

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY 2 MARCH 2010

REPORT OF HEAD OF CHANGE AND SCRUTINY

Report prepared by Louise Smith

1. CONSULTATION

1.1 Issue for Consideration

1.1.1 To consider the Council's consultation methods and tool-kit.

1.2 Recommendation of Head of Change and Scrutiny

1.2.1 That the Committee considers the Council's consultation methods and tool-kit and makes recommendations if required.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 At the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 June 2009, Members considered potential items for the Committee work programme and "Members felt it was important to review consultation to ensure it was conducted appropriately and effectively¹".

1.3.2 At the Committee's meeting on 2 February 2010, Members considered their future work programme. The relevant extract from the draft minutes of the meeting is as follows:

"A Councillor requested that, as part of the 'Council Consultation' item at the 2 March 2010 meeting, consultation with Councillors be considered, as currently some information sessions were being referred to as consultation, and giving information was not the same as meaningful consultation."

Individual service managers are responsible for consulting councillors on forthcoming decisions, however overall responsibility for this lies

¹ Minutes of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 June 2009.

with the Democratic Services Manager, Neil Harris. Mr Harris was unable to attend the meeting this evening, however this issue can be carried forward to the April meeting.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The Committee could decide not to review the Council’s consultation methods, however as the Strategic Plan 2009-12 highlights, “it is important that we engage effectively with communities, share information, listen to views and then plan and deliver services that people want and can easily access”; Overview and Scrutiny can help to ensure that Council consultation is effective by considering the Council’s approach to consultation in its role as a ‘critical friend’.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 Under the key objective “continue to improve access to services”, one of the next steps is to “ensure that the council continues to keep residents informed about the results of consultation (e.g. through Borough Update and Cabinet Road shows)”.

1.5.2 The Council also states its intention to deliver services that residents want, therefore the Council’s consultation processes must be fit-for-purpose.

1.6 Other Implications

1.6.1

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
- 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

1.7 Relevant Documents

Consultation Tool-Kit

Information on consultations carried out 2008-09 and 2009-10.