described as the 'critical friend' in this capacity. Scrutiny Committee meetings serve as an excellent platform for discussion with statutory powers available to call witnesses from a wide range of public bodies.

In recent years Member involvement and belief in the effectiveness of the scrutiny process has begun to diminish. Alternative scrutiny structures were considered by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee during the 2011-12 municipal year. The Committee came to the conclusion that a decision of this magnitude should be made with all member involvement and a Governance Review was recommended.

FACTFILE

- **33 formal meetings**
- **13 Councillors interviewed**
- **52 officers interviewed**
- **34 external witnesses interviewed**
- **3 major reviews**
- **27 one-off topics**
- **11 opportunities to comment and developing Budget, Policy and Strategy Documents**
- **2 call-ins**
- **1 Task and Finish Group**

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee has responsibility for Cabinet Scrutiny, Performance, Complaints and the Budget. Its extensive remit is closely aligned to the Council's priority **'Corporate and Customer Excellence.'**

Reviews

The Committee considered the 'Council as a business?' as its major review topic for 2011/12, investigating the plausibility of trading arms and other viable commercial activity. It sought advice from local business leaders and the Council's executive and evaluated the perception of the council as a business; its function, role and responsibility to residents. Its recommendations in the final report to Cabinet were derived from its wide engagement with members of the public, staff and councillors through its undertaking of questionnaires, surveys and witness sessions. All its recommendations were approved by Cabinet and delegated to the appropriate Cabinet Member to own and take forward.

One off topics and pre-decision scrutiny

Parish Services Scheme	The marketing of council buildings	The complaints annual review	Complaints policy
Performance monitoring	Complaints monitoring	Strategic plan refresh	Draft improvement plan
Equalities objectives,	Budget strategy	Fees and Charges	Welfare Reform

The draft parish services scheme was the focus of an inquiry by a Joint Corporate Services and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Parish Councils were invited to attend the meeting and given the opportunity to speak by the Chairman. Officers and a Parish Councillor from a neighbouring authority were invited to provide an alternative perspective and scheme for comparison. The meeting was held at the end of the consultation period with Parish Councils and before the consultation responses had been considered. It was therefore recommended that the Cabinet Member delay his decision until a second meeting could be held to consider the revised framework of the draft scheme, reflective of the consultation responses received.

The marketing of council buildings was placed on the agenda of the Committee after a Member utilised the Overview and Scrutiny procedure rule¹ allowing any

¹ This procedure has now been revised from 'any Member of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub Committee' to 'any Member of the Council'. For full details of this procedure rule please see the Maidstone Borough Council Constitution, Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, Item 9, Agenda Items.

member of an Overview and Scrutiny to put an item on the agenda of the next available meeting.

The Member attended the meeting to present the item, explaining that the recent marketing of council properties in Mote Park had taken place in a manner that was not transparent and had attracted negative publicity. The responsible Cabinet Member was invited as a witness to respond to the questions raised. The Committee established that media coverage had not reflected well on the authority and despite there being no wrong doing the result of the action taken did not demonstrate transparency and good governance.

Evaluation of the year

The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee are tasked with topics of great magnitude. The Budget Strategy, Cabinet Scrutiny and Complaints and Performance monitoring are all within this Committee's remit. A continued and enhanced member training programme would improve member's confidence in dealing with these topics.

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee has responsibility for Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Health, Crime and Environmental issues including Waste and Recycling. The Committee's broad remit is closely aligned to the Council's priority '**For Maidstone to be a decent place to live.**'

Reviews

The Committee undertook two reviews; Waste and Recycling and Neighbourhood Action Planning.

The Waste and Recycling review was closely aligned to the tendering strategy for the waste and recycling contract 2013. The Committee was focused on ensuring that technological advances, which would occur during the lifetime of the 10 year contract, were considered and provisions made within the contract for their introduction. With the success of the food waste collection the Committee addressed the obstacles that remained for the service such as providing a service for flats and terraced housing.

Members sought innovative ways to reduce or reuse waste. The Committee visited Closed Loop recycling facility which produces food-grade recycled PET and HDPE from plastic bottle waste. Its Dagenham plant reprocesses 35,000 tonnes per year of mixed plastic bottle waste which would otherwise be exported for recycling, or sent to landfill. Plastics were described as 'an untapped natural resource for local authorities.' The Committee also considered Noah Enterprise's model for the collection and reuse of furniture as part of its social enterprise. The Chief Executive and Director from the organisation based in Bedfordshire attended a Committee meeting to provide evidence to the review.

All the Committee's recommendations made in its review of Waste and Recycling were approved by Cabinet and delegated to the appropriate Cabinet Member to own and take forward.

