

Maidstone Borough Council

External Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 21 April 2009

Cabinet Member for Community Services: Progress During 2008/09

Report of: Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The External Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for holding to account those Cabinet Members whose portfolios fall within the remit of the Committee.
- 1.2 The key Cabinet Members whose portfolios relate to the Committee are the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Community Services.

2. Cabinet Member for Community Services

- 2.1 The areas of the Cabinet Member for Community Services' portfolio that are relevant to the Committee are as follows:
 - **Young People** – to be the Lead Cabinet Member for young people; Youth Forum.
 - **Lifelong Learning** – to be the Lead Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning.
 - **Health** – to be responsible on behalf of the Council for all health and community health matters including the development, in conjunction with the Council's partners, of the Community Health Plan.
 - **Crime and Disorder** – to be responsible for all aspects of crime and disorder in the Borough.
 - **Social Inclusion** – to formulate and review policies to enable the enhancement of a socially inclusive society in Maidstone; to guide, advise and provide a strategic overview on social inclusion issues.
 - **External affairs** – to take responsibility for external relationships with parish councils (including concurrent functions), KCC and other levels of local government.
- 2.2 At the meeting of the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 June 2008, Members interviewed the Cabinet Member for Community Services with regard to her priorities for the Municipal Year 2008/09.
- 2.3 Members also considered a written statement by the Cabinet Member, which is attached at Appendix A to this report.
- 2.4 The relevant extract from the minutes of the 17 June 2008 meeting is below:

"The Cabinet Member for Community Services, Councillor Marion Ring, informed Members that in addition to the priorities and plans outlined in her report to the Committee, she was pleased to inform Members that the West Kent Primary Care Trust (PCT) had agreed to match-fund a 'Healthy Lifestyle Manager' to help develop a health action plan and work in disadvantaged areas.

The Chairman then asked the Community Development and Social Inclusion Manager, Ian Park, to outline the challenges faced by the Council with regard to this portfolio. Mr Park stated that partnership working was something that the Council did well, and partnership arrangements with KCC in terms of social issues had allowed the Council to "punch above its weight" in its approaches to those issues. The Council's relationship with health agencies had changed dramatically in recent years. There was an increasing expectation on district councils to promote health. The key challenges were ensuring the ongoing effectiveness of partnership arrangements and monitoring outcomes, as these were not always immediately apparent.

A Councillor stated that a glossary would be useful in documents submitted by the Cabinet Member in future, as many of the acronyms used were unfamiliar. It was clarified that "VAM" stood for "Voluntary Action Maidstone" which was the new name for Maidstone Volunteer Bureau.

In response to a question, Councillor Mrs Ring stated that she had met with representatives of most parishes and would be meeting with them again in the near future to ensure that she was fully aware of what they wanted. She would also be discussing the issue of Quality Parish Council status to ensure that those Parish Councils that wanted this were supported, but that those who did not also received adequate support from the Council.

With regard to partnerships, Councillor Mrs Ring stated that she would be looking at whether all partners of the Council were delivering as much as they should be. She felt, for example, that the Council's relationship with the Police was a one-way relationship in which the Council's officers worked very hard but the police did not deliver the services required in wards.

A Councillor asked what kind of support the Cabinet Member intended to offer to help providers improve educational attainment at GCSE and A Level. Councillor Mrs Ring stated that she would look to influence KCC, as the education authority. Ward members could provide information on what was going on in their wards to ensure that children were receiving the education and support that they needed. Mr Park highlighted that there could be many reasons why a school did not attain good results, both in school and outside of it, and some of these were areas that the Council could assist with. Another Councillor highlighted the difficulty with "lifelong learning" being a Council priority, as no budget was allocated directly to this.

A Councillor stated that the key problem for the Council in delivering community work was capacity. One officer was dedicated to working on issues such as lifelong learning and health and this was not enough. A liaison worker was also needed to work with Multi-Agency Partnerships (MAPs), parishes and community groups, and to help to address deprivation.

With regard to MAPs, Councillor Mrs Ring informed Members that she had attended MegaMAPs, the co-ordinating group for MAPs in the Borough, and had asked attendees to state what their role was and what they had achieved. The answers had not been as positive as she had hoped so she was looking to rename the groups and change how they worked to ensure outcomes. A possible name was "Action for [area name]", which Councillor Mrs Ring felt more adequately suited the purpose of the partnerships. The biggest problem with MAPs, in Councillor Mrs Ring's opinion, was the lack of input from residents, as they knew what they needed better than agencies did. Meetings should be publicised and if no members of the public attended a meeting, it should not be considered a reason to stop publicising.

