

AGENDA

COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING



Overview and Scrutiny

Date: Tuesday 17 July 2012
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street,
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors: Mrs Blackmore (Chairman), Brindle,
Mrs Joy, D Mortimer, McLoughlin,
Munford, Mrs Parvin, Vizzard and
De Wiggondene

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1. **The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast.**
2. **Apologies.**
3. **Notification of Substitute Members.**
4. **Notification of Visiting Members.**

Continued Over/:

Issued on 9 July 2012

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Alison Broom

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6JQ**

5. Disclosures by Members and Officers:	
a) Disclosures of interest.	
b) Disclosures of lobbying.	
c) Disclosures of whipping.	
6. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.	
7. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2012	1 - 3
8. Local Council Tax Scheme & the Impact of Welfare Reforms	4 - 6
Interviews with:	
• Zena Cooke, Director Of Regeneration and Communities;	
• Steve McGinnes, Head of Revenues & Benefits Shared Service; and	
• Jillie Smithies, Director of Operations, Golding Homes.	
9. Appointment of Joint Health Sub Committee	7
10. Forward Plan of Key Decisions and Future Work Programme	8 - 17

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 MAY 2012

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Blackmore (Chairman)
Councillors Brindle, Mrs Joy, D Mortimer, Mrs Parvin,
McLoughlin, Munford, Vizzard and de Wiggondene

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

It was resolved that all items be webcast.

2. Apologies.

There were no apologies.

3. Notification of Substitute Members.

There were no Substitute Members.

4. Notification of Visiting Members.

There were no Visiting Members.

5. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

It was resolved that:

- a) Councillor Annabelle Blackmore be appointed as Chairman for the municipal year 2012-13; and
- b) Councillor Derek Mortimer be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2012-13.

6. Disclosures by Members and Officers:

There were no disclosures.

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

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

8. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2012

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2012 be agreed as correct record of the meeting and duly signed.

9. Work Programming Workshop

Angela Woodhouse, Head of Change and Scrutiny gave Members a presentation entitled, 'Making an Impact'. The Officer's presentation outlined the Council's vision and commitment to residents and the Centre for Public Scrutiny's four governing principles for effective scrutiny, illustrating scrutiny's purpose and what could be achieved by Members. Mrs Woodhouse explained the new ways of working for scrutiny as agreed by the scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee at the end of the 2011/12 Municipal Year. These included bi-monthly meetings with Member led working groups for review topics. It was clarified that scrutiny had a £2,000 budget for expert witnesses and review expenses.

The Committee was informed that the scrutiny team would be offering a scrutiny surgery on a monthly basis, alternating between a daytime and evening meeting. This would provide members with an opportunity to discuss their work programme with the team and request or collect information and research.

The Committee considered its future work programme and the suggested review topics put forward by staff, Councillors and residents. It was agreed that the following suggestions should be passed on to the Committee with the appropriate the terms of reference:

- Neighbourhood Plans;
- Planning Enforcement; and
- Maidstone Borough Council Communications.

The Gypsy and Traveller sites review was considered to be a cross cutting topic and it was therefore felt it should be a joint review with Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny with the Committee's consent.

The Committee selected the following topics for its work programme:

- Police - reduction in numbers;
- CCTV;
- Community Buses and rural transport;
- Youth Services;
- Revenues and Benefits (the impact of Welfare Reforms);
- Housing and Housing Associations;
- Litter;
- Water and Waste (holding the Environment Agency to account); and
- Night Time Economic (Anti-Social Behaviour and the elderly).

Councillor Mrs Joy informed Members that she would circulate a Licensing report in relation to the night time economy for the Committee's information.

It was decided that the two meetings of the year where the Committee

had a statutory role to act as the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee and scrutinise the Safer Maidstone Partnership should be utilised to focus on:

- CCTV and police numbers; and
- The night time economy.

It was also noted that the Committee may have to reinstate further meeting dates to accommodate for this additional role, beginning with a meeting in October.

It was agreed a written update should be requested on Litter, focusing on resident satisfaction levels in the borough, enforcement issues including the use of XFor, litter thrown from vehicles and the possibility of using the media to name culprits.

Members were appointed to a Water and Waste review working group and a Youth Services review working group. Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Mrs Parvin, De Wiggondene and Vizzard volunteered for the Water and Waste working group and Councillors Mrs Blackmore and McLaughlin volunteered for the Youth Services working group.

Members were informed that there would be a scrutiny Member training session on 19th June at 6.30 p.m. at the Town Hall.

