

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Business Support Overview and Scrutiny**  
**Committee**

**Thursday, 23 September 2010**

**6.35pm to 8.00pm**

**Record of the meeting**

- Present:** Councillors: Andrews, Avey, Kenneth Bamber (Chairman), Carr, Gulvin (Vice-Chairman), Griffiths, Juby, Stephen Kearney, Royle and Stamp
- Substitutes:** Councillor Clarke for Councillor Bright  
Councillor Gilry for Councillor Harriott
- In Attendance:** Abigail Cooper, Research and Review Team Manager  
Stephanie Goad, Assistant Director Communications  
Performance and Partnerships  
Mick Hayward, Chief Finance Officer  
Caroline Salisbury, Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator  
Deborah Upton, Assistant Director, Housing and Corporate Services

**361 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 8 July 2010 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

**362 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bright and Harriott.

**363 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were none.

**364 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Griffiths declared a personal interest in any reference to NHS Medway (formerly Medway PCT) on the grounds that he is a non-executive director of the trust.

### 365 Work programme

#### Discussion:

The committee was advised that there were no new items on the recently published Cabinet Forward Plan within the remit of this committee.

The Chairman of Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised that the committee's work programme had changed since the despatch of the agenda and the following changes had been made:

- Chronic Pain services – report deferred
- Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Strategy – added to agenda for 30 September 2010
- Appraisal of NHS White Paper – added to agenda for 30 September 2010

The spokesperson for the Labour Group asked that the committee considers investigating how Medway Council would operate after the government spending cuts had been implemented and what the quantity, scale and implications of these were likely to be. He advised that it was the role of the committee, with its overarching remit, and that the implications should be considered alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan. This would not be an easy task but should be work that the committee endeavoured to carry out.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that the Medium Term Financial Plan was due to be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 28 September 2010 and that it could then be reported to this committee at its next meeting. He advised that on 20 October 2010 the government would announce the national position (called the Comprehensive Spending Review) but this would not include specific budgets for each council. That information would probably not be available until at least December 2010 and would post-date the Cabinet production of the draft budget for 2011/2012.

Members responded that they would like to start looking ahead over the next three to four years to get an idea of the challenge facing the various services and what services/provision might have to be suspended should higher cuts become necessary. Members had not considered, or had any idea of the scale and result the cuts would have on service delivery. The committee should consider where there was possible scope for changes and what that service would then look like.

The Chairman suggested that he and the opposition group spokespersons meet with the Chief Finance Officer to see if this could be taken forward.

#### Decision:

The committee agreed:

- (a) to note that the latest revenue and capital budget monitoring information will be sent via a briefing note and that Members will be given the

## **Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 23 September 2010**

opportunity to raise questions at the following meeting;

- (b) to note the work undertaken by all overview and scrutiny committees in the last cycle and to be considered at the next cycle of meetings with the changes to the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee as shown above;
- (c) that the Chairman and Spokespersons of the committee meet with the Chief Finance Officer to discuss the possibility of the committee investigating how the council would operate after the government spending cuts had been implemented and what the quantity, scale and implications of these were likely to be and the implications of this alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan.

### **366 Response to petitioners regarding the rotation of sheltered housing scheme managers**

#### **Discussion:**

The Assistant Director of Housing and Corporate Services introduced the report advising that she had now visited all of the schemes and measured the reaction of residents to the proposal to rotate the scheme managers every two years from one scheme to another.

The committee was informed that although it was good practice to move managers around between schemes, it was also good practice to listen to residents and many residents were against the proposal, as detailed in the report. As the 'buddy-scheme' of pairing Scheme Managers with a nearby site was in place and working well in terms of the help and support the managers can provide for each other, the Assistant Director had reviewed the proposals and strength of response from the residents and no longer proposed to rotate the Sheltered Scheme Managers.

Mr Shearman, a resident of Marlborough House, addressed the committee in order to thank the council for listening to residents and taking this course of action and advised that it was very much appreciated. He particularly wished to thank the Housing Services Manager for his continued support and hard work with all the sheltered schemes in Medway.

Shirley Griffiths, a representative from LINK, addressed the committee advising of residents in another authority who had been against the rotation of scheme managers but the rotation had gone ahead and within a month it had resulted in people feeling reinvigorated. She added that if the proposed rotation scheme did not go ahead, perhaps the Assistant Director would consider re-introducing the travelling warden scheme.

## **Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 23 September 2010**

### **Decision:**

The committee agreed to:

- (a) note that, following consultation and the risk factors set out in the report, the council would not go ahead with the rotation of the Sheltered Scheme Managers;
- (b) ask the Assistant Director of Housing and Corporate Services to investigate the re-introduction of the travelling warden scheme.

### **367 Quarter 1 Council Plan Monitoring 2010/2011**

#### **Discussion:**

The Assistant Director of Communications, Performance and Partnerships introduced the report advising that it not only gave an update on quarter one (April – June 2010) performance indicators but also showed proposed changes to the Council Plan.

Members were advised that it was unusual to suggest in-year changes to the council's main business plan but this was in order to keep the plan consistent with recent changes brought in by the government. It was proposed that, in response to the government withdrawing funding, actions were deleted from the plan where there were related budget reductions.

