

ENVIRONMENT, SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

1 Background

- 1.1 The Select Committees are required to create a work programme for the next municipal year. The Scrutiny Team have contacted Parish and Town Councils, Councillors, and Officers to ask for suggestions for scrutiny reviews for the upcoming year. A notice was also sent to the press, an article placed in the borough magazine *ilocal*, and two advertisements placed on the front page of the Council website to gain public involvement. All suggestions received so far are outlined in this report for consideration for the work programme.
- 1.2 In order to provide some background information regarding priority areas and responsibilities included in this report is the following information:
- The Remits of the Select Committees (page 8.2);
 - Work undertaken by the Environment, Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee in the past municipal year (page 8.4);
 - The Centre for Public Scrutiny's four principles of effective scrutiny (page 8.5);
 - Suggested topics for review as submitted by 30 May 2008 (page 8.5).
 - Work Programme Table for 2008-9 (page 8.10);
 - The Forward Plan of Key Decisions as relevant to the Committee (to be discussed at the 12 June Cabinet meeting) (Page 8.11);
 - The Council's Corporate Priorities (page 8.15);
 - Details of Environment, Safer and Stronger Communities priorities as included in the Strategic Plan 2008-11 (Page 8.17).
- 1.3 The Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer will research the topics for review, once selected. Members will be provided with more detailed information on each topic in the agenda for the next Select Committee meeting on 15 July. This will enable an assessment by the Select Committee at the next meeting, giving regard to the following criteria:
- 1.4 Stage 1
Reject the topic if it:
- Has been covered by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the past 12 months;
 - Is an individual complaint; or
 - Does not meet the Council's priorities.
- Stage 2
Accept the topic if it:
- Affects local people;
 - Has tangible outcomes;
 - Will bring improvements for local people and/or for the Council;
 - Relates to a poor performing service; or
 - Meets the Council's priorities.

Stage 3

Prioritise:

- If we have more than two major reviews per Committee, Members will be asked to prioritise by looking at how many of the stage 2 criteria have been met and crucially which reviews could bring tangible benefits for local people.

Recommendation

That Members suggest any topics that they wish to review in the next municipal year and identify preferred options to be researched by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer prior to making a final decision on the work programmes for 2007-08 at the Select Committee meeting.

2 Remits of the Select Committees

2.1 Environment and Safer & Stronger Communities Select Committee

Membership: 10 non-executive Members.

Terms of Reference:

To perform the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following matters and deal with Councillor Call for Actions as they arise in relation to these matters:

1. Environmental Services and Street Scene.
2. Refuse collection and recycling.
3. Licensing.
4. Leisure including the provision of parks and open spaces.
5. The provision of cultural activities in the Borough.
6. Community Safety, Community Development and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
7. The Environment and the work of outside agencies.
8. Health Service and Community Well-being.
9. Young people – services provided to young people internally and by outside agencies.
10. Education provision in the Borough.
11. Public conveniences.
12. Crematoriums and Cemeteries.
13. Voluntary and Community Services.
14. Adult services.
15. Older people.
16. Parishes.

2.2 Local Economy and Housing Select Committee

Membership: 10 non-executive Members.

Terms of Reference:

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To perform the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following matters and deal with Councillor Call for Actions as they arise in relation to these matters:

1. Planning and the development of the Council's planning policies.
2. Economic Development and regeneration including the development of businesses in the Borough.
3. Tourism.
4. Building Control.
5. Housing Services, including the identification of housing need and related outside agencies.
6. Transport, including public transport initiatives, concessionary fares and related outside agencies.
7. Revenues and Benefits.
8. South East England Regional Assembly.
9. South East Economic Development Agency.
10. Business Development.

2.3 Corporate Services Select Committee

Membership: 10 non-executive Members.

Terms of Reference:

To perform the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following matters and deal with Councillor Call for Actions as they arise in relation to these matters:

1. The preparation of the Council's budget and the Council's performance in relation to budgetary management.
2. The management of the Council's resources.
3. The development and monitoring of the Asset Management Plan.
4. The development and implementation of the Council's corporate plan and community plan.
5. The development and implementation of the Council's performance monitoring function.
6. The provision of corporate services including human resources, legal services, democratic services and elections.
7. Customer Services.
8. Risk Management.
9. ICT.
10. Public Relations.
11. Equality and Diversity.
12. The Local Strategic Partnership, West Kent Partnership, Community Plan Partnership, Local Area Agreement, Kent Partnership and Partnerships.

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3 Work undertaken by the Environment, Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee during the course of the last municipal year (2007/08)

Environment, Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee		
Topic	Action Taken	Still to be done and Date
Health Inequalities	Considered paper by Terry Hall and requested that projects have measured outcomes for every initiative.	Recommendations to the Director of Services to the Community for confirmation in June on action requested.
Henderson Closure	Interviews held with resident and Doctor, now commencing a joint review with other HOSC on the closure and considering a mental health services review for TW residents.	First meeting of joint scrutiny on 2 July in Sutton.
Waste and Recycling	Report and Recommendations drafted: The 3 or 4 relating to the contract awaiting approval to be included in the tender process Some really big wins for scrutiny if recs approved: Discontinuation of civic amenity vehicle; Audit of biffa bins and reduction; and Better recycling services for residents.	Head of Service and Director informed of recommendations to be included as part of tender. Report and recommendations on waste and recycling to Cabinet in June.
Woodbury Park Cemetery	Site visits and pursuit of funding. 2 issues Land and Parking – looking to strategic priority fund as a one-off Met with residents and engaged the public	Next step to write to owner, letter drafted with NW (legal) Review continuing – August finish
Education and Employability	Interviews with Business Forum and Education Rep	Group required to identify tangible outcome and next stage for the review.