One off topics and pre-decision scrutiny

Housing Strategy	Tendering Strategy – Waste and Recycling Contract from 2013
Parish Services scheme	Residents Satisfaction Survey
Local Bio diversity Action Plan	Community Development Strategy

Call-in

The decision on the future provision of the CCTV monitoring service was called in in November 2011. The Cabinet along with the Head of Finance and Customer Services, the Director of Regeneration & Communities and officers with expertise in procurement were called as witnesses. Having evaluated all the evidence at the call-in the Committee resolved that the decision should stand but recommended that both Cabinet and officers ensure that stakeholders were fully

engaged throughout all stages of the transfer of the CCTV service and its continued operation.

Follow up on previous inquiries

Fulfilling its statutory role as the Crime and Disorder Overview & Scrutiny, the Committee revisited Youth Offending and Domestic Violence, calling witnesses from the Youth Offending Service, Youth Services, Women's Support Services, Kent Police and the Safer Maidstone Partnership. Funding issues were identified as an ongoing issue. It was felt that Maidstone Borough Council could offer support and guidance to struggling organisations by offering its assistance with applications for funding bids.

CCTV and the CCTV call-in was part of a follow up enquiry as the Committee had been involved in the consultation process as changes to the monitoring service were being proposed and evaluated. Members of the Committee, the previous municipal year, had visited the Medway Control Centre and attended stakeholder consultation events.

Evaluation of the year

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has one of the broadest remits of the three Committees. The Committee sets out to achieve a great deal each year. A more focused work programme could help enable the Committee to achieve improved outcomes.

Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee has responsibility for Transport, Economic Development and the Local Development Framework and Core Strategy. Its remit is closely aligned to the Council's priority '***For Maidstone to have a growing economy.***'

Reviews

The Regeneration and Economic development Overview and Scrutiny Committee identified the negative impact congestion issues had on the quality of life for those who live and work in the borough. It was felt that traffic congestion needed to be addressed and managed in order to enable economic growth. The Committee's evidence gathering included witness sessions with officers from Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council as well as site visits to Goldstone Traffic Control Centre and Chelmsford and Medway Councils. The Committee sought the opinion of residents by advertising its review on local bus routes and in the local press.

The recommendations in the final report to Cabinet were derived from its wide engagement with members of the public. The Committee included an extensive evidence pack with its final report. Its recommendations were approved by Cabinet and delegated to the appropriate Cabinet Member to own and take forward.

One off topics and pre-decision scrutiny

The Committee examined the Museums' Business Plan 2011-19 which reflects the Council's commercial approach to how the museums are run; generating more revenue to reduce costs and in turn reduce the Council's overall financial contribution to the museums.

The Committee also considered Employment and Skills training in Maidstone and as part of this evaluated the worklessness stakeholder event in March 2012 which was organised jointly by Maidstone Economic Development and Regeneration Delivery Group and Connexions Kent and Medway and brought together expert speakers and practitioners to address the key challenges in helping people access training, support, apprenticeships and employment. As part of its investigation the Committee identified that a barrier to employment was a lack of knowledge of the type of skills that were required in the local area.

Call-in

The decision that Brunswick Street pay and display car park and adjoining garage premises be declared non-operational and surplus was called-in. The call-in aired concerns relation to the loss of income and loss of parking spaces for local residents. As a result the Committee recommended that the decision be referred back to the Cabinet Member for Environment. It requested that additional information be provided. If the additional information satisfied the Cabinet Member that businesses and residents could be provided for with no adverse impact then it was felt that the decision should stand.

Evaluation of the year

This Committee conducted a number of focused inquiries and identified key issues in its findings. In order to improve its outcomes in the future the Committee will need to turn its findings into quality recommendations by clearly stating what it wants and making the recommendation to the person or organisation best placed to deliver it.

Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny

In 2011-12 the Joint Committee followed up on its successful Adult Mental Health Services review with an event at the Blackthorn Trust in Maidstone. This was the last in the series of mental health events that had been organised following the launch of the review report to cover the many aspects of mental health that had continued to provoke discussion and interest.

The event at the Blackthorn Trust showcased the excellent work of the trust in the field of mental health recovery and employment. The gardens were utilised for networking opportunities for the community and voluntary sector. Delegates were able to walk around the gardens and view stands whilst sampling the homemade cake made by the trust's in-house cafe.

The Blackthorn Trust's Employment Support Officer kicked off the afternoon's proceedings with a short film about the Blackthorn Trust. Speakers included Stuart Rayner Mental Health Co-ordinator from Job Centre Plus, Lynn Marchant Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust, Service User Employment Manager and lead for Kent Mindful Employer, Kerry Turner, Deputy Service Development Manager, Mental Health, Employment & Community from MCCH.

