

Maidstone Borough Council

Joint Corporate Services and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 7 February 2012

Draft Parish Services Scheme

Report of: Overview & Scrutiny Officer

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 29 November 2011 the Joint Corporate Services and Overview and Scrutiny Committee met to consider the Parish Services Scheme.
- 1.2 The decision on the new Parish Services Scheme cuts across the remit of two Overview and Scrutiny Committees; value for money and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for Corporate Service and the impact on Parishes for Communities. Therefore a joint meeting was appropriate.
- 1.3 The Committee interviewed a wide range of witnesses to help in its evaluation of the draft Parish Services Scheme. These included:
 - Councillor John Wilson, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services;
 - Zena Cook, Director of Regeneration and Communities;
 - Paul Riley, Head of Finance and Corporate Services;
 - Ryan O'Connell, Corporate Projects and Overview and Scrutiny Manager;
 - Neil Lawley, Chief Accountant at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council;
 - Frankie Gahal, Senior Account at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council;
 - John Perry, Chairman of Staplehurst Parish Council;
 - Harry Rayner, Chairman of Wrotham Parish Council; and
 - Geraldine Brown, Chairman of the Kent Association of Local Councils;
- 1.4 Visiting Members and representatives from Parish Councils were also invited to attend and those seated in the public gallery were given the opportunity to speak.
- 1.5 The Committee made the following recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Leisure Services (**Appendix A**):
 - a. That the decision on the Parish Services Scheme should be delayed until the Cabinet meeting on 11 January 2012 to allow for further consultation with parishes;

- b. The Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services and the Corporate Projects and Overview and Scrutiny Manager should continue their engagement and consultation with individual parishes in order to develop the proposed Parish Services scheme; and
- c. The Corporate Services and Communities Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee should meet to consider the revised Parish Services Scheme once the responses from the consultation with Parish Councils which ended on 25 November 2011 have been considered by the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services. The Committee wish to reconvene on 10 January 2012.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to consider whether the revised draft Parish Services Scheme is 'fit for purpose' and make recommendations as appropriate. The Committee should consider the draft Parish Services Scheme and draft Funding Agreement in relation to the changes and actions identified in the Consultation Summary (all documents can be found under **Appendix B**). The Committee should be aware that the scheme is in draft form and its recommendations will be considered ahead of the decision being made. The report to the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services on the Parish Services Scheme will be published on 9 February 2012.
- 2.2 The Committee are recommended to interview Councillor John Wilson, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services and Ryan O'Connell, Corporate Projects and Overview and Scrutiny Manager.

3. The draft Parish Services Scheme.

- 3.1 The draft Parish Services Scheme is the result of a review which began in January 2011. Throughout the review there has been consultation with Parishes and the Kent Association of Local Councils. The main consultation began in August 2011 with a presentation and question and answer session for all Parish Councils. The parish consultation ended on 25 November 2011.
- 3.2 When the Joint Corporate Services and Communities Overview and Scrutiny met on 29 November 2011 the consultation responses from Parishes had yet to be evaluated and the Committee were therefore unable to understand how the outcome of the consultation would impact on the Parish Services Scheme.
- 3.3 Since the Committee last met it was agreed by Cabinet on 21 December 2011 as part of the Budget Strategy 2012/13 onwards that:

'The utilisation of a one-off £100,000 from general balances to support the concurrent functions grant process during 2012/13 to allow for consultation to be completed and the delivery of the new Parish Services Scheme be agreed.'

- 3.4 The decision on the Parish Services Scheme was due to be made by the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services in January 2012 in line with this Committee's original recommendations. The report to the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services on the Parish Services Scheme will be published on 9 February 2012.

4. Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 4.1 The Committee will consider reports that deliver against the Council's priorities:

- 'Corporate and Customer Excellence'
- 'For Maidstone to have a growing economy'; and
- 'For Maidstone to be a decent place to live';

- 4.2 The Strategic Plan sets the Council's key objectives for the medium term and has a range of objectives which support the delivery of the Council's priorities. The Committee's work will contribute to the delivery of these key objectives over the next year.

5. Further Information and background reading.

- 5.1 There is a wide range of information available on Concurrent Functions. This can be provided on request. Please contact Orla Sweeney on 01622 602524.