4 Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) – Four principles of effective scrutiny

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- 4.1 “The Centre for Public Scrutiny has been created to promote the value of scrutiny in modern and effective government - not only to hold executives to account but also to create a constructive dialogue between the public and its elected representatives - to improve the quality of public services. The CfPS have established four principles which propose that effective scrutiny:
- Provides ‘critical friend’ challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers;
 - Enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities;
 - Is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the scrutiny process; and
 - Drives improvement in public services.”

(Taken from the CfPS website at <http://www.cfps.org.uk/about_us/index.php>)

5 Work Programme Items

Outlined below are suggestions for reviews to be considered by the Environment, Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee.

5.1 Possible Major Reviews

5.1.1 Provision of mental health care facilities in the borough.

5.1.2 This would investigate the availability of care for residents and the accessibility of provision available. Mental Health care has historically been a “Cinderella” service, which consistently receives less money for treatment year on year as resources are placed with more ‘friendly faced’ services. The National Service Framework (NSF) for Mental Health has a ten-year implementation plan which started in 1999 and the review could aim to measure how far the NSF has been adopted within West Kent within the 10-year timeframe and identify areas that have not been achieved.

5.1.3 Responsibility for mental health care provision lies with the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, West Kent Primary Care Trust and Kent County Council Social Services, however a review undertaken by the Council could provide much needed advice as to how residents can access services and could investigate where shortfalls lie, or highlight where greater provision is needed. At the very least it could provide a route map for treatment, guidance and assistance within the borough. The review would need to consider that the provision for mental health care is cross boundary and would need to explore services in neighbouring Councils in order to be fully effective.

5.1.4 The review could explore ease of access, treatment offered, support for families and availability of provision. It would investigate the extent of mental ill health within the borough and whether the treatment available was adequate.

5.1.5 Witnesses could include, the Tunbridge Wells Mental Health Resource; the Community Mental Health team at Pembury Hospital; the Associate Director of Specialist Mental Health and Secure Services, South East Coast Specialist Commissioning Group; patient advice and liaison services at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, West Kent Primary Care Trust.

5.1.6 The review would need to set its parameters of exactly what it would achieve for local residents and whether it would consider child, adolescent or adult

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mental health care provision individually or combined. It would however meet the CfPS principles of reflecting and engaging the public voice and driving improvement in public services. As the geography for mental health services are cross border and not restricted to Borough limits, this could be well placed as a joint review with Maidstone Borough Council who also have this on their work programme.

5.1.7 Domestic Violence

5.1.8 To attempt to identify the extent of domestic violence within the borough and the assistance available to those at risk or suffering from abuse. Domestic violence includes physical, sexual and psychological attacks and staggeringly, 1 in 4 women, regardless of ethnic origin or social status will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. Men also are victims of violence at the hands of both male and female partners and have exactly the same rights to be safe in their homes. The effects of growing up in an abusive environment can cause lifelong harm to children.

5.1.9 Despite the statistics of its prevalence, domestic violence is largely underreported by victims and under recorded by professionals. This is a cross cutting issue in terms of service providers and the local authority has a key role to play in assisting victims and providing services such as housing, children and family services, benefits and providing information to victims about local specialist services.

5.1.10 Tackling crime and community safety is an important issue for both local residents and the Council; it lies in the strategic plan under helping vulnerable people and is in line with meeting objectives in relation to Every Child Matters.

5.1.11 The review would need to investigate the work to date on domestic violence but could include the development of a corporate domestic violence strategy, manual and action plan. This would need to be developed in conjunction with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and in order to be effective would need input from partnerships such as the police, PCT, GP's, courts, probation and the voluntary sector.

5.1.12 The review could focus on Councillor awareness or domestic violence interventions available to residents; Local issues for domestic violence service provision such as access, equality and diversity issues, sustainability, partnership work already undertaken and identifying any gaps in service provision as well as areas of good practice.

5.1.13 Nuisance Neighbours

5.1.14 To identify which provisions are in place to deal with persistently anti-social neighbours. The review could establish the different definitions and nature of 'nuisance' and aim to focus on residential neighbour disputes, particularly those involving some form of anti-social behaviour. It could examine the principal causes of disputes between neighbours in residential areas within the Borough and how and to whom they are reported and assess the current role of the Borough Council and partner organisations in the dealing with disputes between neighbours. It should also assess the success or otherwise of such activities.

5.1.15 Evidence could be received from the Council's Environmental Health and Legal Services departments, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, Kent

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Police, Tunbridge Wells County Court, West Kent Mediation Services, Town and Country Housing Association, and Terry Hughes, the anti-social behaviour co-ordinator.

