

## **Maidstone Borough Council**

### **Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 6 September 2011**

#### **'The Council as a Business' Review – The Council's Outlook**

**Report of:** Overview & Scrutiny Officer

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At the meeting held on 6 July 2011 the Committee decided to engage with staff and Councillors on the review, 'The Council as a Business?' by conducting a bespoke survey. At their August meeting the Committee evaluated the interim report prepared which showed the response so far.

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 That Members individually take ownership of an idea to research on behalf of the Committee. The responses made to the survey questions should be evaluated and selected on the strength of the following:

- The quality of the responses given; what benefit would the suggestion made have to the organisation and residents of Maidstone;
- How the idea could be implemented;
- Does the suggestion fit with the council's strategic outlook demonstrated in the 3 priorities; 'For Maidstone to have a growing economy', 'For Maidstone to be a decent place to live' and 'Corporate and Customer Excellence';
- Would the idea generate income;
- Would the idea increase efficiency; and
- Would the idea result in a saving

#### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Committee decided that an anonymous staff/Councillor survey would be the best way to find out individual's ideas for the council to generate an income. Councillors Paine, English and Wilson helped the Scrutiny Officer put together the following survey and questions:
- 3.2 Many of you will have seen Alan Sugar's 'The Apprentice' and understand we are again in an age when we must embrace our entrepreneurial spirit! We all sit there watching and come up with far better money making ideas, why not share them with us!

The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee have begun their major review of the year 'The Council as a Business?'

The Committee would like to explore the possibility of generating an income for the Council which might substantially reduce the need for service cuts and savings in the current economic climate.

Your idea could relate to your skills and ambitions not currently being utilised, your current role, any role or department in the Council or any of the Council's resources...

What can you offer the residents of Maidstone? Can you think of a 'paid for' service that yours or another department could offer?

What niche service could you offer the public and/or private sector?

How could Maidstone Borough Council manage their land and/or resources in a manner that could generate an income? (or in a manner that is more efficient?).

3.3 Staff and Councillors were sent an email with a link to the electronic survey and it was advertised to staff via the Wakey Wakey newsletter. Staff working off site at the Museum, the Depot and the Hazlitt Theatre were sent a paper copy to complete and the Communications team adapted the survey and included it on the Council's Facebook page. The responses have been collated at appendix a and b.

3.4 A press release was also made to begin public engagement. The Kent Messenger picked up on this and an edited version appeared in the Maidstone edition on Friday 5 August:

'Council ideas

Maidstone council's corporate services committee is asking for money-making ideas. Chairman Cllr Fay Gooch said that suggestions could help the council's financial situation. The town hall being used as a wedding venue is one idea. To submit an idea, call Orla Sweeney on 01622 602524.' The responses are included at appendix c.

3.5 The Bright Sparks staff innovation scheme have recently agreed a new theme; 'Future Income Generation' with particular reference to the Town Hall and Mote Park. Previous themes have included 'Giving Something Back' and 'Efficiency Savings'. There will be an opportunity for the suggestions put forward to the scheme to be shared with the Committee to feed into the review.

#### **4. Impact on Corporate Objectives**

4.1 The Committee will consider reports that deliver against the following Council priority:

- 'Corporate and Customer Excellence'.