It was resolved that:

- a) The July Meeting should focus on Revenues and Benefits and the timescales for the implementation of the local Council Tax scheme should be investigated by Councillor Mrs Joy and the scrutiny officer;
- b) Housing and Housing Associations should be the focus of the September meeting with research conducted by Members;
- c) A Water and Waste working group should be established to review the topic;
- d) A Youth Services Working Group should be established to review the topic;
- e) A written update should be sought by the Scrutiny Officer on Litter;
- f) The agreement of the Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be sought for a joint review on Gypsy and Traveller sites;
- g) The Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee should meet in October to focus on CCTV and police numbers; and
- h) Community Buses should be the focus of one meeting, held in the rural area.

10. Duration of Meeting

6.30 p.m. to 8.07 p.m.

Agenda Item 8

Maidstone Borough Council

Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 17 July 2012

Local Council Tax Scheme & the Impact of Welfare Reforms.

Report of: Overview & Scrutiny Officer

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its first meeting of the Municipal Year the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to examine the impact of current changes to Revenues and Benefits Services as a result of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which was given royal assent on 8 March 2012.
- 1.2 The Chairman felt it appropriate to receive a verbal update on the Local Council Tax Scheme which will be approved by Cabinet on 18 July 2012 in order for the Committee to have an input into the decision making process.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee is recommended to consider the Local Council Tax Scheme and make recommendations as appropriate.
- 2.2 That the Committee consider the wider impact of Welfare Reforms, in line with the areas of responsibility within its remit, and the impact on residents. Members are recommended to interview Zena Cooke, Director of Regeneration & Communities, Steve McGinnes, Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service and Jillie Smithies, Director of Operations, Golding Homes.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee's remit is closely aligned with the Council's priority area, 'For Maidstone to be a decent place to live'. This Committee has an expansive remit that includes Revenues and Benefits, Housing and Vulnerable people and deprivation.
- 3.2 The Local Council Tax Scheme is the latest challenge for the Council in the Government's Welfare Reforms. The amendments to the Housing Benefit Scheme were phased in from April 2011-13; the creation of New Universal Credit is ongoing and will result in the transfer of Housing Benefit to the Department of Work and

Pensions; and the New Local Scheme for Council Tax due to be implemented in April 2013. It is important that the Committee gain an informed understanding of these ongoing changes to assist it in its ongoing role.

- 3.3 In its 2010 Spending Review the Government announced that it would localise support for council tax from 2013-14, reducing expenditure by 10%. From April 2013 a fixed amount of money will be provided to local authorities by central Government to operate new Local Council Tax schemes. Pensioners will be protected against any reduction in support, so savings will have to be made from the assistance the working-age population receives with their Council Tax. It will be up to the individual councils to decide exactly how to achieve these savings within the design of their scheme.
- 3.4 The Kent Finance Officers and Kent Benefit Managers, in its report to the Kent Forum on 23 March 2012, endorsed a common scheme 'where pensioners are protected in full and working age claimants would have to pay the additional 20% of their Council Tax Bill.'
- 3.5 The Committee may wish to consider the following challenges faced by local authorities in devising a scheme.
 - Prevention of a 'postcode lottery' whereby a person may receive assistance in one locality and not in another;
 - Protecting vulnerable groups who cannot increase their income through work; and
 - Ensuring that the message of Universal Credit: 'better off in work' is given whilst withdrawing support from people of a working age.

4. Housing

- 4.1 Maidstone Borough Council transferred its Housing Stock to Golding Homes, formally Maidstone Housing Trust, in 2004. Golding Homes are one of many Register Social Landlords (RSLs) operating in Maidstone. They own and manage approximately 6, 500 properties in Maidstone and Tunbridge and Malling.
- 4.2 The Committee may wish to discuss the impact Welfare Reforms have had so far on Golding Homes tenants and the renewed challenges they face with the implementation of a Local Council Tax Scheme.
- 4.3 Members may wish to explore the following areas of discussion:
 - How tenants are kept informed of changes to Benefits as a result of Welfare Reforms?
 - How Maidstone Borough Council works with RSLs in a joined up manner to keep residents informed?
 - How do Golding Homes overcome Fraud issues such as subletting?

- How are Golding Homes helping to reinforce the Government's message 'better off in work'.

5. Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 5.1 The Committee will consider reports that deliver against the following Council priorities:
- 'For Maidstone to be a decent place to live.'
- 5.2 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.