Stuart Rayner and Lynn Marchant presented a joint initiative called the Integrated Pathways Passport. The Passport would help support a customer from Clinical Care and Employment/ Vocational Support through to employment by identifying the adjustments that would need to be made for the customer to return to work with adequate support which would benefit them and their employer. The Shaw Trust, present at the meeting, had piloted the initiative and informed delegates that it had helped with 35 job retentions. They praised the document describing it as a 'fantastic tool'. Kerry Turner from MCCH presented the Individual Placement and Support Model (IPS) used by MCCH and Stuart Rayner covered all aspects of Job Centre Plus's offer to those seeking employment with a mental health need.

The discussion was chaired by Dr Kulvinder Singh, Chairman of the GP consortium. Helen Grant MP and Councillor John A Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Leisure Services attended to support the event. Helen Grant MP said, "This event, like the two previously held in Tunbridge Wells, offers an excellent opportunity for people with an interest in mental health to come together to discuss their work. It also gives agencies the chance to consider new ways of working in these challenging times. The joint Review offered the impetus for these meetings to start as they have proved popular and productive we hope they continue."

The Local Development Document Advisory Group

The Local Development Document Advisory Group was disbanded at the start of the municipal year and responsibility for this area of work was given to the Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A task and finish panel comprising of 8 members; 4 Conservatives, 3 Liberal

Democrats and 1 independent were appointed with the opportunity to co-opt members of the public and other interested parties. The task and finish panel examined draft Core Strategy documents and the annual monitoring report.

Local Strategic Partnership

The Local Strategic Partnership was dissolved in November 2011 and was replaced with the Locality Board. The Locality Board was in a formative stage during this municipal year however written updates were provided. The Local Strategic Partnership had five delivery groups and each Committee had in the past invited representatives from each to scrutiny as applicable to the topic being investigated.

Site Visits

Scrutiny members undertook specific site visits as part of their review inquiries:

Goldstone Traffic Control Centre	Chelmsford City Council	Medway Council
Close Loop Recycling Facility, Dagenham, Essex	Maidstone Prison – Recycling Unit	Maidstone Prison – Print Unit
Blackthorn Trust	The Freighter Service (followed the service on its route)	Mela, Mote Park

Spreading the Word

Members of the Corporate Services Committee had a stand at the Mela in Mote Park, armed with questionnaires and seeking the opinion of Maidstone’s residents, they conducted over 40 in depth surveys on their review topic, ‘the Council as a Business?’ An information leaflet on the Overview and Scrutiny function was produced and distributed to residents at the event to encourage resident involvement in the scrutiny process.

Councillor Burton, Chairman of the Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee was interviewed by local radio on the Traffic Congestion Review. All scrutiny reviews were reported on in the local press.

Member training

Continued member training and development is organised by the Council’s Human Resources and Learning and Development team. Members of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee were offered additional training by the Scrutiny team in Performance Management and the Budget to prepare them for their role on the Committee as the year commenced.

Looking ahead

Overview and Scrutiny Members started the new municipal year with a Member led workshop on making 'Quality Recommendations'. Quality recommendations fulfil the following criteria:

Affect and make a difference to local people	Result in a change in policy that improves services	Identify savings and maintain/improve service quality	Objectively identify a solution
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Chairman of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Annabelle Blackmore, led the workshop, facilitated by the scrutiny team. Members looked at recommendations from recent and past reviews and identified 'good' and 'bad' recommendations that had been made.

The impact of a bad recommendation was quickly realised. If the recommendation was unclear and non specific in what it was asking, and of whom, it was unlikely that it would have any impact and therefore would not achieve an outcome. It was also found that a recommendation needed to be evidence based; the report should provide the background and investigation to support the recommendation being made and therefore enable the person being asked to deliver it.

Social Media

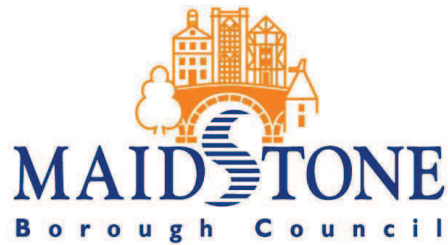
The Overview and Scrutiny team will be raising its profile in 2012/13 with the use of social media to encourage public engagement with the scrutiny process.

The use of social media is widely advocated by senior politicians and is used to update the public on parliamentary activity as well as in a local context. As well as following the tweets of @tweetminster, @UKParliament and @HelenGrantMP the scrutiny team are following local community groups including @ParentstheWord and @st_stonestudios. Follow us @maidstonesvoice and see who we are following and who follows us!

