

Maidstone Borough Council

Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 30 June 2009

Work Programming 2009-10

Report of: Overview and Scrutiny Officer

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On Wednesday 27 May 2009, Members participated in a workshop to develop ideas for the 2009-10 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes. Ideas were received from residents, community and voluntary sector groups and officers, and these were considered alongside Members' own ideas at the workshop by each Committee.
- 1.2 Members of the Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee present at the workshop identified the following ideas as topics they wished to consider in 2009-10.

2. Potential Major Topic for Review

- 2.1 Gypsy and Traveller Sites Appendix A
 - 2.1.1 Members at the workshop suggested an in-depth review to determine whether the promotion of a framework for a gypsy and traveller site Supplementary Planning Document was required.
 - 2.1.2 The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) had revealed a need for some 32 additional pitches in the Borough for the period 2006 to 2011 which equated to a rate of some 6.4 permanent pitches per year. The Partial Review of the South East Plan will confirm how many pitches the Council must identify in the Borough for the 10 year period 2006 to 2016. The Council has recently invited consultants to help it prepare a Development Plan Document with the specific purpose of finding the additional necessary sites for Gypsies and Travellers. It is expected that the Consultants will be appointed in July 2009 and a long list of potential sites will be agreed by the Council by February 2010. Furthermore, it is anticipated that a Development Plan Document will be adopted by mid 2011.
 - 2.1.3 Given the progress that has been made in producing a Development Plan Document to find additional sites, Members may not wish to review this topic yet and instead continue to monitor it under the Committee's watching briefs. However, if Members wish to conduct a review of gypsy and traveller sites, Members will need to amend the scoping report they produced at the work shop. A possible area the Committee could review includes the allocation of gypsy and traveller site prior to the adoption of the Development Plan Document. If the Committee wishes to conduct

this as a review, it is recommended that 1 to 2 months be allocated to this, including Committee meetings, visits to sites and desktop research by the Scrutiny Officer.

2.2 Clearance of Contaminated Land *Appendix B*

2.2.1 Members at the Workshop suggested that the Committee conduct an in-depth review of the clearance of contaminated land. This review would identify whether or not the Council was in a vulnerable position.

2.2.2 The country has the world's longest history of industrial activity dating back to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th Century. Unfortunately this has left a legacy of contamination to address. Maidstone, as a historic town, has its share of previously industrial land including quarrying operations, often subsequently used for landfill.

2.2.3 This review would involve site visits and select-committee style interviews, in addition to desk based research by the Scrutiny Team. It could be undertaken over six months.

2.3 Economic Development Strategy *Appendix C*

2.3.1 The Cabinet Member for Regeneration endorsed the Council's Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan produced by Shared Intelligence in December 2008 and it may therefore be too premature to review the Council's Economic Development Strategy at this stage. Members may consider it more appropriate to request an update on the progress of implementing the strategy's action plan towards the end of the municipal year.

2.3.2 A possible alternative to this may be further involvement in the Council's production of a Regeneration Statement. A short regeneration statement is being produced by the Director of Prosperity and Regeneration to bring together the fragmented parts of regeneration across the authority. An initial draft is being produced and could be considered by the Committee at its meeting in July should Members wish to be involved. The production of a more comprehensive strategy will be considered after the adoption of the statement and Members may wish to also be involved in this.

2.4 Disabled Facilities Grants *Appendix D*

2.4.1 A Member suggested that the Committee review the Council's approach with regard to aids and adaptations to disabled housing to establish whether they were necessary. Members may also choose to review the distribution of Disabled Facilities Grants to home owners, private sector tenants and Registered Social Landlords to determine whether the distribution is appropriate.

2.4.2 Initial desktop research of this topic revealed a number of Local Authorities had reviewed the administration of Disabled Facilities Grants from initial enquiry to post adaptation, and Members may therefore wish

to expand this topic to a major review if they felt it was appropriate. This major review could be undertaken over three to four months. A scoping report for this review is attached at Appendix D.

- 2.4.3 This review could therefore either be done as a one-off review over one to two months or as a major review over three to four months. This review would involve select committee style meetings to interview the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the Chief Housing Officer, in addition to desktop research undertaken by the Scrutiny Team. An informal meeting could also be undertaken to interview disabled housing tenants and Registered Social Landlords.

3. Potential One-Off Topics for Review

3.1 Maidstone's Roads

- 3.1.1 Members of the Committee suggested a one off review of Maidstone's Roads with regard to pot holes and congestion be undertaken at its meeting on 24 November 2009.

3.2 Concessionary Fares Update

- 3.2.1 Members of the Committee requested an update on concessionary fares at its meeting on 27 October 2009. This would include consideration of the impact of concessionary fares on the Council. This item could be expanded to also include an update of the Council's Travel Assistance for Disabled People Scheme. Members may consider a written update sufficient and request officers attend a future meeting if it was considered necessary.

3.3 Aids and Adaptation to Disabled Housing

- 3.3.1 Possibilities for an in-depth review of Disabled Facilities Grants are outlined at 2.4. However, if Members decide that sufficient time is not available for an in-depth review, they may wish to narrow the focus of the review to consider the Council's approach with regard to aids and adaptations to disabled housing to establish whether they were necessary.
- 3.3.2 This review could be done as a one-off review over one to two months, with a meeting to interview the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the Chief Housing Officer, in addition to desktop research undertaken by the Scrutiny Team.

