



Overview & Scrutiny

e-bulletin



Welcome to the Christmas and New Year edition of the Overview & Scrutiny e-bulletin for 2008-2009, updating you on the key issues and activities of the Select Committees.

Scrutiny Events

Gateway Tour



Members of the Corporate Services Select Committee were given a guided tour around the Gateway before their Committee meeting in November. William Benson (Director of Change and Business Support) and Denise Shortall (Gateway Manager) gave the tour and the Councillors congratulated them on the project and the positive difference it would make to residents seeking assistance from the Council and its partners.

Scrutiny Training – Acting the Part!

Scrutiny members and officers have been busy bees in November, taking advantage of two joint training opportunities with Maidstone and Swale. At the beginning of November Members took part in an all day event, facilitated by Andrew Coulson from InLoGov, on the nuts and bolts of effective scrutiny and new legislation.



At the end of November RADA facilitated an evening session on scrutiny communication skills. Members covered how important it was for a scrutiny committee to have a shared objective before commencing questioning witnesses, the importance of personal impact, listening and questioning skills. At the end of the evening members role-played a scrutiny meeting taking the part of officers and councillors to test out their new skills. Feedback from both events was very positive.

December Meetings

Corporate Services (CS)

Tuesday 16 December, 6.00pm

Interview with the Cabinet Members on the Medway to North Farm Depot review:

Environment, Safer & Stronger Communities (ESSC)

This Select Committee is not meeting in December

Local Economy & Housing (LEH)

Thursday 11 December, 6.00pm

Private Sector Renewal Strategy Monitoring Report and the mid-term review of the Rural HeLP project (Rural Homes for Local People).

January Meetings

Corporate Services (CS)

Tuesday 13 January 2009, 6.30pm

The Budget, Strategic Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, People Strategy and Asset Management Plan.

Environment, Safer & Stronger Communities (ESSC)

Tuesday 6 January 2009, 6.15 pm

Pest Control, Education and Employability

Local Economy & Housing (LEH)

Thursday 15 January 2009, 6.00pm

Conversion of front gardens into parking spaces and Parking study

Road Safety meeting



A working group of the Local Economy and Housing Select Committee is undertaking a review of road safety and transportation in the borough. As part of the review, the working group (Councillors Ransley, Neve, and Holden) met with a number of professionals on Monday November 24th. They were joined by a working group of Maidstone Borough Councillors, who are investigating road safety issues in their borough. Guests included the Executive Director of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, the Road Safety Development Manager at Kent County Council, and the Chief Inspector of the Kent Police Roads Policing Unit.

Tourist Information Centre



Following recommendations made at the September Local Economy and Housing Select Committee meeting, the Committee met in November to discuss a report on the options to keep the TIC on the Pantiles. Options included the retention of the current service, co-operation with and funding from private sector partners, and sources of public sector funding. Members identified a way forward that could retain the current level of service as well as making a significant efficiency saving for the Council. Targetfollow, who own the Pantiles, had offered to charge the Council £1 per year to rent the building. In addition, Officers had spoken with Arriva about the possibility of selling bus tickets at the TIC with the Council taking a commission. The combination of these two offers, along with pursuing smaller revenue streams, could potentially save the Council more than £24,000 per year. This recommendation was made to the Cabinet, who asked for more information on several other options before deciding whether the TIC should stay on the Pantiles.

Dog Fouling and Litter Review



Two members of the Environment and Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee, Councillors Mrs Moore and Mrs Herriot, carried out their own short scrutiny review into litter and dog fouling. The Councillors reviewed the footpath from Culverden Down to St. John's Recreation Ground and Culverden Down from Reynolds Lane to Hurst

Wood (a school run route and a popular dog walking route). They found that there was dog fouling, with black sacks of dog mess left on the pavement, and there were no litterbins at all between the football stadium, Coniston Avenue or Lake Road. They recommended improving and replacing the signage along the path and putting in two new litterbins on Culverden Down. All recommendations made will be implemented by Environmental Services and are cost neutral.

Your views welcome

We would like to encourage people to be active in Scrutiny and welcome Officers, Councillors, and members of the public to give us your views on topics to be discussed in November, the major reviews, or any other issues that people would like raised.

Major Reviews for 2008/09

CS – Medway/North Farm Depot, Budget

ESSC – Licensing, Mental Health, Fly tipping

LEH – Road Safety and Transportation

Waste Contract Tender

The Environment and Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee met for a special meeting in November to discuss the waste contract tender for the borough. Following the Committee's discussion and recommendations to Cabinet, the new contract will include the doorstep collection of plastics and cans. It is expected that this will increase recycling rates across the borough. It was also recommended and agreed that Town and Parish Councils receive greater information of details of the change in service when it has been finalised by Cabinet.



Scrutiny Partnership Mental Health Review

On November 5th, Councillors from Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils held their first working group meeting. They invited the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust as Witnesses and discussed mental health services across the boroughs. Those present included the Chief Executive of Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust, the Mental Health Commissioner for West Kent at KCC, and the District Manager for Tunbridge Wells Social Services at KCC (among others). At the meeting the working group agreed their Terms of Reference. The review will look into the key differences in public and private sector mental health service provision, as well as identifying barriers to accessing mental health services and considering ways of improving access to services and reducing inequalities.

Urban Parishing



The Corporate Services Select Committee conducted a review into urban parishing. Members considered the legal process for establishing a parish council, the advantages and disadvantages of parish councils, special expenses, and the role of the Town Forum as the current representatives for the urban communities of Tunbridge Wells. The Committee's report was presented to the Cabinet, who agreed all three recommendations made. The Council will now publicise new forms of local Councils and emphasise the benefits, identify support for community groups and individuals who wish to create parish councils, and liaise with the Town Forum to review their role as representatives of the urban area to see if this is effective and make improvements as appropriate.

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