

Medway Council
MEETING OF BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

6.30pm to 8.45pm

RECORD OF THE MEETING

PRESENT: Councillors: Andrews, Avey, Kenneth Bamber (Chairman),
Brake, Carr (Vice-Chairman), Harriott, Juby, Stephen Kearney,
Mackinlay and O'Brien

Substitutes: Councillor Matt Bright (Substitute for Councillor Roy Hunter)
Councillor Vince Maple (Substitute for Councillor Glyn Griffiths)

In Attendance:	Angela Drum	Head of Legal
	Stephanie Goad	Assistant Director Communications Performance and Partnerships
	Peter Holland	Committee Co-ordinator
	Joy Kirby	Quality Assurance and Client Manager

666 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hunter and Griffiths.

667 RECORD OF THE MEETING

The record of the meeting held on 2 February 2010 was signed by the Chairman as correct.

668 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Maple declared a personal interest in item 5(B) Holding the Leader to Account, as he is the Electoral Agent for the Chatham and Aylesford Constituency.

Councillor O'Brien declared a personal interest in any interest to the health service on the grounds that members of his family work for the health service.

669 WORK PROGRAMME

Discussion:

Members were presented with a report that advised them of the current work programme that allowed them to adjust it in the light of latest, issues and circumstances.

Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16 March 2010

Decision:

The Committee noted the work undertaken by all overview and scrutiny committees in the last cycle and to be considered at the next cycle of meetings is noted.

670 ATTENDANCE OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Discussion:

The Leader of the Council addressed the Committee, outlining recent activity within areas of his portfolio:

- all arrangements were conducted appropriately and with a high degree of professionalism in relation to the by election held in Luton and Wayfield
- feedback from elected Members about the services provided by the Members' Services team showed high levels of satisfaction. 92% of those responding to the questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that the advice and support was good
- completion of in-depth scrutiny reviews on access to Medway Maritime hospital for people with a disability, the Council's policy on disabled parking bays, support for people in temporary accommodation, NHS Winter Plans and the health risks associated with telecommunications masts
- organisation of the first Youth Question Time in Medway involving a Panel of Councillors during Local Democracy week 2009
- introduction of new procedures and delivery of Member training on Councillor Call for Action
- successful introduction of scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership which is a new duty for the Regeneration Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee as our designated Crime and Disorder Committee
- planning arrangements for the General Election, with polling stations and polling station staff provisionally booked on the assumption that 6 May will be Polling Day. The counting of votes will take place after the close of poll at 10pm at Medway Park. Councillors have been kept up to date with the polling arrangements and a meeting with election agents and candidates is scheduled for 18 April. The induction programme for newly-elected Councillors is also being developed
- proposals have been put forward to revise the arrangements for the Annual Council meeting and Mayor's Dedication Service. Generally, the proposals are that the Annual Meeting will deal with the business of electing the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor, with the Dedication Service and reception afterwards enhanced to celebrate the Mayoralty. Group Leaders are being consulted on these proposals, and subject to the outcome, the new

Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16 March 2010

arrangements will come into effect for the Annual Council meeting on 19 May 2010

- council recently received a Report on the new executive arrangements, as required by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Following consultation, work will begin on adopting new executive arrangements and drawing up the required changes to the Council's constitution, which have to be in place by May 2011.

Members asked questions about:

- the electoral register
- support for Members
- the forthcoming General Election
- youth question time during Local Democracy Week
- ensuring that the information contained on the Council's website was robust and up-to-date
- the number of people prosecuted for not registering onto the electoral register

During the discussion on this item the Head of Legal agreed to supply Councillor Harriott with the actual number of people who had been prosecuted for not registering on the electoral register.

Decision:

The Committee thanked the Leader, Councillor Rodney Chambers, for attending the meeting and the responses he gave.

671 ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE

Discussion:

The Portfolio Holder for Finance addressed the Committee outlining the main achievements within areas of his portfolio:

- in relation to the procurement process it was noted that in general the processes are much improved and 2 new pieces of work had been commissioned in relation to improving the procurement process. These pieces of work involved a piece of work that was software based and another looking at the actual process and this was being carried out by the Council's external auditors

Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16 March 2010

- in respect of the Legal section, there had been a good level of both enforcement and prosecutions and more resources had been put into the child protection process
- in respect of the Revenue and Benefits team it was noted that despite the large increase in the number of claimants and enquiries due to the economic downturn more resources had been added to deal with the increase and new claims were now being processed in under 30 days
- the Communications Team had successfully completed a number of high profile campaigns and were now working on the renewed bid for City status in 2012 and had successfully dealt with a significant increase in media enquiries last year
- in relation to risk management, it was noted that a wider recognition of risk monitoring had been introduced throughout the Council and there was now a risk management section in every report. It was further noted that there was a need to ensure that all risks were validated and embedded in all departments
- in respect of property the Council still continue to target £4 million a year for capital receipts and although in the present economic climate such capital receipts were hard to achieve, there were areas where the market was not so depressed
- it was noted in respect of finance that the Council had achieved a balanced budget over the last 5 years and it was important to continue to focus on service delivery.

Members asked about:

- the procurement process in relation to the forthcoming Waste Contract
- empty properties
- the good progress made in dealing with claims and enquires by the Revenues and Benefits section
- costs of subsidising bus transportation
- the introduction of new staff in respect of child protection and the reduction of administrative work for Social Workers which increased their ability to protect vulnerable children.
- prosecutions of landlords for houses in multiple occupation
- the Council's forthcoming new website and the need to keep the information on it up-to-date and ensuring that it supports current and future innovations in social media

Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16 March 2010

- the renewed bid for City status in 2012
- whether the Council, when disposing of land, should sell it with planning permission already attached

Decision:

The Committee thanked Councillor Jarrett for attending the meeting and the answers he had provided.

672 SIX-MONTHLY REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE BUSINESS RISK REGISTER

Discussion:

The Quality Assurance and Client Manager introduced a report that asked the Committee to consider the 6 monthly review of the Council's Corporate Risk Register in accordance with paragraph 4.1 of the Council's Risk Management Strategy.

It was noted that risk owners had reviewed their risks and Management Team had proposed amendments to the risk register set out at paragraph 3.1 of the report.

Members asked that the risk of a potential legal challenge to the waste contract be incorporated into the risk register and that there be more detailed narrative contained within the report to explain the justification for increasing a risk's rating.

Decision:

The Committee:

- (1) Noted the proposed amendments to the risk register set out at paragraph 3.1 of the report.
- (2) Asked that the risk of a potential legal challenge to the waste contract be incorporated into the risk register.
- (3) Requested that in the future there be more detailed narrative contained within the report to explain the justification for increasing a risk's rating.

673 QUARTER THREE COUNCIL PLAN MONITORING AND LAA UPDATE

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Communications, Performance and Partnerships introduced a report that presented the Council's performance for the third quarter of 2009-2010. It was noted that the report included performance against

Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16 March 2010

indicators and actions agreed in the Council Plan 2009-2012 and gave Members an update on the progress in achieving Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets both those led by the council and those led by partners which the council has a role in supporting.

The Assistant Director, Communications, Performance and Partnerships gave Members a brief summary of the performance for the first quarter against the six priorities and 2 core values in the Council Plan and performance against individual detailed actions and performance indicators relating to those priorities.

It was noted that since the last round of reports on LAA targets regulations had come into effect giving all Overview and Scrutiny Committees power to obtain information from LAA partners. Members were informed that each Medway Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been assigned a number of LAA targets to keep under review with the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee keeping a general overview as well as scrutinising the specific targets falling within its terms of reference.

Members commented on the following areas:

- the work of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) project planning group
- the success of the Council's apprenticeship programme
- indicator NI 8 (Adult participation in sport and active recreation)
- the Council securing two significant EU grants to target carbon emissions
- the results that people in Medway are feeling safer
- key Stage 2 results
- the positive results of the Future Jobs Fund
- the reduction in teenage pregnancy rates

Decision:

The Committee noted the performance for the third quarter 2009/10.

674 MEDWAY DRAFT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2010-2026

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Communications, Performance and Partnerships asked the Committee to comment on and endorse the draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2026 prior to it being approved by Cabinet, the Local Strategic Partnership) LSP Board and Council. It was noted that the report summarised

Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16 March 2010

the content of the draft strategy and paragraph 2.4 of the report summarised the ambitions of the strategy and paragraph 2.5 of the report set out the Strategy's key principles.

Members asked the Assistant Director, Communications, Performance and Partnerships to provide them a briefing note on how many Partners and Communities Together (PACT) panels were in existence in all wards.

Members asked how officers had engaged the community in drawing up the strategy.

Officers responded that key consultation events included two meetings of the LSP plenary with each meeting being attended by over 100 organisations and individuals, two workshops with councillors attended by 15 members, workshops with Medway Voice, the Youth Parliament, Medway Older Person's Partnership, the Ethnic Minorities Forum and the Council's Disability Forum and a meeting with community representatives. It was further noted that LSP staff had given local people had an opportunity to give their views on the future of Medway as part of a series of neighbourhood "Community Futures Workshops" focusing on the most deprived wards. Consultations have also been held with stakeholders through the LSP thematic partnerships. It was noted that the Residents Opinion Poll carried out in Autumn 2009 had also been taken into account to ensure a representative sample of Medway residents' views informed the priorities for improvement as well as the OFSTED Tellus survey of children and young people carried out in 2009.

Decision:

The Committee:

- (1) Noted the draft Sustainable Communities Strategy 2010-2026 and recommended it for approval by Cabinet, the LSP Board and Council.
- (2) Asked the Assistant Director, Communications, Performance and Partnerships to provide them with a briefing note on how many Partners and Communities Together (PACT) panels were in existence in all wards.

Chairman

Date:

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