A Councillor stated that there was no Member involvement in either of the children services clusters in Maidstone. Mr Park stated that the clusters were now called "Local Children's Services Partnership Boards", and each district in Kent had two, none of which had any elected Member involvement. If Members wished to change this it would need to be taken up at a political level with KCC. A Member asked if Councillors could attend Board meetings to observe and Mr Park confirmed he could look into this. A Member then asked about the Common Assessment Framework. Mr Park explained that this would allow information about vulnerable children to be shared across agencies on a "need to know" basis. Mr Park stated that this was expected to be online by early 2009.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Mr Park for their attendance and noted that the key issues for the coming year in this portfolio would be capacity and effective partnership working."

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 Members are recommended to consider the statement made by the Cabinet Member for Community Services at the beginning of the year and ask questions with regard to progress that has been made on those issues highlighted as priorities.

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES**ACTION PLAN 08 / 09**Introduction

This Portfolio is wide ranging and covers:-

- Community Safety
- CCTV
- Community Services, including:-
 - Health
 - Life Long Learning
- Community Engagement

Due to the content of the Portfolio, this is an outward facing task and these are four of the services that the Council can deliver in rotation. The majority of services have to be delivered in partnership with other Agencies and there are others where the Council can only seek to influence the outcome.

I have set out below the priorities for the year and what will be done to achieve them. I have identified what the Council will do itself, what it can do in partnership with others, and the areas where it will try and influence the actions of others.

Community Safety

Priority:-

To enable people to live without the fear of crime. How this is to be achieved this year is set out below.

ACTIONS		
DIRECT	WITH PARTNERS	INFLUENCE / PROMOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of CCTV • Work to reduce ASB • Assist in designing out crime • Promote S17 in all decisions • Develop Crime Reduction Strategy 	<p>Work with Police and other Partners to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce crime • Improve public protection • Increase public reassurance <p>Identify resources to enable PACTS to work effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the relationship with the Police and other Partners provides good policing for the public

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Create Sustainable Communities

Priority:-

To create a Borough where all faiths and cultures can work together in a thriving and democratic culture.

ACTIONS		
DIRECT	WITH PARTNERS	INFLUENCE / PROMOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that LSP works effectively • Develop the Sustainable Community Strategy • Refine the external grants process • Manage the joint MBC/KCC Service Level Agreement in respect of VAM as the third sector infrastructure body for the Borough • Create an on-line shopping guide to Maidstone for disabled shoppers • Ensure the statutory Corporate Equality Plan effectively promotes social cohesion and fair access to Council services • Support the work of Maidstone Youth Forum to promote civic engagement • Support the development of a sustainable Youth Café in the town. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with LSP • Jointly fund and support community development workers • Work with Partners in deprived areas to use existing community settings for youth activities and provision • Working with partners to reduce dependency and to promote independence where appropriate • Working with partners and partnership organisations (such as the CDRP, the PCT, KCC, MEGAMAPS) in programmes to help reduce deprivation and its social consequences • Support youth activities particularly in targeted areas of need. • Support the Third Sector through a joint Service Level Agreement with KCC for Voluntary Action Maidstone and support for the Voluntary and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban parishing • Quality parishes • The personal independence of citizens within the Borough (eg reducing dependency where appropriate, promoting disabled access to services) • Volunteering within the community •

	Community Sector Focus Group	
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Life Long Learning

Priority:-

To improve the level of education and skills in the local population, to improve their prosperity.

ACTIONS		
DIRECT	WITH PARTNERS	INFLUENCE / PROMOTE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the LSP and the Children and Young People's Partnership Boards to provide support within the Council's remit which will help providers improve educational attainment at GCSE and A level • Through the LSP to provide support within the Council's remit which will help providers improve the skills and qualifications levels of adults within the Borough between the ages of 18-64 • To work with KCC to develop community learning champions for targeted areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To seek to improve educational attainment at GCSE and A level with all schools in the Borough • To seek to improve the skills and qualifications levels of adults within the Borough between the ages of 18-64 • To help promote community learning opportunities in areas of need

Health

Priority:-

To Harness the Council's services to help partners improve the health of residents.

ACTIONS		
DIRECT	WITH PARTNERS	INFLUENCE / PROMOTE
	To lead and develop the	Matters of public health

APPENDIX A

	multi agency Maidstone Health Action Team	affecting the residents of Maidstone
	To lead and develop a multi agency Health Action Plan for the Borough	Child protection and child safeguarding issues
	To ensure that the Choosing health budget for promoting community health in the Borough (2008-9) is spent effectively in areas of need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work of the Children and Young People's Partnership Boards in Maidstone
	To develop with key partners Maidstone Older Person's Forum as a voice for older people in the borough	
	To look to develop and adapt sport programmes with health outcomes	