

COUNCIL

29 JULY 2010

REPORT ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTIVITY

Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive

Author: Julie Keith, Head of Democratic Services

Summary

This report provides a summary of the work of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees since the last report to Council on 17 June 2010.

1. Policy and Budget Framework

1.1 The Council's constitution allows for reports on overview and scrutiny (O&S) activity to be reported to Council meetings.

2. Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2.1 8 July 2010

2.1.1. Response to petitions – sheltered accommodation

Members debated the policy proposal to rotate sheltered housing scheme managers having heard from the Assistant Director, Housing and Corporate Services and some residents who attended the meeting and concluded that there did not appear to be sufficiently robust reasons to change the current policy. In view of this the Assistant Director, Housing and Corporate Services, was asked to continue her visits and to report back to the Committee in due course.

2.1.2. Report on performance indicators

Members requested briefing notes providing clarification on the data for the time taken from the point of reporting a repair to the completion by the contractor for the various repair priorities and the accompanying customer satisfaction results (as reported for performance indicator H5 - average time for non-urgent repairs), clarification about the direction of performance and the high level of voids days reported at Brennan House (as reported for performance indicator H8 - average time taken to relet council dwellings).

2.1.3. Temporary accommodation

Members were updated on the outcome of a feasibility study undertaken on the viability of producing an assessment centre for people requiring temporary accommodation in Medway. The Assistant Director, Housing and Corporate Services, explained that she would be continuing discussions with Southampton City Council in relation to changes in the housing benefit situation to assess how this affected their current temporary accommodation provision.

A briefing note will be circulated to the Committee on the unit costs referred to in the feasibility study explaining why the unit cost/night for a single male parent was less than for a single female parent.

2.1.4. Electoral registration

The Head of Elections and Members Services introduced her report on electoral registration, following a request from Audit Committee.

A briefing note was requested from the Head of Elections and Member Services, following consultation with officers in legal and finance, giving greater clarity on data matching within the Council.

2.1.5 Housing revenue account reform prospectus

Members noted the amended response from Cabinet to the Department for Communities and Local Government, sent on 6 July, in relation to the housing revenue account reform prospectus.

3. Children and Adults Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3.1. 12 July 2010

3.1.1. Work programme

Members agreed:

- additions to the work programme
- a themed meeting be held in February 2011 on the effectiveness around prevention work to reduce young people's experiences of bullying
- that a briefing to update Members on changes to education policy be held prior to the next meeting and;
- to refer to Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee the progress in relation to raising attainment for looked after children and the Child Protection Monitoring Group.

3.1.2. Ofsted inspections

Members were informed of the Ofsted judgements made in Medway between 2009 and 2010 and advised of key developments with schools

causing concern. The Committee were also notified that Ofsted changed the inspection framework on 1 September 2009 and that judgements before that date used different criteria to those inspected after that date. In view of concerns around funding the Committee requested a letter be sent from the Chairman of the Committee to the Secretary of State for Education expressing Members' concern at the potential loss of funding for the three academies in Medway so close to implementation. A copy of this letter will be sent to the three local Members of Parliament.

3.1.3. Child development centre update

The Deputy Chief Executive of NHS Medway updated Members on the future location of the Child Development Centre. Members were keen that any suitable locations were not disposed of prior to being considered for this service and noted that a full report will be submitted to the meeting in October.

3.1.4. Youth justice plan

The Youth Justice Board has judged Medway's Youth Offending Team as 'good' and Members questioned officers about contingency plans being considered for any potential national financial proposals and changes to funding legislation.

The Youth Justice Plan was forwarded to Cabinet for approval and on behalf of the Committee, the Chairman will send a letter to the Youth Offending Team recognising their performance.

3.1.5. Looked after children attainment

A presentation was given on the provisional 2010 attainment of Medway's looked after children, and action being taken to drive improvement in this area. The use of one-to-one tuition had proved helpful in bringing about substantial improvements. The Committee requested that Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee is informed that this had been looked into and that no further action was suggested.

4. Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4.1. 15 July 2010

4.1.1. Work programme

The scoping for the themed meeting on safeguarding vulnerable adults was agreed and a Member task group set up to consider findings with a view to reporting to the Committee on 30 September 2010.

4.1.2. Dermatology

Members welcomed the business case proposed for the dermatology service designed to enhance and extend the existing service into the community, to increase the number and range of skin conditions dealt with.

4.1.3. Phlebotomy service

A detailed introduction was given to the review of the phlebotomy service which recognised the service pressures, particularly at the hospital, and the resultant queues which did not constitute a good experience for patients.

Plans were underway to extend the phlebotomy service into the community to increase patient choice and improve patient experience. Members requested a briefing note on suggestions made at the meeting in relation to the possibility of a mobile clinic and the option of having blood taken elsewhere and relayed back to Medway, for the benefit of those people who commute out of the area.

4.1.4. Dementia update

The Committee were advised about the strategic outline case for dementia care, which will be designed to bridge the current gaps between primary, community and secondary care services.

A briefing note was requested in relation to the possibility of placing an article in Medway Lifeline magazine about household adaptations, which may assist people with dementia.

4.1.5. Primary angioplasty

Representatives from Kent Cardiovascular Network attended the meeting and gave a presentation updating Members on the success of the newly adopted service for primary angioplasty for heart attack patients in Kent and Medway. For those people who had received primary angioplasty, their stay in hospital had been considerably shorter than it would have been following alternative treatment and the feedback from patients had been very positive.

A full and in-depth review of the service would be undertaken by the network at 6 month and 12 month intervals.

4.1.6. LINK annual report and related issues

Members noted the LINK annual report, review of the LINK protocol and the interaction between Medway LINK and adult social care.

5. Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5.1. 6 July 2010

5.1.1 Community Safety Partnership Plan Review

Members commented on the annual rolling three year plan for community safety and asked questions on:

- Enforcement checks of uncovered skips on Medway's roads
- The use and success of the SoS bus
- Anti-social behaviour
- Gated alleyways and the use of community clear-up campaigns
- Alcohol control zones.

The report was referred to Cabinet and recommending the addition of a section on the enforcement of uncovered skip vehicles.

5.1.2. Gateway 3 contract award: household waste recycling centres

Members questioned a number of elements of the contract award for household waste and recommended to Cabinet the award of the contract to Bidder 4 as the most economically advantageous tender. An additional recommendation to Cabinet requested authorisation for the Chief Finance Officer as the officer responsible for signing certificates issued under the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 in relation to the management of the household waste recycling centre contracts to be entered into by the Council.

5.1.3. Local development framework

This item was deferred until the meeting on 29 September 2010 on the grounds that the government had formally abolished the South East Plan earlier in the day.

5.1.4. The future of Strood environmental enhancement scheme

The Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the Strood environmental enhancement scheme is abandoned and if Cabinet agree this, there were further recommendations made regarding disposal of land and properties in the area.

5.1.5. Work programme

Members agreed that a report on the Gun Wharf Masterplan would be submitted to the next meeting in August 2010 along with a report on the outcome of consultation on the consolidation and extension of the Rochester Conservation Area as pre-decision scrutiny.

The feedback from the Waste Contract task group in relation to the waste strategy stocktake was forwarded to Cabinet and the feedback in relation to the KCC Rail Select Committee noted.

A request was made that no more than one Portfolio Holder attends a meeting to be held to account in future.

Background papers

None

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