4. Setting the Work Programme

- 4.1 The Committee can choose up to 2 major reviews; these can be conducted either in traditional Committee meetings or as working groups. The Committee currently has a working group on Choice Based Lettings which will provide updates on its progress as appropriate. The Working Group is reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of a points, bands and hybrid allocation system. The Group will meet again in September to

monitor the progress of the existing points allocation system under the new Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

- 4.2 One-off reviews can be programmed into the work programme at any time; when deciding on this, Members should be mindful of other Committee work being undertaken at that time.
- 4.3 The complete work programme does not need to be drawn up immediately; Members are recommended to allow some flexibility in the work programme to allow for new issues to arise. However, it is recommended that Members identify potential items for the Committee to consider to ensure a varied, interesting and effective work programme.
- 4.4 The following work programme outlines the potential organisation of work for the Committee for 2009-10:

Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Future Work Programme 2009-2010

Date	Items To Be Considered
27 May 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elect Chairman and Vice- Chairman
25 Jun 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint LDDAG meeting
30 Jun 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Regeneration Vision • Cabinet Member for Environment Vision • Work Programme
28 Jul 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Review (1)
25 Aug 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Review (1)
29 Sep 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Review (1)
27 Oct 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concessionary Fares Update (?) • Major Review (1)
24 Nov 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maidstone's Road –potholes and congestion (?) • Begin Major Review (2)
22 Dec 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Review (2) • One off item
26 Jan 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Review (2)
23 Feb 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Review (2)

23 Mar 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One off item
27 Apr 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Members Progress

Gypsy and Traveller Sites
<p>What are the objectives and desired outcomes of the review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Framework for a Gypsy and Traveller Site Supplementary Planning Document be promoted if necessary.
<p>Which witnesses are required?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Council Representatives; Cabinet Member for Regeneration; Planning Officer; and Representative of Gypsy Community.
<p>Other ways to seek evidence? E.g. site visits, involving members of the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site Visit
<p>What information/training is needed?</p>
<p>Suggested time for review and report completion date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 months
<p>How does the review link to council priorities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A place that has strong, healthy and safe communities; and A place to live and enjoy.
<p>How does this item deliver CfPS effective scrutiny principles?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables the voice and concerns of the public Is carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny role
<p>Any co-optees or expert witnesses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Councillor; and/or Gypsy Representative.

Clearance of Contaminated Land
<p>What are the objectives and desired outcomes of the review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the Council's statutory role with regard to land contamination; • Establish whether the Council's Contaminated Land Strategy is fit for purpose; • Review the Council's progress in implementing the Contaminated Land Strategy Action Plan; • Identify whether a proactive or reactive approach is undertaken with regard to the identification and remediation of contaminated land; • Consider how identification and remediation of contaminated land is prioritised and whether it is fit for purpose; • Identify and compare the Council's approach to reviewing information regarding previously assessed individual sites; and • Determine whether the Council is in a vulnerable position and make recommendations as necessary.
<p>Which witnesses are required?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental health officer • Assistant Director of Environmental Services • Environmental Enforcement Officers • Environment Agency • Contaminated Land Officers, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs • Dr Paula Carey, Principal Lecturer in Environmental Science, The University of Greenwich and Co-ordinator of the Centre for Contaminated Land Remediation
<p>Other ways to seek evidence? E.g. site visits, involving members of the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible site visit • Photographic evidence
<p>What information/training is needed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maidstone Borough Council's Land Contamination Strategy 2001 (Revised 2006) • Environmental Protection, England (2000 No.227) Contaminated Land (England) Regulations 2000
<p>Suggested time for review and report completion date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 Months
<p>How does the review link to council priorities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A place that is clean and green.
<p>How does this item deliver CfPS effective scrutiny principles?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drives improvement in public services.
<p>Any co-optees or expert witnesses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative from Specialists in Land Contamination (SiLC) • Representative from Contaminated Land: Applications in Real Environments (CL:AIRE)

Economic Development Strategy
<p>What are the objectives and desired outcomes of the review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish whether the Council's Economic Development Strategy is appropriate, particularly in light of current economic developments.
<p>Which witnesses are required?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader • Cabinet Member • Economic Development Manager • Assistance Director of Development and Community Strategy • Tourism Manager • Business Community including Town Centre Management, the Federation of Small Business and Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce • Transport
<p>Other ways to seek evidence? E.g. site visits, involving members of the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Visit – other boroughs
<p>What information/training is needed? Information from regional development agency</p>
<p>Suggested time for review and report completion date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term
<p>How does the review link to council priorities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A place to achieve prosper and thrive. • A place that is clean and green. • A place that has strong, healthy and safe communities. • A place to live and enjoy.
<p>How does this item deliver CfPS effective scrutiny principles?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy makers and decision makers. • Drive improvement in public services.
<p>Any co-optees or expert witnesses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business community representatives • Bill Moss, Town Centre Manager

Disabled Facilities Grants
<p>What are the objectives and desired outcomes of the review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish whether the administration of Disabled Facilities Grants is appropriate and make recommendations as required; • Determine whether the distribution of Disabled Facilities Grants to Home Owners, private sectors and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) is appropriate; and • Establish whether aids and adaptations to RSL's disabled housing are necessary, and make recommendations as required.
<p>Which witnesses are required?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled housing tenants • Cabinet Member for Regeneration • Chief Housing Officer • Registered Social Landlords
<p>Other ways to seek evidence? E.g. site visits, involving members of the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible site visit. • Photographic evidence. • Best Practice at other Local Authorities.
<p>What information/training is needed?</p>
<p>Suggested time for review and report completion date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 – 4 months
<p>How does the review link to council priorities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A place with efficient and effective public services.
<p>How does this item deliver CfPS effective scrutiny principles?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy makers and decision makers • Drives improvement in public services.
<p>Any co-optees or expert witnesses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •