

Partnerships and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 11 January 2011

Written Update from Cabinet Member for Community Services

Introduction

The greatest challenge for Community Services this year, has been preparing for the budget cuts that Maidstone Borough Council has had to consider as a result of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review.

This has resulted in a proposed 30% reduction in the Concurrent Functions Grant to Parishes for 2011/12, and for a review of the system to be carried out in consultation with the Parishes, starting in January 2011.

The cost of the Council's CCTV service provision is also being reviewed, with a range of options identified, including a shared service proposal from Medway Council to join a shared control centre based in Medway.

However, despite the financial challenge, it is my intention to limit reductions in funding for current Voluntary Sector SLA services to those that have minimal impact. However, the SLAs will be reviewed to include tighter monitoring and evaluation controls.

Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

December saw the launch of the **Local Children's Trust** as a delivery group of the LSP, an arrangement to support local involvement being piloted with KCC. The group will take the lead for the children and young people's agenda in Maidstone Borough. It will support the priorities of tackling child and family poverty, worklessness, reducing teenage conceptions and improving road safety.

The **Safer Maidstone Partnership** is now established as a delivery group of the LSP, and has identified as its priorities Anti Social Behaviour, Domestic Abuse, Road Safety and Substance Misuse. It held the first LSP Stakeholder event in early November, focussing on Domestic Abuse service provision in the Borough. The event was attended by over 90 people and was very well received, bringing together expert speakers and practitioners to provide best practise case studies, including Connexions, which supports young people in abusive relationships and the Rising Sun Domestic Violence Project, which runs a prevention programme in schools. Service and policy updates were provided in relation to key issues such as legal remedies for families, support for male victims and perpetrators, housing options and women's support services. Helen Grant MP gave a keynote address to demonstrate her support in this vital area of concern.

The **Health and Wellbeing** group were pleased with the performance of the Council's Community Development team, in the area of weight management, with

over 100 adults accessing programmes in the Borough. Families with children identified with weight problems access a specific programme with referrals from GPs, Occupational Health, School nurses and the Hospital. Mental health and wellbeing for older people is being addressed by the provision of a new counselling service for the over 50s.

Health Matters

With the abolition of the Primary Care Trust only a few years away, the recent Heath White Paper has outlined the future role of GP consortia as well as the role of local authorities for public health matters. It is likely that there will be 2 consortia covering Maidstone borough and links are being established to ensure there is good communication and joint planning going forward. Given the scale and range of changes being proposed there is likely to be some disruption over the next two years in terms of funding and service delivery. Through the LSP, I will be ensuring that the council is fully involved in securing the best funding and service delivery proposals for Maidstone borough.

We heard on 22 December 2010 from the Secretary of State, that he supports the Strategic Health Authorities plans to relocate consultant led maternity services from Maidstone Hospital to Pembury Hospital. MBC and partners will continue to fight this move and Helen Grant will table her Parliamentary objections. Whatever the outcome I am clear that we will work with the relevant partners to ensure that the interests of Maidstone borough's residents are protected and their needs met.

Neighbourhood Forums

The Neighbourhood Forums were launched in November and will be piloted for one year across four areas within the Borough. Each forum consists of a selection of County, Borough and Parish Councillors, other service providers such as Kent police, Kent Fire and Rescue etc., and Community Groups. Residents are invited to attend the forums on a quarterly basis to question, learn and influence local services and plans, and to raise issues involving their local area. I will be reviewing the effectiveness of the Forums to ensure they are achieving their objectives and serving the interests of residents.

Events in brief

A highly successful '**Uprockin**' took place at South Park including music, skateboarding and BMX biking.

The **SWITCH** Youth café continues to flourish and elections took place in November for the **Maidstone Youth Forum** which for the first time, had a candidate each representing a different secondary school.

The **Try Angle** awards took place at Mote Park Leisure Centre to celebrate the achievements of some truly inspirational young people.

Peace One Day and **Maidstone Mela** took place in September, and despite horrendous weather, attracted huge crowds.

Another successful series of **HOTFOOT** Play schemes took place in August to the great delight and benefit of the children **and** parents attending.

The **Older Persons' Forum**, which includes a welcome lunch, continues to be well attended and a source of enjoyment for all those attending. It always encourages 'healthy debate' on a range of topics among those taking part.

The **Annual Parish Conference** took place in October at Lenham and was voted a huge success by the Parishes attending.

Cllr JOHN A Wilson