Maidstone Borough Council

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 17 July 2012

Appointment of Joint Health Sub Committee

Report of: Head of Change and Scrutiny

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Maidstone's Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules include an agreed protocol for overview and scrutiny of local NHS bodies. It states that 'the protocols are based on the principles that Overview and Scrutiny should minimise the additional administrative burdens on local authorities or NHS bodies.' Furthermore, the protocol also states that District Councils should coordinate or have joint committees to consider local service issues to ensure cross-district issues are dealt with jointly. Having a joint health sub committee would therefore enable this.
- 1.2 The first item of the year would be to consider the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Draft Annual Quality Account Statement. The Committee could also consider carrying out review work where there was shared interest.
- 1.3 The Committee could choose not to form a joint health sub committee with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council; instead both Committees would hold separate meetings with NHS authorities. However this would be contrary to the agreed protocol to minimise the administrative burdens of Overview and Scrutiny on local NHS authorities.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee:
 - Agrees to form a joint Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Health Sub Committee; and
 - Nominates three representatives onto the Committee.

Agenda Item 10

Maidstone Borough Council

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 17 July 2012

Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions

Report of: Overview & Scrutiny Officer

1. Introduction

- 1.1 To consider the Committee's future work programme and the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.
- 1.2 To consider the update on the work programme given by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee considers the draft future work programme, attached at **Appendix A**, to ensure that it is appropriate and covers all issues Members currently wish to consider within the Committee's remit. Items on the draft future work programme, highlighted in red, are provisional items for the Committee to approve.
- 2.2 That the Committee considers the sections of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions relevant to the Committee and discuss whether these are items require further investigation or monitoring by the Committee.

3 Future Work Programme

- 3.1 Throughout the course of the municipal year the Committee is asked to put forward work programme suggestions. These suggestions are planned into its annual work programme. Members are asked to consider the work programme at each meeting to ensure that remains appropriate and covers all issues Members currently wish to consider within the Committee's remit.
- 3.2 The Committee is reminded that the Constitution states under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules number 9: Agenda items that 'Any Member of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub-Committee shall be entitled to give notice to the proper officer that he wishes an item relevant to the functions of the Committee or Sub-Committee to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting. On receipt of such a request the proper officer will ensure that it is included on the next available agenda.'

4 Forward Plan of Key Decisions

4.1 The Forward Plan for 1 July 2012 to 31 October 2012 (**Appendix B**) contains the following decisions relevant to the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee's current work programme and terms of reference:

- Empty Homes Plan Scoping Report;
- Public Gypsy & Traveller Site: process update;
- Localism & the Community Right to challenge and bid;
- Policy changes for New Waste Collection Contract; and
- Empty Homes Plan.

5. Working Groups Update

5.1 At its first meeting of the Municipal Year the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointed Members for two review Working Groups: Water and Waste Water and Youth Services. The Committee should consider the verbal updates given by both Working Groups and make recommendations if appropriate.

6. Impact on Corporate Objectives

6.1 The Committee will consider reports that deliver against the following Council priority:

- 'For Maidstone to be a decent place to live.'

6.2 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. Actions to deliver these key objectives may therefore include work that the Committee will consider over the next year.

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2012-13

Meeting Date	Agenda Items	Details and desired outcome
23 May 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman • Work programming workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint Chairman and Vice-Chairman for 2012-13 • Select and develop review topics focusing on achievable outcomes.
17 July 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Council Tax Scheme • Appoint of Joint Health Sub Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider the update given on the Local Council Tax Scheme and make recommendations ahead of a report being taken to Cabinet • Members to be appointed to the Joint Health Sub Committee with Tunbridge Wells
11 September 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
09 October 2012 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing its statutory role acting as the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinising the Safer Maidstone Partnership. Review or scrutinise decisions made or other actions taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authoritiesⁱ of the crime and disorder functions.
13 November 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Buses • Litter – Written Update • Water and Waste Water Review • Youth Services Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
15 January 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
12 March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing its statutory role acting as the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinising the Safer Maidstone Partnership. Review or scrutinise decisions made or other actions taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authoritiesⁱⁱ of the crime and disorder functions.

Appendix A

ⁱ “The responsible authorities means the bodies and persons who are responsible authorities within the meaning given by section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (c.37) (authorities responsible for crime and disorder strategies) in relation to local authority’s area.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

FORWARD PLAN

12

**1 July 2012 to
31 October 2012**

**Councillor Christopher Garland
Leader of the Council**



Forward Plan July 2012 - October 2012

INTRODUCTION

This is the Forward Plan which the Leader of the Council is required to prepare. Its purpose is to give advance notice of all the “key decisions” which the Executive is likely to take over the next 4 month period. The Plan will be up-dated monthly.

