

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY  
2012**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Blackmore (Chairman)  
Councillors Brindle, Butler, Field, FitzGerald,  
D Mortimer, Mrs Parvin, Paterson and Mrs Stockell

**120. The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast.**

**It was resolved** that all items on the agenda be webcast

**121. Apologies.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hinder and Yates

**122. Notification of Substitute Members.**

Councillors Brindle and Butler substituted for Councillors Yates and Hinder respectively.

**123. Notification of Visiting Members.**

There were no Visiting Members.

**124. Disclosures by Members and Officers:**

The following Members declared an interest in item 7, Safer Maidstone Partnership – Neighbourhood Action Planning:

- Councillor FitzGerald, Chairman of Fusion Healthy Living Centre;
- Councillor Mrs Stockell, Member of Kent Police Authority; and
- Councillors Mortimer, FitzGerald and Stockell and Members of the Locality Board.

**125. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.**

It was agreed that all items should be taken in public as proposed.

**126. Safer Maidstone Partnership - Neighbourhood Action Planning**

The Chairman welcomed Sarah Robson, Community Partnerships Manager, Jim Boot, Community Development Manager, Inspector Prodger, Kent Police, Ian Summer, Kick Kent and Charlie Beaumont, Youth Offending Service.

Sarah Robson, Community Partnerships Manager updated the Committee on the Safer Maidstone Partnership. She explained that the Local Strategic Partnership had dissolved in September 2011 and had been replaced with the Locality Board. The Locality Board would be reviewing and streamlining the thematic delivery groups which included the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP). They would develop action focused work plans against the priorities set and there would be an emphasis on a task and finish approach. The Committee were informed that the SMP's priorities remained the same:

- Anti Social Behaviour;
- Domestic Abuse;
- Substance Abuse; and
- Road Safety.

In April 2010 the SMP's statutory requirements were expanded to include the formulation and implementation of a strategy for reoffending. It was explained that reoffending would be considered in all work undertaken by the SMP and would become an adopted priority. The SMP were currently working on its Annual Strategic Assessment and a three year Partnership Plan which would establish the for the borough.

Inspector Prodger from Kent Police, described the changes to policing since November 2011. The Borough was now divided into three areas of command and Inspector Prodger was responsible for the western area of the borough which included Park Wood. There was a focus on neighbourhood policing with Sergeants and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) given ownership of specific areas. He informed Members that this provided Officers with the opportunity to liaise with partners and actively work with local residents to develop a local knowledge. He told Members that it was early days but he felt it was more effective approach. Statistically Crime was up on the same period the previous year but had gone down since November 2011. The Officer felt this was attributed to a combination of working with communities, intelligent units and reactive CID (Criminal Investigations Department). Members considered the impact of Neighbourhood Action Planning on crime. Inspector Prodger told the Committee that from a Police perspective it was important to know that diversionary activities existed as Officers had an opportunity to signpost young people to them. He felt that activities were helping and had a positive effect on crime and anti social behaviour. He explained that there had been a decrease in cases of criminal damage which was largely associated with anti social behaviour and an increase in violent crime that could be related to a rise in reported cases of Domestic Abuse which was seen as a positive outcome. The Committee felt that it would be beneficial to have a breakdown of crime figures across the borough included anti social behaviour.

Jim Boot, Community Development Officer informed Members on the Park Wood Neighbourhood Action Plan 2010-1015. He explained that it was a pilot scheme that had been developed with 600 residents. Approximately 2,800 issues had been raised, many of which were associated with

community safety and crime. The methodology used was 'Planning for Real' which involved creating a 3D model of the area with residents and wider engagement through road show events.

Members were informed that Kick Kent were commissioned by Maidstone Borough Council to deliver football sessions on a Wednesday evening in Park Wood, Coxheath and Shepway. This was a diversionary activity for young people. Kick Kent incorporated tackling difficult behaviours and the issues faced by young people into their sessions. Ian Summers from Kick Kent explained that the sessions had been running since September 2011 and were well attended.

The Committee were informed that boxing was a new activity to Park Wood and would be delivered jointly with the Police. Members observed that sports activities did not reach everyone and questioned whether there were any other types of interventions on offer such as arts and drama activities. Members were told that Eddie Walsh from Kent Youth Service had made a successful bid for funding to deliver arts activities at Fusion's Youth Cafe.

The Committee considered Fusion Healthy Living Centre and the Youth Cafe. Councillor FitzGerald, Chairman of Fusion, informed Members that funding was needed to keep the centre open. He explained that staffing the Youth Cafe on a Thursday evening was a problem as a minimum of two staff were required. It had been agreed that the staff would be provided by Kent Youth Service but this was not always possible due to their own staffing issues. It was highlighted that Kent Youth Service also provided detached Youth Workers in the area on a Wednesday evening but that better communication between partners was needed to as this was not widely known.

Charlie Beaumont from Youth Offending Service, explained that he dealt with young people from Shepway North and Park Wood. He told Members that he would like to see a more coordinated approach between partners in dealing with young people and was encouraged by the new requirements of the SMP to address reoffending. He explained that there would be a more joined up approach taken by Kent Youth Service and Youth Offending Service as the two areas were to be integrated. The services were going through a transformation and there would be some delay in service provision but the result would be a more co-ordinated approach. Mr Beaumont volunteered to take forward the issues raised regarding staffing at the Youth Cafe and detached youth work in the area. It was felt that especially where young people were concerned there was need to follow through on commitments made as they could become disenchanted very quickly. Mr Beaumont informed Members that he would supply further information on youth re offending detailing age, gender, offences and interventions via the Scrutiny Officer.

