

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING HELD ON 24 APRIL 2012**

**Present:** Councillors Beerling, Burton, FitzGerald and Mrs Gooch

**16. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs Blackmore and Paine

**17. Election of Chairman for the Duration of the Meeting**

In accordance with the procedure agreed at the previous meeting of the Coordinating Committee, that the Chair would cycle on an alphabetical basis, Councillor FitzGerald was appointed as Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

**18. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 19 December 2011**

The Minutes of the Meeting Held on 19 December 2011 were approved as a correct record.

**19. Future Scrutiny Structure**

The Committee considered the report circulated with the agenda on a new structure for Overview and Scrutiny in answer to Member concerns the Head of Change and Scrutiny clarified that scrutiny was not going to be merged with Democratic Services and the changes to scrutiny staffing levels. The Committee requested that the new structure include the task and finish panel for the Local Development Documents. It was explained that the new system had been developed to address member concerns and budget pressures. Members expressed concern that they had not been sufficiently involved in designing the new structure whilst the Head of Change and Scrutiny had been on maternity leave.

The Committee was concerned that the changes were driven by budgetary requirements rather than to improve the service. The Head of Change and Scrutiny responded that they were required to save one post from scrutiny and there was also a need based on Member concerns to make scrutiny more Member led. The Committee noted the concerns raised by Councillor Paine regarding the change to a single committee and potential loss of expertise. The Chairman stated that Maidstone had always been a leader in terms of delivering scrutiny and in 2009 won an award for best scrutiny team with Tunbridge Wells. The Chairman also emphasised the importance of health and crime and disorder scrutiny going forward. It was clarified that the new structure would be supported by one overview and scrutiny officer, 0.5 of the Scrutiny and Performance Officer and 0.3 of the Head of Change and Scrutiny. Reviews would be led by Members via working groups supported by officers with up to three running at any one time.

The Committee considered the new structure and the wider governance issues in light of the Localism Act. It was agreed that before a new structure could be devised there needed to be full member engagement and consideration of the council's governance arrangements in terms of its model for taking decisions and the role of backbench members across the council.

**Resolved:** That the present structure remain unchanged and a review of governance be conducted including a review of the scrutiny arrangements and the role of backbench members.

**20. Other Problems and Issues**

The Committee considered other issues and problems. It was agreed that for scrutiny to be successful members need to lead it and in particular scrutiny chairs. The Committee considered the budgetary requirements and ways of stimulating more interest in scrutiny. It was agreed that meetings would be held on a bi-monthly basis to allow more time for member led working groups to carry out reviews. Agendas would be led by scrutiny chairmen and the committee would be encouraged to take on tasks outside of meetings.

**Resolved:** That scrutiny meetings are held on a bi-monthly basis with reviews undertaken by the working groups supported by the Change and Scrutiny Team.

**21. Duration of Meeting**

4.45pm until 6.00pm