

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE PARTNERSHIP AND WELL BEING
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 12 APRIL 2011**

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Stockell (Chairman)
Councillors Brindle, Butler, Ms Griffin and Paterson

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

Resolved: That all items be web-cast

106. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Parvin and D Mortimer sent their apologies.

107. Notification of Substitute Members

It was noted that Councillor Brindle was substituting for Councillor Mrs Parvin.

108. Notification of Visiting Members

There were no Visiting Members.

109. Disclosures by Members and Officers:

There were no disclosures.

110. 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.

111. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 14 March 2011

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed by the Chairman.

112. Amendment to order of business.

It was agreed that Item 9, Progress Update from the Cabinet Member for Community Services be taken before Item 8, Progress Update from the Leader of the Council.

113. End of Year Progress Update from Cabinet Member for Community Services

The Chairman welcomed Councillor John A Wilson to the meeting.

Councillor Wilson told members that his first year in a cabinet role had been challenging but that he had achieved everything that he set out to and with limited funds, making reference to the spending cuts. The Chairman told the Cabinet Member that many of his priorities had been concentrated on by the Committee in their work programme including Domestic Violence and Road Safety. The Committee was informed that there were sufficient funds for the coming year to continue without any loss of service in the areas under the Cabinet Member's jurisdiction. Members discussed the scrutiny review 'Fit for the Road' and the outstanding recommendations made around Road Safety. Councillor Wilson confirmed that this would be revisited. The Cabinet Member made reference to the Local Strategic Partnership for whom Road Safety was a priority. He told Members that their priorities were not talking points, they were actions and they would be followed up. The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for his reassurance.

Members questioned the statistic in the Cabinet Member's written report which put Maidstone 4th highest in Kent and higher than the Kent average in Domestic Violence incidents. The Committee expressed their concern and explained that after interviewing Women's Support Services earlier in the year and other organisations in that sector, they felt that Maidstone was acting to address domestic violence and was therefore surprised to hear that this was not reflected in the statistics. Councillor Wilson explained that the statistics he had referred to were from 2009/10 as there were no current figures available. The Chairman echoed the Committee's praise for those working in the field of Domestic Violence offering victim support and 1 to 1 counselling as well as all the other initiatives Maidstone seemed to be leading on in this area. The Committee was updated on the Domestic Violence website which was being constructed with the aid of practitioner partners.

Members were told that Community Safety streamlining was imminent and was being achieved with the reduction of one post through retirement. The Committee asked for an update on CCTV. The Cabinet Member explained that this was an issue he had kept a strong hold on, ensuring all stakeholders were invited to the consultation meetings. He told members that if what was on offer was not considered transparent it would go to tender which was the point that had now been reached. The tender process would begin next month and would be completed by the end of November. Councillor Wilson concluded by explaining that a great deal of people had been interviewed and consulted during the process and he was confident they were taking the correct route.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for attending and for his frank answers.

Resolved that the report of the Cabinet Member for Community Services be noted.

114. End of Year Progress Update from the Leader of the Council.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Chris Garland was welcomed to the meeting and began with an update on the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP). He explained that Ashford had left the partnership but that Tunbridge Wells, Swale and Maidstone would continue working closely together. Members were told that the IT issues with the Revenues and Benefit's Partnership had been resolved and this was progressing well. The Committee was informed that the Revenues and Benefits Partnership would provide some of the biggest savings over the next four years as part of the medium term financial strategy. The Leader emphasised that with stringent budget cuts it was vital that MKIP continued to move forward to help achieve these. In response to Members questions the Leader explained that the Licensing Partnership with Sevenoaks was also functioning well. With regards to Ashford no longer being part of MKIP; the Audit Partnership and anything that had already been established would continue.

