

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Community, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2015**

**Present:** Councillor J.A. Wilson (Chairman), and  
Councillors Mrs Joy, D Mortimer, Newton, Round,  
Sargeant and Vizzard

**Also Present:** Councillor Ells

73. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEB-CAST

**RESOLVED:** That all items on the agenda be webcast.

74. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies were received from Councillors Munford and Mrs Parvin.

75. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Newton was substituting for Councillor Munford.

76. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Ells was in attendance as a Visiting Member.

77. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures.

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

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

79. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2015

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2015 be approved as a correct record and duly signed.

80. UPDATE ON TACKLING SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS FACED BY OLDER PEOPLE

Sarah Shearsmith, Community Development Team Leader was invited to present her report to the Committee.

The officer outlined the responses to the Committee's recommendations on the proposed model to identify lonely and isolated over 65 year old residents of Maidstone, as set out in the agenda report. This had been presented at the Committee's January meeting.

**RESOLVED:** that

1. The officer fulfil the following information request: website links or information be provided to the Committee on the three organisations residents will be signposted to: Silverline, Age Action Alliance and Depression Alliance.
2. The bereavement pack be friendly in its approach and short and succinct in its layout i.e. bullet points.
3. The role of the church be explored with reference to the bereavement pack and the role of the clergy, particularly in rural areas.
4. The resident's survey includes a question on GP satisfaction (in relation to combating loneliness and isolation).
5. A breakdown to ward level of GP satisfaction be sought and provided to the Committee.
6. The details of the volunteers from local schools who would like to be involved in the intergenerational project where young people in the community share IT skills will the older generation, be passed to AGE UK.
7. The quality of life survey to go out with the resident's survey.

81. AMENDMENT TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

**RESOLVED:** that item 10, Update on Collective switching campaigns be taken before, item 9 Affordable Housing Programme Update.

82. UPDATE ON COLLECTIVE SWITCHING CAMPAIGNS

Helen Miller, Household Expenditure Project Officer introduced the report on the update on collective switching campaigns which outlined the benefits to residents. These included year on year savings. The benefit of the scheme to the Council was in its ability to be in a position to help residents. The £5 referral fee was spent on promoting and marketing the scheme making the scheme cost neutral.

In response to Member's questions it was confirmed that other collective switching services did not provide a supportive service to clients, other than AGE UK. In addition Council residents were also able to phone and come into the Gateway for an offline service.

It was also clarified that the Council used one provider (ichoser) on behalf of residents and was not choosing an energy company on behalf of residents.

**RESOLVED:** that the recommendations set out in 1.3.10 of the report to increase take up in subsequent schemes be agreed.

### 83. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME UPDATE

Andrew Connors, Housing Enabling Officer outlined the update report on the Affordable Housing Programme to the Committee, asking it to note the 'importance of affordable housing supply and how it is delivered, key challenges ahead and the opportunities for continued investment in the delivery of affordable housing.' The officer explained that the programme sought to increase the supply of new homes.

The impacts of Welfare Reforms and Planning Reforms were considered:

- Over occupation and downsizing was an issue as smaller properties were not available.
- There were approximately 1400 people on the Housing register with 60% in need of 1 and 2 bedroom accommodations.

In response to concerns raised by the members of the Committee regarding downsizing, the need to increase new build, 1 and 2 bedroomed properties and the market being led by developers, it was explained that:

- The team were working with registered providers and identifying where moves to smaller properties could be made.
- Housing had regular monthly meeting with the Planning at the pre application stage.

The Committee was informed that the Council was looking at the formation of a local housing company which would expand the range of tenancies that could be offered. It was also told that work had begun on the New Housing Strategy for the next five years. It would link into the new affordable homes scheme and planning and welfare reforms.

Members felt that the report presented contained a wealth of information and should be brought to the attention of all Councillors.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be circulated to all Councillors, via email, by the Chairman.
2. A progress update should be given to the appropriate Committee in 3 months.

84. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Future Work Programme. Members discussed how items of interest and importance from the current Municipal Year would be taken forward following the Council's change in governance arrangements. The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee would be producing the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report. The report would highlight the work undertaken by each Committee and the report would be a public document that would be a point of reference going forward.

Members considered its current body of work and its input into the Council's model for tackling isolation and loneliness. The Committee would meet as the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March, this would provide Members with the opportunity to look at the topic from the perspective of community safety and examine interventions that could be made by Community Wardens and the Police.

**RESOLVED:** that

1. The Future Work Programme be noted.
2. The March meeting examine the interventions of Community Safety partners and their effect on tackling social isolation and loneliness faced by older people.

85. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 8.10pm