The team are also trialling the use of pinterest. Using pinterest, you can create online notice boards, pinning articles, news stories, quotes and images to a virtual pin board. This creates a wonderful visual stimulus when gathering research and evidence as part of a scrutiny inquiry. In the run up to the presidential elections in the United States, the First Lady, Michelle Obama, joined pinterest; news of this was reported across the world!

If you are interested in finding out more about social media or you would like to contribute by writing a piece on a scrutiny meeting or a topic you feel passionate about please contact a member of the team. We would love to hear from you; your involvement and contributions will help make this a successful venture.

The team can be contacted at osc@maidstone.gov.uk, on 01622 602534 or for more information visit: www.maidstone.gov.uk/scrutiny.



Keeping an eye on
Maidstone

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012-13

Foreword from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen



**Councillor David Burton,
Chairman Regeneration
and Economic
Development Overview
and Scrutiny Committee
2012-13**

The regular meetings were held bi-monthly this year and although we did hold interim meetings as required I am sure that this schedule meant momentum was lost and I sincerely hope that next year will return to the certainty of regular monthly slots.

We also spent a significant part of our year assisting with discussions to help shape the Core Strategy and associated ingredients including Transport Strategy.

On behalf of the RED Committee I would like to thank the O & S support team for all of their hard work and assistance over the last year.



**Councillor Annabelle
Blackmore, Chairman
Communities Overview
and Scrutiny Committee
2012-13**

During 2012/3 the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee have contributed to a variety of health consultations. The Committee also provided feedback to the Kent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Kent Community Health NHS Trust. The impact of these changes will be felt across the borough and should provide

better integration of health services for all residents.

Following the move of the CCTV control room from the Town Hall to Medway a six month review was undertaken. It was pleasing to learn that there were no problems relating to the transfer and all operations were running effectively.

The impact of the anticipated Welfare Reform was considered by the committee. This will need to be reviewed again as further changes relating to benefit payments come into effect.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all members and substitute members of the committee for their input and energy.

Our scrutiny officer Orla Sweeney deserves particular thanks for arranging additional meetings, ensuring agendas are produced in a timely fashion and making sure all recommendations are followed up.



**Councillor Fay Gooch,
Chairman Corporate
Services Overview and
Scrutiny Committee 2012-
13**

Performance Monitoring and the Monitoring of Complaints are the

The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees this year has been against the backdrop of the Governance Review which concerns itself with the very essence of how best to involve as many Councillors as possible in both policy development and investigation. The RED Committee chose, as its main topic, to consider the location of Maidstone's Visitor Information Centre and this subject became implicitly intertwined with considerations about the future of the Town Hall. Such a subject roused Members to participate in such numbers that are rarely seen! There must be a lesson here somewhere about choosing topics that really matter?

Committee's regular areas of work, and required our particular attention during 2012/13 as changes to the Benefits and Council Tax systems brought pressure to bear on staffing. Regular Budget updates from the Finance team were invaluable in keeping the Committee in step with the Government's intentions as they gradually unfurled throughout the municipal year.

The Committee's tasks varied from keenly following the progress of the new Complaints System, finally launched mid-year, to examining the initial stages of the far-reaching Customer Services Improvement Strategy; from examining the Asset Management Strategy, to making amendments and additions to the refresh of the Strategic Management Plan. Our input in developing the new Commissioning and Procurement Strategy was particularly welcomed by the Cabinet Member.

Our main focus was the Review of the Capital Strategy. Despite loss of momentum mid-stream, the final report produced a swathe of constructive recommendations which we look forward to being taken on board in due course.

I warmly thank the Members of the Committee for their contribution to a good year's work, and I highly commend the unfailing support of Scrutiny Officer Orla Sweeney.

Introduction

What is Scrutiny?

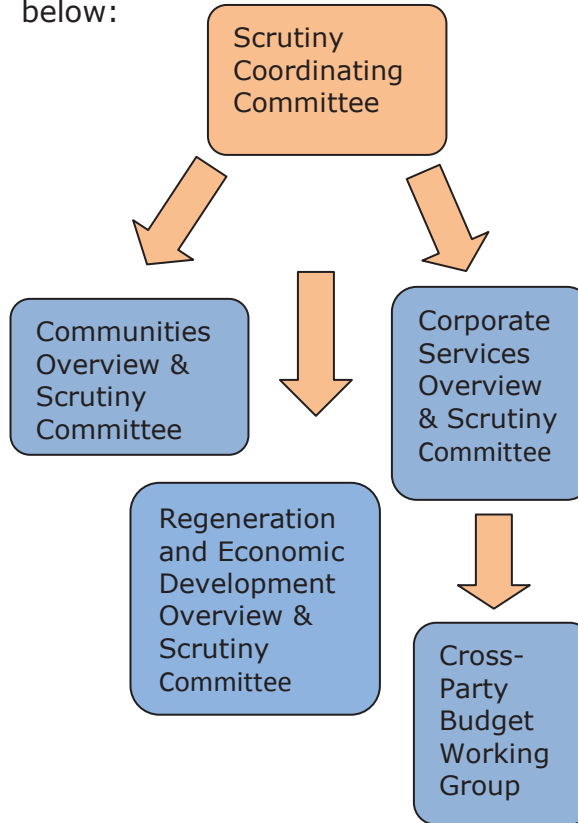
All local authorities operating a Cabinet and Scrutiny model have a Cabinet made up of the Leader of the Council and up to nine members of his Group. All executive decisions (i.e. those needed to implement the Policy Framework and Budget approved by the County Council) are taken by the Cabinet.

