

## **Maidstone Borough Council**

### **Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 13 March 2012**

#### **Neighbourhood Action Planning**

**Report of:** Overview & Scrutiny Officer

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At the beginning of the Municipal Year the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee made a recommendation as part of its future work programme to evaluate 'Neighbourhood Action Planning with a focus on the vulnerable and areas of deprivation.' Members felt that this should be 'set against the Localism Bill' and it be established 'where we (Maidstone Borough Council) are heading in the longer term to strengthen ties with communities'.
- 1.2 The Localism bill was given Royal Assent on 1 November 2011. It details the intended power shift from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and local councils.
- 1.3 Localism provides the framework for the 'Big Society,' the idea launched in the 2010 Conservative manifesto. The Localism Act Localism outlines the following principles for communities under which Neighborhood Action Planning can be established:
  - makes it easier for local people to take over the amenities they love and keep them part of local life;
  - ensures that local social enterprises, volunteers and community groups with a bright idea for improving local services get a chance to change how things are done; and
  - enables local residents to call local authorities to account for the careful management of taxpayers' money.
- 1.4 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has an 18 month Structural Reform Plan. The actions to be completed within that time frame will enable the decentralisation and transparency reforms that will put residents and councils in control of their communities.
- 1.5 In the DCLG's latest monthly implementation update (January 2012) the following action is detailed to be started by the end of January 2012:
  - 5.1 (iv) Work with a small number of places to develop neighbourhood plans using existing powers.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to interview Sarah Robson, Community Partnerships Manager, Councillor Marion Ring, Cabinet Member for Environment, Representatives from Parents is the Word, Caroline McBride, Head of Community Development, Golding Homes, Caroline McBride, Head of Community Development, Golding Homes and Ellie Kershaw, Policy and Performance Manager.
- 2.2 Areas of discussion could include but are not limited to:
- Maidstone Borough Council's role in Neighbourhood Action Planning;
  - The role of partners and other public sector agencies in Neighbourhood Action Planning;
  - Available funding to the Council and Community Groups;
  - How groups can become 'constituted' and therefore eligible for funding;
  - Aspirations for the future for young people and residents in Park Wood and suggestions for ways in which underlying issues relating to health, teenage pregnancies, worklessness and skills and education attainment can be tackled across all age groups;
  - Whether the priorities of residents remain the same;
  - To consider the strengths and weaknesses of the Park Wood Neighbourhood Action Plan and established residents groups and what could be taken forward to benefit other areas of Maidstone.

## 3. Neighbourhood Action Planning

- 3.1 A pilot Neighbourhood Action Plan has been developed in Park Wood using Planning for Real which is a registered Trademark (**as detailed in appendix a**). It was developed in Park Wood by Maidstone Borough Council with local residents and with the support of partners which included Kent County Council, Golding Homes and Kent Police.
- 3.2 The Park Wood Neighbourhood Action Plan 2010-2015 (**appendix b**) was adopted by Cabinet on 10 November 2010.
- 3.3 One year on from the development of the Action Plan residents were surveyed to establish whether they felt there had been improvement in the priority areas highlighted (**appendix c**).
- 3.3 Parents is the Word is a residents group which operates in Park Wood it is advertised online ([www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)).

- 3.4 Park Wood has Meadows Children's Centre, Fusion Healthy Living Centre and Heather House. These facilities help to aid the delivery of services by various partners for the residents of Park Wood.

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

- 4.1 The Committee will consider reports that deliver against the following Council priorities:
- 'Corporate and Customer Excellence'; and
  - 'For Maidstone to be a decent place to live'.
- 4.2 The Strategic Plan sets out 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.