

Extract form Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee minutes, 7 August 2012.

Cabinet Priorities for the 2012-13 Municipal Year

The Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, Councillor John A Wilson, the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Marion Ring, the Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development, Councillor Malcolm Greer and the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development, Councillor Stephen Paine, outlined their priorities for the 2012-13 Municipal Year.

Housing was an area highlighted to the Committee by the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services. Members were informed that the new Empty Homes Strategy would seek to mitigate the risks brought about by the current economic situation. Parks and Open Spaces and in particular, Mote Park, was discussed. It was explained that the Mote Park Maintenance Plan was an opportunity to continue to develop the park over the next 10 years with a focus on events and volunteering.

Members of the Committee questioned whether Parks and Open Spaces would be impacted as a result of the implementation of the Parish Services Scheme. The Cabinet Member stated that details of the Scheme had not yet been finalised. He was asked if the customer satisfaction from recent surveys could be maintained, and he explained that currently customer satisfaction in Mote Park and Cobtree Park was high.

The final area of the Cabinet Member's portfolio discussed was Community priorities. Members were informed that Domestic Abuse and Road Safety were the two main areas being addressed.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment responded to Members questions on litter and street cleansing. The Committee discussed the responsive approach taken by the Council to reports of littering or requests for grass cutting. Councillor Ring explained that the first step with all reports would be to establish if it was an area Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) was responsible for. The Committee were informed that at the end of August officers from MBC would be meeting with officers at Kent County Council (KCC) to address recouping money spent by MBC responding to areas of KCC responsibility in the borough.

The Committee offered their congratulations to George Gray and his team for the excellent service offered.

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development informed the Committee of the successful opening of Jubilee Square which had been put forward for a Kent Design Award. He explained that the focus was on maximising all the Councils assets, including Jubilee Square. An Events Management provider was being sought to facilitate this.

Councillor Greer spoke of the encouraging rise in visitor numbers following the extension to the museum. The Committee were informed that the new wing had received an award from Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). The Cabinet

Member discussed options for driving the Visitor Economy forward including 'borrowing to invest'.

The success of the Olympic Torch events were noted by the Committee and Members offered their congratulation to officers.

Finally the Committee heard from the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development. He explained enormity of the decisions currently being made in relation to the Core Strategy and the importance of Member involvement.

With regards to transport issues the Cabinet Member told members that you could not discourage car use but it was important to have good bus and cycle routes in place.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was discussed and arrangements that had been made between neighbouring parishes who were coming together to improve their understanding. A Planning officer was to work with the parishes in an advisory capacity.

It was recommended that:

- a) All updates be noted; and
- b) An update on the progress of Events Management be sought from the Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development.