Officers had also taken the opportunity, in light of the cancellation of any future work by the Audit Commission under the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) arrangements, to re-visit and streamline the actions reported on in the plan and had concluded that some were not of a strategic level but more 'day-job' activities. These were highlighted in yellow on appendix 2 to the report and were proposed to be removed from the Council Plan.

The Assistant Director confirmed that although items were proposed for deletion from the plan this did not mean that the council would stop those services. The issue was not about the practical level of the service but about the amount of performance monitoring detail Members wanted to consider at meetings.

Some Members expressed serious concerns about the proposed approach to amending the plan in-year and considered that it would be better to keep reporting them this year with the narrative of the report reflecting the impact of loss of funding against the actions, rather than deleting un-funded activity from the plan. The Members considered that the items proposed for removal were also the priorities that mattered to the public and these should remain in the plan and be changed next year.

The committee considered various indicators proposed for deletion and voted on whether to recommend their retention in the plan.

## Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 23 September 2010

### Decision:

In accordance with the council's policy framework rules, the committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet on 28 September 2010 and Council on 14 October 2010 the changes to the Council Plan actions and measures highlighted in Appendix 2, **with the exception of** the following actions and indicators which it recommended **should be retained** for the remainder of the reporting year:

- (a) page 73 of the agenda (page 2 of Appendix 2) – action - 'delivery of Phase 2 of the Playbuilder Programme resulting in the refurbishment of 22 play areas by 2012';
- (b) page 77 of the agenda (page 6 of Appendix 2) – action - 'Supported by external funding, we will continue to deliver action plans in our key priority neighbourhoods of All Saints, Strood South, White Road and Twydall, to secure social regeneration';
- (c) page 80 of the report (page 9 of Appendix 2) – action - 'Increase public feelings of safety by maintaining a dedicated safer communities officer in each ward';
- (d) page 96 pf the report (page 25 of Appendix 2) – indicator - 'Number of Sure Start Children Centres';
- (e) page 98 of the report (page 27 of Appendix 2) – indicator - 'Timeliness of social care assessment (all adults) - percentage from first contact to completion of assessment within 4 weeks';
- (f) page 104 of the report (page 33 of Appendix 2) – action - 'minimising of congestion arising from roadworks';
- (g) page 108 of the report (page 37 of Appendix 2) – indicator - 'Bus services running on time';
- (h) page 110 of the report (page 39 of Appendix 2) – action - 'Implement a £1m per annum housing renovation programme for the poorest quality housing in Luton and All Saints';
- (i) page 111 of the report (page 40 of Appendix 2) – indicator - 'Repeat homelessness (To be local measure)';
- (j) page 111 of the report (page 40 of Appendix 2) – indicator - 'Average time taken to re-let council dwellings (days)';
- (k) page 111 of the report (page 40 of Appendix 2) – indicator - 'Homelessness decision cases decided within 28 working days (To be local measure)';
- (l) page 114 of the report (page 43 of Appendix 2) – action - 'Work to improve Public Spaces/town centre environments through the public

## Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 23 September 2010

spaces working group to be informed by town centre action plans, developed by economic development and social regeneration teams’;

- (m) page 117 of the report (page 46 of Appendix 2) – action - ‘400 individuals accessing retail workforce training programmes’
- (n) page 122 of the report (page 51 of appendix 2) – action – ‘tackling the barriers to public participation in sport’.

### 368 Support for people in temporary accommodation

#### Discussion:

The Assistant Director of Housing and Corporate Services introduced the report advising that an Assessment Centre options appraisal had been undertaken following the recommendations of a task group review into ‘Support for People in Temporary Accommodation’.

Emergency accommodation was very costly as it was usually bed and breakfast (B&B) facilities, although the council tried to keep the stay in B&B facilities to a minimum, the costs to the council were still substantial. Access to an emergency assessment centre was the best possible working practice for an excellent housing department.

The Assistant Director acknowledged that the initial setting up for an emergency assessment centre would be costly, as a suitably large property would have to be found and refurbished. The costings in the options appraisal (attached to the report) assumed that the centre would be full at all times whereas in reality officers knew that there was always a fluctuation in the number of people presenting themselves to the council for housing.

The recommended option 3 in the appraisal report proposed improved procurement by use of a framework and potential joining together of other public sector partners who have need for temporary accommodation such as the NHS, the Probation Service and the council’s youth service. It would help all organisations to have pooled accommodation and for it to be managed in a planned way.

Members were encouraged by the idea of partnership working for a shared temporary accommodation facility and emphasised that the location of any possible building was very important to ensure that it did not produce social isolation for its users.

#### Decision:

The committee agreed to:

- (a) recommend that Cabinet instructs officers to undertake a procurement process for temporary accommodation by way of a framework of

## **Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 23 September 2010**

providers, as set out in the appendix to the report;

- (b) request that the Temporary Accommodation Task Group is re-formed to oversee the work for a possible shared Assessment Centre in Medway.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

**Caroline Salisbury, Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator**

Telephone: 01634 332013

Email: [democratic.services@medway.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@medway.gov.uk)