Each “key decision” is the subject of a separate entry in the Plan. The entries are arranged in date order – i.e. the “key decisions” likely to be taken during the first month of the 4 month period covered by the Plan appear first.

Each entry identifies, for that “key decision” –

- the subject matter of the decision
- a brief explanation of why it will be a “key decision”
- the date on which the decision is due to be taken
- who will be consulted before the decision is taken and the method of the consultation
- how and to whom representations (about the decision) can be made
- what reports/papers are, or will be, available for public inspection
- the wards to be affected by this decision

DEFINITION OF A KEY DECISION

A key decision is an executive decision which is likely to:

- Result in the Maidstone Borough Council incurring expenditure or making savings which is equal to the value of £250,000 or more; or
- Have significant effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in Maidstone.

**Forward Plan
July 2012 - October 2012**

HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?

The Council encourages and welcomes anyone wishing to express his or her views about decisions the Cabinet plans to make. This can be done by writing directly to the appropriate Officer or Cabinet Member (the details of which are shown for each decision to be made).

Alternatively, the Cabinet are contactable via our [website](#) where you can submit a question to the Leader of the Council. There is also the opportunity to invite the Leader of the Council to speak at a function you may be organising.

**Forward Plan
July 2012 - October 2012**

Decision Maker, Date of Decision/Month in which decision will be made and, if delayed, reason for delay:	Title of Report and Brief Summary of Decision to be made:	Consultees and Method:	Contact Officer and deadline for submission of enquiries:	Relevant Documents:
Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services Due Date: 2 Jul 2012	Empty Homes Plan Scoping Report To consider the options available to update the Council's interventions relating to empty homes.	Members and Officers internal consultation	John Littlemore, Head of Housing & Community Safety johnlittlemore@maidstone.gov.uk 28 June 2012	Cabinet Member Report for Empty Homes Plan Scoping Report
Cabinet Due Date: 11 Jul 2012	Public Gypsy & Traveller Site: process update Report to consider and agree next steps in the process of delivering 15 additional public Gypsy & Traveller pitches in the borough by 2015.	Forward Plan recipients Forward Plan	Rob Jarman, Head of Development Management, John Littlemore, Head of Housing & Community Safety Robjarman@maidstone.gov.uk , johnlittlemore@maidstone.gov.uk 25 June 2012	Exempt Cabinet, Council or Committee Report for Public Gypsy & Traveller Site: process update

**Forward Plan
July 2012 - October 2012**

Decision Maker and Date of Decision/Month in which decision will be made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary of Decision to be made:	Consultees and Method:	Contact Officer and deadline for submission of enquiries:	Relevant Documents:
<p>Cabinet</p> <p>Due Date: 11 Jul 2012</p>	<p>Localism and the Community Rights to Challenge and Bid</p> <p>To set out the possible approaches the Council wishes to take in implementing these new powers.</p>		<p>David Tibbit davidtibbit@maidstone.gov.uk</p> <p>22nd June 2012</p>	<p>Cabinet, Council or Committee Report for Localism and the Community Rights to Challenge and Bid</p>
<p>Cabinet Member for Environment</p> <p>Due Date: 31 Jul 2012</p>	<p>Policy Changes for New Waste Collection Contract</p> <p>To consider a range of changes proposed as part of the new waste collection contract to improve efficiency, health and safety and cost effectiveness of the waste collection services.</p>	<p>Garden waste retailers; service users; partnering authorities; contractors; Health and Safety Executive Service feedback received; Health and Safety Inspection; Letters; informal discussions; roadshows</p>	<p>Steve Goulette, Assistant Director of Environment & Regulatory Services Stevegoulette@maidstone.gov.uk</p> <p>30th June 2012</p>	<p>Cabinet Member Report for Policy Changes for New Waste Collection Contract</p>

**Forward Plan
July 2012 - October 2012**

Decision Maker and Date of Decision/Month in which decision will be made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary of Decision to be made:	Consultees and Method:	Contact Officer and deadline for submission of enquiries:	Relevant Documents:
<p>Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services</p> <p>Due Date: 21 Sep 2012</p>	<p>Empty Homes Plan</p> <p>To consider the detail of the Council's intervention in respect of empty homes</p>	<p>Members and Officers internal consultation</p>	<p>John Littlemore, Head of Housing & Community Safety johnlittlemore@maidstone.gov.uk</p> <p>31 August 2012</p>	<p>Cabinet Member Report for Empty Homes Plan</p>