The Leader moved on to discuss the partnership arrangements for Kent. He explained that Kent comprised of two key groups: the Kent Partnership and the Leader and Chief Executives Group; a two body arrangement that was too top heavy and cumbersome and had now been streamlined. The Committee was told that Kent County Council were replacing the current partnership arrangements with the Kent Forum which would include all Leaders, Chief Executives and any other elected bodies, with 'Ambition Boards' sitting below this group, fulfilling the county's priorities: the economy, environment and a decent place to live. Under the Ambition Boards would come 12 Locality Boards comprised of District and County Councillors. The 9 County Councillors for Maidstone would be matched with the same representation at a District level to ensure balance between the two tiers of government. Councillor Garland told the Committee that the 'big public spenders' should be included on Locality Boards in order to achieve change. He referred to the resource mapping exercise that had been carried out by the Local Strategic Partnership which had shown that there was approximately £610 million in public money coming into Maidstone as identified in 13 organisation's spend profiles. Kent County Council, the Primary Care Trust, Maidstone Borough Council and Kent Police were listed as the biggest spenders with pronounced figures given to the Committee; these organisations therefore had the most impact on people's lives from a public spending point of view. It was the Leader's view that the Locality Boards should consist of these organisations in order to fulfil KCC's ambition of a single agency or body to govern all partnership working. With regard to the LSP, Councillor Garland explained that there was evidence to show they had not achieved substantial results over the past four years to continue in their current form and envisaged them becoming part of the Locality Boards. Successful LSP projects that were highlighted were Park Wood and Age Concern (Community Hub). He went on to explain that the LSP had had £295,000 to spend in the last year but there would be no future funding available to them. The Leader

gave his personal view of the future Locality Boards which he said he was in support of if they included the right people, were based on trust and had a clear, strategic direction. He said it was the most streamlined rationale of partnership working to come. The Committee was informed that by 2014 they would become decision making bodies with money to spend. Their first function would be to cut out duplication of effort and the example was given of collaborative working in areas such as Community Safety. The Sustainable Communities Strategy would be revised to reflect this new partnership structure with three focused objectives, particularly in view of the coalition government reducing the National Indicators it previously focused on. In response to Members questions the Leader confirmed that it could be GP consortiums that would join the Locality Boards rather than the PCTs and that other non-elected bodies who brought money into the borough such as the Army could be called upon for their input in relation to specific agenda items. Councillor Garland clarified that the Kent Forum would be formed by elected Members and the Locality Boards could include the PCTs and non-elected bodies. He confirmed that Local Enterprise Partnerships would also have an input.

Councillor Garland moved on to the 'Big Society'. He told Members that the voluntary sector had a large role to play in this as they were key to life in Maidstone but there was an irony that came with this in light of the spending cuts. The Leader explained that it was yet to be decided what the Big Society meant for Maidstone but it would provide a new landscape.

Members queried the Health Issues in the borough, particularly the recent move of Maternity and Children's Services from Maidstone to Pembury Hospital. The Leader explained that KCC was not pursuing a judicial review of this decision which meant that the Secretary of State's decision would likely stand however there may be an opportunity for influence as issues arose.

Members questioned the progress of the Local Development Framework and the provision of gypsy traveller sites. The Leader informed the Committee that a political consensus on the spatial distribution of housing had been reached and there would be meetings to determine how to progress the LDF. In May 2011 there would be a public consultation. The issue that remained was employment land with 16 hectares to be found by 2016. This decision would have to be signed off by the Secretary of State and would go to full Council next year. The advent of Localism and a different planning system could change this.

The Chairman thanked the Leader for attending and for keeping the Committee updated on issues before they happened.

Resolved that the report of the Leader be noted.

115. Future Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2011-2012

The Chairman asked the Committee to consider items for the Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2011-2012.

Members discussed the Joint Working group which incorporated Members from Partnerships and Well-Being and Environment and Transportation Overview and Scrutiny who had looked at Air Quality issues in the borough with a view to establishing a Low Emission Zone. Councillor Paterson informed the Committee on the seminars attended by the group at Aylesford Priory earlier in the municipal year which had examined the health issues relating to Poor Air Quality and urged the Committee to take the issue forward. The Working Group had been established in relation to the remit available to council's and communities via the Sustainable Communities Act to meet the challenges of sustainability and local well-being. Members were informed by the Scrutiny Officer that new direction given from the Local Government Association, the 'selector' body, regarding the Sustainable Communities Act was in relation to 'barrier busting'; to help facilitate a change by removing a bureaucratic obstacle that prevented ideas from being put into action.

The Committee discussed the work that had been carried out by Scrutiny over the past year and areas that they felt needed to be revisited as well as new items for the agenda.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their hard work over the year and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer for her informative reports on the issues tackled.

Resolved: That the following items be put forward for the Overview and Scrutiny work programme:

- Air Quality and a Low Emission Zone;
- Domestic Violence – A review of what is being achieved in Maidstone;
- Obesity;
- Water Scarcity;
- Railways – Train Links;
- Youth Offending Service & Community Payback – How this could be utilised;
- Changes in the Health Service and how it is affecting Maidstone specifically; and
- Rural Economy and Employment Land – Explore sustainable employment in rural areas.

116. INFORMATION: New Strategic Priorities

117. Duration of the Meeting

6.30pm to 7.30pm