5.1.16 The review would need to focus on how prevalent the problem is, the way in which partner organisations tackle problems and how improvements could be made if necessary.

5.1.17 Fly tipping/ North Farm congestion

To investigate the Council's procedures for the management of unauthorised waste disposal (fly tipping) within the Borough including financial costs and the environmental implications and the achievement of performance objectives. With particular aim to identify what the extent and nature of the problem in the Tunbridge Wells borough is currently and whether it would be likely to increase if the recommendation from the waste and recycling review to scrap the civic amenity vehicle is agreed; it should identify the existing systems and procedures for dealing with fly tipping and assess the current disposal facilities available in the borough. There have recently been problems with accessibility to the North Farm Household Waste facility and this could be investigated.

The review should investigate why the Council has not made any prosecutions for fly tipping in the last two years and identify the cost of dealing with fly tipping and whether there is scope for sharing the costs between agencies or if there are additional sources for funding.

The review could investigate the impact on community safety and health and look at what could be done to assist private landowners who suffer from fly tipping. Other areas for consideration could be whether the arrangements for clearing fly tipped material are working effectively or what the Council can learn from best practice and initiatives elsewhere. This could be a very positive review with significant outcomes.

5.1.18 Animal Nuisances

Review to consider all aspects of animal nuisances, including dog fouling and control, stray horses and review any policies, procedures and bylaws in place to tackle these problems. The environment enforcement officers would need to be contacted to establish the extent of the problems and the ways in which the Council is already tackling them. A working group review for this topic would need three months.

5.2 **One-Off (1-2 meetings)**

5.2.1 Medway Depot

A review to look at the way in which the sale of the Medway Depot was handled and identify lessons to learn for the sale of other Council assets. The Council sold the Medway Depot in Royal Tunbridge Wells in March 2008 to Fairview New Homes Ltd for £3,551,479. A full planning application for residential properties is yet to be submitted, however, the new scheme will include at least 58 affordable homes. The Depot is currently occupied by four individual business tenants and by Veolia who are the Borough Council's contractors for refuse, recycling and street cleansing. Veolia will be moving to the Council's new Depot that is being built on North Farm Industrial Estate where money from the sale of the site has been allocated to building a new

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state-of-the-art, modern and energy efficient depot in an industrial area, just outside of the town centre.

5.2.2 Alcohol Control Zones

As part of the Council commitment to reducing crime and disorder and the fear of crime within the borough, it has designated certain roads, car parks, public areas and parks Alcohol Control Zones. The designation will not prevent all on-street drinking in those areas, but will enable the police to take action against people who are creating nuisance or annoyance to the public, or causing disorder. The ACZ have been extended to include the majority of the Town Centre and now cover a comprehensive area. The review could investigate the difference this has made to the public in terms of safety and community issues.

5.2.3 Heritage Protection

New legislation is due to be passed which would allow local authorities to list buildings of interest in their area. A review could investigate if there are areas in the borough that the Council should be aware of if the legislation comes to pass.

5.2.4 Neglected verges

There has been press coverage highlighting the state of some of the verges in the Borough and the need for more care and attention to be exercised for their upkeep.

5.2.5 Unofficial taxi rank on York Road

It has been reported that private hire cars and some taxis have taken to waiting for night time fares close to the former Habitat building which is double yellow lined. Local residents have found this to be disruptive and could be an area for brief scrutiny investigation.

5.2.6 Drug Raids

There have been reports of the Police breaking down the doors of the wrong houses in attempted drug raids. This could be raised as part of the monitoring of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

5.2.7 Quantity of commercial bins in town centre

An investigation could be carried out as to how many 'biffa' style bins are present in the town and whether the Council has any power to exert influence over commercial waste decisions.

5.2.8 Too many real estate signs

A suggestion from the Town Forum to help improve the visual amenity of the town centre.

5.3 Watching Brief and Updates:

- The Sustainable Community Strategy;

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- Public Conveniences;
- Master Planning;
- Health Action Plan as part of Health Inequalities;
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership:
The key agencies of Kent Police, the County and Borough Council, Fire, and PCTs have a statutory duty to work together to formulate a strategy to combat crime, disorder, and the misuse of drugs in the local area. This would be an ongoing monitoring role to identify the effectiveness of the CDRP and the way that it is working within the community.

Carried Over Items:

- Woodbury Park Cemetery
- Education and employability review

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Environment, Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee

Work Programme 2008-2009

Date	Items for discussion
10 June 2008	Work Programme Setting Portfolio Holder Cabinet Priorities Comprehensive Equality Scheme
15 July 2008	Environmental Protection Service Level Consultation update – David Bower
9 September 2008	
14 October 2008	Health and Wellbeing Action Plan
18 November 2008	
6 January 2008	
10 February 2009	
17 March 2009	
21 April 2009	Review of achievements of Select Committee

All meetings start at 6.30pm and are held at the Town Hall, unless otherwise stated.

Major Reviews

TBC

Joint Reviews

TBC

One-Offs

TBC

Ongoing

Education and Employability
Woodbury Park Cemetery