

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 20 NOVEMBER
2012**

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

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

It was resolved that all items be webcast.

50. Apologies.

Apologies were received from Councillor Mortimer.

51. Notification of Substitute Members.

Councillor Grigg substituted for Councillor Mortimer.

52. Notification of Visiting Members.

There were no Visiting Members.

53. Disclosures by Members and Officers.

Councillor Grigg made a disclosure of interest by virtue of her appointment as Vice-Chairman of the Housing Consultative Board in relation to item 9 on the agenda, Change to the Allocation Scheme.

54. 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.

55. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2012.

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2012 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed.

56. Update on the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group

Dr Bob Bowes and Ian Ayres of the West Kent Clinical Commission Group (CCG) provided an update on the progress of CCGs (**Appendix A**). Members were informed of the following:

- There were 212 CCGs across England;
- £5m in efficiency savings were made this year which would exceed the target for the year but there would still be a gap;
- West Kent had 62 GP practices that have been amalgamated into 12 CCGs;
- Engagement with public and patients was a critical part of the role of CCGs; and
- Despite being an affluent area there were health inequalities and areas of deprivation in West Kent.

It was explained that there was a requirement (as part of plans to modernise the NHS under the Health and Social Care Act 2012) to have a top tier Health and Well Being Board (HWBB). Dr Bowes told the Committee it would be preferential to establish a HWBB for each CCG.

In response to Members questions on the funding inequalities that existed across Kent, it was explained that the formula for the allocation of funding was on the Department of Health's website. The Committee questioned whether the formula was correct and representative of the population's needs. Mr Ayres told the Committee that there were indications of a new 'fair share' approach to funding in the future but could offer no further information on this at present.

The Committee considered the integration of social care with public health. They were informed that this was being done but it could be done better. A positive example was given at Maidstone Hospital where patients moved into the care of the Community Care Trust and out of acute care where an assessment was made on the patient's requirements in order to return home. The move was seamless from the patient's point of view and made more beds available.

The Committee considered the strategy of prevention in health and the way in which this would be reflected in NHS expenditure. It would place an emphasis on community care rather than acute care. Members were advised that the way to move funding was to move the activity i.e. in delivering community care. This would form part of the commissioning priorities of the HWBB and would be driven by the JSNA. The JSNA would go down to ward level, drawing from GP information and Local Government data.

Members considered possible overlaps occurring in public health and how they could become involved in the changes taking place. The Committee were advised of Patient Participation Groups which were set up in all GP surgeries, the Chairs of these groups were invited to regular meetings with the CCG. The importance of organisations working together with local councils to determine local priorities was emphasised and the Committee felt Maidstone Borough Council had an opportunity to take the lead on this by engaging with all GPs as early as possible.

It was resolved that:

- a) Maidstone Borough Council's Public Health Officer engage with all GP's in the borough, providing an early opportunity to feed into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and to support the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in its delivery of this; and
- b) The Scrutiny Officer establish how Members can become involved in Patient Participation Groups in their locality.

57. Change to the Allocation Scheme

John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services introduced the draft Allocation Scheme. He explained that the previous points system to measure housing need had become complex and difficult to understand as well as to administrate. It had been in place for 10 years and adapted over that period of time. Mr Littlemore highlighted the following points in his verbal update:

- The new scheme was in line with the Council's priorities;
- The scheme promoted the Council's priorities and was easy to understand;
- The new scheme was categorised by 'bands' as outlined in 1.2.12 of the document;
- Provisos such as a local connection and the definition of a housing need were defined in statute;
- There was an emphasis on making a positive contribution to the community which was promoting the Council's priorities; and
- Band B, Community contribution, would have the largest allocation of vacancies.

Members felt that clarity was required in the document on community contributions and whether these had to be made locally. They Committee questioned what band applicants would be placed in if they had not made a community contribution and were informed this would be the general band for housing need. The Council would have a responsibility to help applicants improve their circumstances to move into another band. It was emphasised that the scheme encouraged people to be more active and positive but it would take time.

A Member aired concerns regarding the inclusion of foster care under community contributions. It was felt that this could encourage applicants to foster for the wrong reasons. The Committee considered the bedroom allocation criteria. It was explained that this was an area that was not defined in law. Members felt that this should be in line with recent Welfare Reform guidelines. It was highlighted that section 42 of the document only mentioned Golding Homes and should refer to all Housing Associations in Maidstone.

Members were supportive of the scheme and the shift towards work but concerns were raised about its effect on troubled households. The Committee asked to be provided with the actual number of troubled

families identified as part of the Troubled Families Programme and if possible, be provided with a breakdown by ward.

It was explained that every applicant on the housing list had been written to and had been engaged with online via Kent Homechoice and in the Gateway. The Committee were informed that its comments would be considered as part of the consultation which would end on 30 November 2012. Members questioned whether the consultation was available in any other format. They were informed that 94% of applicants used the internet, digital TV channels or mobile phones to look for accommodation.

It was felt that the scheme should be reviewed 6 months after implementation in October 2013 by the applicable Scrutiny Committee

It was resolved that:

- a) Section 42 of the draft Allocation Scheme makes reference to all Housing Associations in the borough;
- b) The Committee be provided with the actual number of Troubled Families/households identified in the borough and if possible a breakdown of these by ward;
- c) Section 14 of the Allocation Scheme, Bedroom Allocation, be brought into line with the guidance and specifications given under Welfare Reform;
- d) That clarity be given within the document on Community Contributions; whether or not contributions must be made locally;
- e) The Committee be provided with an actual figure for Housing applicants who use the internet to look for accommodation. This figure was estimated at 94% which was higher than expected; and
- f) Officers engage with Councillor Grigg to give proper consideration to her concerns regarding the inclusion of fostering under Community Contributions and the possibility that this could encourage applicants to foster children for the wrong reasons.

58. Future Work Programme

The Committee considered its future work programme and the List of Forthcoming Decisions.

It was agreed that the Committee should meet as the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its January meeting to consider the Community Safety Plan refresh.

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59. Duration of Meeting

6.30 p.m. to 8.40 p.m.