Overview and Scrutiny bodies are not "decision making" bodies but are bodies which monitor and influence those that are. The Overview and Scrutiny role, carried out by non-Cabinet members, is designed to support the work of the Council in the following ways:

- Reviewing and scrutinising decisions taken by the Cabinet (sometimes known as acting as a "critical friend");
- Considering aspects of the Council's performance;
- Assisting in research, policy review and development;
- Involving itself with external organisations operating in the borough to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working; and

- Providing a means of involving the community in the Council's work.

The Structure of the Overview and Scrutiny system in Maidstone is set out below:



The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee comprises of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of all three Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It has overall responsibility for overview and scrutiny including terms of reference, budget and progress of reviews. It is also

responsible for addressing cross-cutting issues and to prevent duplication in the work of individual committees. The Corporate Services, Communities and Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committees scrutinise the Council's functions in relation to the relevant departments, as appropriate to the Committee's term of reference which are each aligned to one of the Council's three corporate priorities. The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee also scrutinises the activities of NHS bodies which has responsibility for commissioning and providing health care services.

The Budget Working Group was a recommendation of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 'the Council as a business?' review undertaken during the 2011/12 Municipal Year. It was felt that a cross-party Budget Working Group, appointed from the membership of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee would help improve the Committee's understanding of ongoing budgetary issues and allow the Committee opportunity for greater input in developing the budget strategy and the budget setting process looking in depth at certain aspects.

Key Outcomes from work undertaken during the past year

Governance Review

The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee at the end of the 2011/12 Municipal Year considered a review of the overview and scrutiny structure. In light of the wider implications of the Localism Act 2011 and a view of backbench member engagement in decision making a motion was put to council to review returning to the committee system. It was agreed that there should be a review of the governance model for the council.

The Coordinating Committee considered whether there should be a scrutiny led review of governance and set up a joint working group to carry this out.

The review included in depth research and evaluation of alternative governance arrangements at other local authorities as well as interviews with Cabinet Members, Senior Officers and a broad cross section of Members.

In February 2013 the working group gave a presentation at Council with four options for consideration. It was agreed that option C, Retain Cabinet System with enhanced Scrutiny be taken forward. Furthermore it was requested that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee develop the model and proposals for implementation to be considered at the April Council meeting.

In developing an enhanced scrutiny model the Coordinating considered and investigated the following areas:

- The Overview and Scrutiny Model;
- Vision for Scrutiny;
- Cabinet Member Accountability;
- The role of Scrutiny Chairmen;
- Pre and Post decision Scrutiny;
- Continuous Professional Development;
- Approach to the Work Programme; and
- Support for Scrutiny.

It considered different options for an enhanced scrutiny secure but resolved that an extra Committee should be created so that each Cabinet Portfolios could be aligned to a Scrutiny Committee, providing its terms of reference. A key recommendation made

by the Coordinating Committee in its proposal was that the Spatial Planning Advisory Group and the Housing Consultative Board be subsumed into scrutiny to avoid duplication and strengthen the scrutiny process. Looking ahead to the 2013-14 Municipal Year it has been agreed that there will be four new Overview and scrutiny Committees and the Spatial Planning Advisory Group and the Housing Consultative Board will cease to exist.

Scrutiny of Health Bodies

In April 2013 the structure of the NHS changed dramatically. The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee identified Health as a key area to look at during the 2012/13 Municipal Year. From April 2013 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) commission health services including General Practitioner (GPs) and community and hospital services. These services had historically been commissioned by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

The Committee invited key representatives from the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group to update it on key changes.

The Committee felt it was important that

organisations worked together with the Council to determine local priorities and recommended that Maidstone Borough Council take the lead on this by engaging with all GPs as early as possible.