Members questioned the role of the mobile Gateway. The need for this had been identified as part of the engagement with residents in Neighbourhood Action Planning. The mobile Gateway was an events unit and was being used one day a month for six months on a trial basis.

Members were informed that there were on average thirty five detailed enquiries per day. The unit had Wi-Fi access which was used to demonstrate the Council's website and the services available to residents online. Detailed Benefits and Housing enquires were dealt with at the Fusion Healthy Living Centre as Wi-Fi could not be for accessing confidential information. Different venues for the mobile Gateway had been trialled including Bellwood School. It was found that the mobile Gateway was most successful when positioned at the Park Wood parade. There was involvement from a number of different agencies including Kent County Council, Golding Homes, Connexions, along with the Council's Gateway staff. At the end of the six month trial the success of the service would be evaluated. Officers explained that a consideration to be made was whether the mobile Gateway would be better used in more remote areas of the borough such as Marden and Staplehurst as Park Wood was situated close to the Town Centre. Some Members felt that 'financial ability' was part of the reason it was important to Park Wood. The return bus fare was in excess of £2 to the Town Centre which was felt to be a significant part of a resident's income.

Members queried the engagement with Housing providers such as Golding Homes in the pilot Neighbourhood Action Plan. The Committee were informed that Golding Homes held a drop-in session at Fusion Healthy Living Centre every Thursday. Mr Boot informed Members that Golding Homes had been supportive of the Park Wood Neighbourhood Action Plan and had made financial contributions. He explained that their staff were frequently involved with activities and there was already a strong level of engagement.

The Committee felt that it was important to have a representative from Golding Homes at its next meeting. Mr Summers told Members that Golding Homes had initially been involved with Kick Kent in Park Wood and had invested money in the project. He felt that it would be helpful to have their involvement with Kick Kent to provide background information on the young people involved which would assist their work.

It was felt that the issues raised by residents in the Park Wood Action Plan were problems that existed across the borough and it would remain a challenge for partners to maintain service provisions in the current economic climate. Members queried the effect of funding cuts. Mrs Robson explained that with such a significant reduction in the Home Office Grant (from £200,000 to approximately £47,000) which would impact on Kent Police, Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council which is why a partnership approach was important. She informed the Committee that the setting of priorities by the Locality Board was key to avoiding duplication. Members were informed that the Community Safety Unit met on a weekly basis to address issues but larger, priority issues would be addressed by the Locality Board at its March meeting and action plans would be devised.

Mr Boot informed Members that the Council were currently building the capacity of communities to access funding and training. A Health Champions training course was currently being offered which was as a

result of the consultation process with residents. Residents felt they would prefer to hear from someone they could relate to. Members felt that this example clearly demonstrated Maidstone Borough Council's role as a 'facilitator' and the Committee considered whether the Council should be developing this role further. Members were informed that part of the Council's Community Development Strategy was to build the capacity of communities. It was suggested that Fusion, for example, could in time be run by the local community.

The Committee questioned whether Neighbourhood Action Planning would be taken to other areas of the borough. The Officer explained that Park Wood was a pilot and in addition to this Parish plans offered an experience of resident led initiatives which could be translated into an urban setting. Within the Council's Strategic Plan was an ambition to develop Neighbourhood Action Plans in other areas.

Communication across the borough and the issue of the public's perception of Community Safety was discussed. Members were informed that the SMP were keen to improve public confidence through improved communication. Members felt that a communications plan was important and also commented on the 'You said, We did' update included in the Park Wood Action Plan update. It was felt that this approach could be used in a newsletter to residents as a means of letting them know what was being achieved.

Members were concerned that other areas of the borough could be overlooked with the focus on Park Wood. Mrs Robson informed Members that the Safer Maidstone Partnership responded to a variety of issues across the borough. The Officer highlighted Kent County Council wardens who were focused on the needs of rural communities. In addition to Neighbourhood Action Planning in Park Wood, youth activities were run in anti social behaviour hotspots across the borough in areas such as Headcorn and the Town Centre. They were described as responsive services that were commissioned and developed with the Community Safety Unit and Kent Police.

Members discussed communication channels. It was felt that information needed to be brought together and a collaborative approach taken. A Member highlighted Multi Agency Planning (MAPS) meetings that were taking place in Park Wood.

It was noted that the minutes of the previous Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting had not been included as an item on the agenda, having being approved by the Parent Committee at an earlier meeting. It was noted that the protocol should be that the minutes be agreed by the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee and included in its agenda.

**It was recommended that:**

- a) Clarification on the staffing commitment from Kent Youth Services to supply two volunteers to the Youth Cafe held at Fusion Healthy

Living Centre on a Thursday evening should be sought by the Scrutiny Officer and assurance that this requirement will be built into their future programme of services;

- b) Kent Youth Services should provide an update on detached Youth Work in Park Wood and other areas of the borough;
- c) Mr Beaumont, should supply the Committee with information on the intervention successes of Kent Youth Services and the Youth Offending Service;
- d) An analysis of the usage of the Mobile Gateway should be undertaken to help demine whether it should be used in other areas of the borough;
- e) A representative from Golding Homes should be invited to attend Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 13 March 2012 and feedback should be given to Kick Kent;
- f) Inspector Prodger should provide the Committee with crime data by ward that includes incidences of Anti Social Behaviour;
- g) Maidstone Borough Council should develop its role as 'facilitator' by encouraging and supporting community groups to access funding not available to the Council; and
- h) The Safer Maidstone Partnership should develop a communication plan to help raise the public perception of the successful way crime and other high priority issues are being dealt. This should include a 'You said, we did' style newsletter.

**127. INFORMATION ONLY: Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Protocols**

**128. Duration of the Meeting**

6.38 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.