The Committee responded to two key consultations; the Kent Community health NHS Trust's Consultation on becoming an NHS Foundation Trust and the Draft Kent Health and Well-being Strategy. The Committee's response to the Kent Community Health NHS Trust Consultation was included as part of its application to the Secretary of State in support of its application to become a Foundation Trust.

The Committee's response to the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy Consultation was submitted, in full, in the consultation engagement report to the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2013.

Capital Programme Review

The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a review of the Council's Capital Programme.

Its starting point was to establish what the Council's policy was for developing a Capital Programme and how it contributed to the priorities and

outcomes set out in the Council's Strategic Plan.

The Working Group sought to establish a means by which the Council could continue to deliver an ambitious Capital Programme through exploring borrowing options and innovative ways of utilising the Council's available finances and assets.

Its investigations naturally progressed to considering the Council's involvement in development which contributes to and promotes economic growth. These included Woking Borough Council's ventures as Woking Borough Homes Ltd and Wolsley Place Shopping Centre. The Trafford Centre and Maidstone's Fremlin Walk Shopping Centre were also evaluated.

The Working Group explored the concept of land assembly and acquisition in relationship to Maidstone so that it could establish whether or not Maidstone Borough Council should have a future role in shaping Maidstone, seeking expert advice from Smiths Gore, chartered surveyors and property consultant.

Having considered the evidence, the Committee approved a wide range of recommendations that would help enable transparency, continuity and forward planning in the Council's Capital Programme. There was a definite focus on making efficient and effective use of

the Council's and Maidstone's assets which includes land and property and the knowledge and innovation of both staff and residents. The recommendations embodied a sense of belonging and community that would shape the future of Maidstone, with the people of Maidstone, for the people of Maidstone.

The report and recommendations were considered by Cabinet in June 2013. The Cabinet Member is scheduled to update the Committee on the progress of its recommendations in December 2013.

Brunswick Street Call-in 2011 Update

The Economic and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held an important follow-up meeting on a call-in from the previous Municipal Year in order to establish what progress had been made on the recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny.

The suspension of the original decision still stood and the car park remained operational. The original intention had been to declare the site surplus and release it for regeneration but since the decision was suspended the tenant in the adjacent building had vacated and subsequently the Council had lost the income from this site. The Committee agreed that the Council should seek to

find another tenant, if only short term, due to the loss of income.

The Committee made a number of recommendations to help improve residents parking options in the area which was identified as an issue and Resolved that the original decision to declare Brunswick Street Car Park surplus be revoked and the process restarted.

Visitor Information Centre Review

The Economic and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a review on the Visitor Information Centre. The Visitor information Centre, once housed in the foyer of the Town Hall, moved to Maidstone Museum in 2011 as part of the East Wing extension project.

The empty space left in the foyer of the Town hall was offered to Volunteer Action Maidstone (VAM) as a customer point.

Since the moving of the Visitor Information Centre (ViC), Jubilee Square, part of the High street regeneration project has been completed and while VAM have played a valuable role in keeping the Town Hall open and in use there was evidence that visitors were confused about where to go for visitor information.

The Committee visited Visitor Information Centres in Rochester and Bexley as well as the ViC in the Museum. It considered the role of the Gateway and the future use of the Town Hall and the Maidstone's approach to tourism as whole.

Whilst the review found no conclusive evidence to support returning the ViC in full to the Town Hall, it made a number of recommendations to support a more holistic approach to 'Visitor Information'.

Public Gypsy & Traveller Site: site selection

The Communities and Joint Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committees formed a Joint Committee to consider this cross-cutting topic.

The report considered by the Joint Committee was an exempt report and therefore considered under Part II. The Joint Committee recommended that it was in support of the recommendation outlined in the report.

Local Council Tax Discount Scheme & Welfare Reform

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Council's Local Council Tax Discount Scheme prior to a

decision by Cabinet and its public consultation.

The Committee recommended that Cabinet supported Option 6 in the Localisation of Council Tax Support report: Local variation within the framework for scheme in Kent which recommends that the Council applies a standard deduction of 13% on all non-pensioner claimants, removes the 10% discount currently applicable to second homes and reduces the exemption on Class C empty properties from 6 months to 1 month.

It also recommended that actively assisted vulnerable groups affected by the Local Council Tax Discount Scheme and the wider impacts of Welfare Reforms through continued engagement with stakeholders and the voluntary and charity sector.

The Committee went on to examine the impact of Welfare Reforms in more depth with registered social landlord, Golding Homes, who own and manage approximately 6,500 properties in Maidstone and Tunbridge and Malling.

As well as the impact of Welfare Reform the Committee explored whether or not this, combined with the Department of Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Social Housing Fraud consultation (published in January 2012) provided an

increased impetus for change within social housing with regards to unlawful occupation including subletting and the ability to introduce flexible tenancies under new legislation in the Localism Act 2011.

The Committee saw the introduction of flexible tenancies as a way forward for making social housing available to those with a genuine need and offered its support and input into Golding Homes' review of this in a year's time.

Housing Allocation Scheme

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny considered the Council's new Housing Allocation Scheme, pre-decision.

The Committee examined the Council's draft Housing Allocation Scheme to determine whether or not it supported the message of Welfare Reform 'better off in work' and was clearly aligned to the Council's strategic priorities with the ability to deliver.

The Committee made a number of key recommendations including the following:

- That Section 14 of the Allocation Scheme, Bedroom Allocation, be brought into line with the guidance and specifications given under Welfare Reform; and

- That clarity be given within the document on Community Contributions; whether or not contributions must be made locally.

A Member of the Committee also volunteered to undertake some follow up work with officers on the scheme to ensure concerns regarding the inclusion of fostering under Community Contributions and the possibility that this could encourage applicants to foster children for the wrong reasons could be addressed and appropriate changes made.

Policy Framework documents

Policy development was undertaken by the Corporate Services by the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its consideration of the following Budget and Policy Framework documents:

- Budget Strategy;
- Refresh of the Strategic Plan; and
- Asset Management Plan.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees are constitutionally bound to consider a number of plans and strategies, some of these are statutory, others have been

chosen by the Council to form part of its policy framework.

The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee act as the 'critical friend', holding the Council to account in its quarterly monitoring of the Council's Performance and Complaints.

Customer Focused Services Review & Customer Services Improvement Strategy

The Customer Services Improvement Strategy was the outcome of the Customer Focused Services review undertaken by the Business Transformation team. The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee were involved in its development, undertaking pre-decision scrutiny on the outcomes of the review at its meeting in February 2013.

The Committee agreed a set of principles that would underpin the development of the customer service delivery model which were that it should:

- Enable as many customers as possible to be self sufficient ;
- Be affordable;
- Ensure services are accessible to the most vulnerable;
- Have high quality service standards consistently applied; and

- Be sustainable and adaptable for the future.

When presented with the Strategy in April 2013 the Committee had one main concern which was ensuring that vulnerable people were not disadvantaged by more ICT focused services. It recommended that a contact list of partner organisations (including the private sector) offering support and training in ICT be compiled, including organisations with the ability to support individuals with low literacy, learning difficulties and mental illness. It specified that the information should be specific to the type of support on offer i.e. 1 to 1 and be used to signpost residents to these services.

CCTV Update

The decision to move CCTV monitoring from Maidstone to a central monitoring centre in Medway was a contentious one.

Maidstone Borough Council took the decision in November 2011 to award the contract for the CCTV monitoring service to Medway Council Control Centre.

This decision was called in and considered by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee resolved that the decision should stand

but recommended that 'both the Cabinet and officers ensure that stakeholders are fully engaged throughout all stages of the transfer of the CCTV service and its continued ongoing operation.'

It was on this basis that Committee resolved that a review of the implementation of the CCTV monitoring service at the Medway Control Centre should be included in its work programme for the 2012/13 Municipal Year. A meeting was held in October 2011 and the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee acting as the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee interviewed key witnesses from Kent Police, the Community Safety Unit alongside with Vikram Sahdev, Head of Business Development at Medway Council and Lynne Goodwin, Operations Manager, Medway Council.

The Committee were satisfied with the services being provided at Medway and that contract specifications had been deliver. Recommendations were made to ensure continuous improvement of the service.

Legislative and Constitutional Changes

The Coordinating considered amendments that were required to the Constitution in relation to Overview and

Scrutiny. It agreed that as a consequence of the Localism Act, the following parts of the constitution relating to scrutiny were amended during 2012/13:

- The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, section 9, Agenda Items and section 20 procedure at Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings; and
- Councillor Call for Action Protocol.

The Future...?

As the local government landscape continues to change at a rapid pace, Scrutiny will need to be more adaptable than ever before in order to maintain a robust check and balance on service delivery. We have encountered a number of challenges this year.

With the election of the new Police and Crime Commissioner in November 2012 came entirely new arrangements for Police accountability at a County Level.

In April 2013 public health were transferred to functions the County Council. There will be new opportunities to ensure that the Council's activities reflect the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and its aim to improve the quality of residents' lives.

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has endeavoured to stay abreast of changes in both health and crime.

There are existing scrutiny protocols in place in crime and health which help ensure that at a district level there is an input. However these will need to be refreshed in light of recent changes in order for scrutiny to continue to have a meaningful impact.

The Kent Police Crime Commissioner is scheduled to attend Scrutiny in October 2013 which will be almost a year in to her term of office, providing a timely opportunity to evaluate the past year.

Maidstone Borough Council has representation on the Local Health and Well Being Board from a long serving Overview and Scrutiny Member which will provide an opportunity for future engagement.

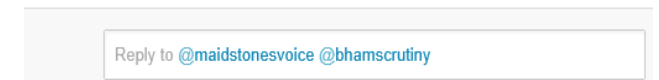
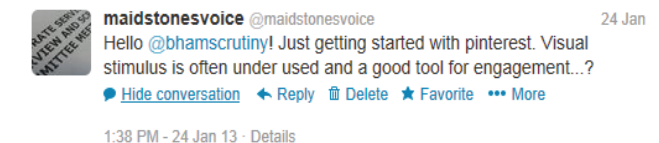
Social Media...a tool for public engagement?

How do we ensure that scrutiny is examining the issues that matter most to our residents, are we adapting a methods of communications appropriately?

The Overview and Scrutiny team continue to explore the challenges of finding new ways to engage with residents and have implemented a variety of social media tools which can be utilised and developed by Scrutiny Members. Twitter is used to communicate when Overview and Scrutiny meetings will take place and engage with residents.

Pinterest and Instagram are both useful, visual tools for sharing information. Pinterest could be a useful tool for reviews as information and articles can

be 'pinned' on a virtual notice board. Advocated include 10 Downing Street and a number of Government departments including the Department for Communities and Local Government. We were complimented by leading a Scrutiny authority, who are affiliated with Birmingham University, in our innovative use of Pinterest for Scrutiny. See below:



These tools are in place and Members are most welcome to come and learn about the possibilities from the team who would be happy to offer training or advice.

Training

Continued member training and development is organised by the Council's Learning and Development team. The Scrutiny team organised training in Performance Management and

the Budget for members of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to prepare them for their role as the year commenced.

Members began the new municipal year with a Member led workshop on making 'Quality Recommendations'. Quality recommendations fulfil the following criteria:



Chairman of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Annabelle

Blackmore, led the workshop, facilitated by the scrutiny team. Members looked at recommendations from recent and past reviews and identified 'good' and 'bad' recommendations that had been made.

The impact of a bad recommendation was quickly realised. If the recommendation was unclear and non specific in what it was asking, and of whom, it was unlikely that it would have any impact and therefore would not achieve an outcome. It was also found that a recommendation needed to be evidence based; the report should provide the background and investigation to support the recommendation being made and therefore enable the person being asked to deliver it.

Gypsies and Travellers, National Awareness Training Programme

In November 2012 a training session was offered on Gypsy and Traveller awareness. The programme was devised by the Local Government Association (LGA) and Planning Advisory Service (PAS) with direct support from Communities and Local Government (CLG). It explored the challenging issues surrounding Gypsies and Travellers in the UK and looked at the potential solutions that councillors, their officers and local partners can put into practice in their area.

The training covered the following:

- The current Government's position and policies particularly on planning and enforcement;
- The history of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK;
- Discussion on inappropriate encampments and unauthorised developments;
- The issues in the light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Localism Act 2011 and the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS);
- The cultural, equalities, education and health issues;
- The highly contentious issue of community opposition;
- Funding availability for provision; and

- The options available for making provision and the financial consequences of both action and inaction.

Continued Professional Development

An outcome of the Governance review was that each individual Committee should consider its 'Continuous Professional Development' at each meeting so that appropriate training sessions can be arranged. This will be taken forward during the 2013-14 Municipal Year.

Get in Touch!

The following Officers are available to discuss your Overview and Scrutiny issues:

Officer	Contact Details
Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communication.	t: 01622 602620 f: 01622 692974 e: angelawoodhouse@maidstone.gov.uk
Clare Wood Policy and Performance Officer	t: 01622 602491 f: 01622 692974 e: clarewood@maidstone.gov.uk
Orla Sweeney Overview and Scrutiny Officer	t: 01622 602524 f: 01622 692974 e: orlasweeney@maidstone.gov.uk

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

18 SEPTEMBER 2013

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Report prepared by Debbie Snook

1. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES

- 1.1** Notification has been received of proposed additions to the lists of named Substitute Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board.

2. RECOMMENDED:

- 2.1** That the following changes be approved to reflect the wishes of the Leader of the Independent Group:-

Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Substitute Members

Add Councillors Moriarty and Sams

Economic and Commercial Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Substitute Members

Add Councillors Munford and Sams

Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Substitute Members

Add Councillors Mrs Gooch and Sams

Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Substitute Members

Add Councillors Moriarty and Sams

Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

Substitute Members

Add Councillors Mrs Gooch and Sams

Background Documents

Email from the Leader of the Independent Group – Democratic Services Section