

Reports of the Select Committee Chairmen

a) ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Report on the meetings held on 8 December 2009 and 9 February 2010.

Since my last report the committee has met twice. On 8th December the Committee's main task was to examine the LDF Core Strategy Draft for Submission. This was done very thoroughly and a number of comments and suggestions provided.

The Committee then took a look at the Economic Development Action Plan, before moving on to consider the Annual Review of Parking Charges from which a recommendation was made to cabinet. We then considered the Allocations Development Plan and made some suggestions for corrections/additions.

Members met again on 9th February. After considering our forward plan of work we were provided with a presentation by a representative of the Environment Agency on Flood Risks. This proved to be of great interest and we shall return to water-related topics in the future.

We then considered two Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, for South Darenth and Riverhead. Members were able to make a number of comments and suggestions.

This meeting also considered various further growth and savings in respect of the forthcoming 2010/2011 budget, on which a numbers of comments were made.

R.F.C.Walshe
9/2/10

b) SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

Report to follow.

c) SOCIAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE

Report of the meeting held on 24 November 2009

Dentistry Provision in West Kent.

Members received presentations from Stephen Ingram, Director of Primary Care, and from Georgina Martin, Dental Contracts Manager NHS West Kent, on the availability and take up of NHS Dentistry across the Sevenoaks District.

Currently there are only sixteen NHS dental practices operating within the District, although another is due to open in Swanley in the near future. Sevenoaks is not

Item No. 10

regarded as an area of socio-economic need despite both rural and urban pockets of social deprivation nor is its rural nature and geographical spread properly recognised.

Members voiced concerns around the actual number of people who could access NHS dental care, as each practice only contracts for a fixed number of treatments. Poor public transport and long distance travel required to reach a NHS dentist were also raised as issues which needed to be addressed.

Mr Ingram accepted that there was room for further investment in NHS Dentistry throughout the District and invited the Council to help identify those areas in greatest need of the service. The Council, for its part, would welcome information on how resources were allocated and the profile evidence on which the PCT based its decisions.

Budget: -

Environmental Health

Members were informed that any further reduction in the Environmental Health budget, over and above the £60,000 already agreed, could only be achieved through a reduction in staff and the level of service provision.

CCTV

A variety of options were voiced including a recommendation that the police be requested to fund 50% of the operational cost. A small working group was set up to study the issue in greater depth, to examine all potential options and report back to the January meeting.

Choosing Health Evaluation

Members were disturbed to learn that the West Kent Primary Care Trust was proposing to cut funding from this well received project by £90,000 for the coming year despite the current Service Level Agreement. The Council will be asking the Trust to reconsider its decision which would seriously affect ongoing programmes.

It would seem that the Council is being penalised for its success; other councils, not so advanced in delivering this project, appear not to have suffered a similar fate.

The Draft Older Peoples Strategy

This was favourably received but Members queried what arrangements had been made for wider public consultation. It is understood that the Community Plan and Housing Strategy are to be the main consultation vehicles and that any responses will be fed back into the strategy when that document is reviewed next autumn. Members however

thought that the paper should be the subject of consultation in its own right and that cross references to other strategic documents should be included.

Cllr Alison Cook. Chairman

Report of the meeting held on 19 January 2010

South East Coast Ambulance Service Foundation Trust Proposals

Members received a presentation from Amy Day, Head of Communications at the South East Coast Ambulance Service, on its proposals to seek Foundation Status, the outcome of which should be known by early 2011 at the latest. Unfortunately, due to timing, it had not been possible to schedule her talk during the consultation period.

The current Authority had been formed by a merger of three ambulance services in 2006 and now covered the counties of Kent, Surrey and East Sussex, including Brighton and Hove and parts of Berkshire and Hampshire, serving a population of 4.5 million. It had some 3,000 staff operating out of 65 local sites. Approximately 650,000 emergency calls had been received last year of which only 10% were for critical incidents; the majority being for non life threatening acute conditions.

The service was deemed to be one of the highest performing in the country but still lagged behind outcomes being achieved by the best in the world in areas such as cardiac arrests. This position was acknowledged and to address this there were proposals to offer university courses to some paramedics to qualify them to perform more life saving interventions.

Achieving Foundation Trust status would allow the Service greater freedom while still remaining part of the N.H.S. It would provide the flexibility to raise additional funding and to retain any budget surpluses for ploughing back into patient care as well as the ability to invest in new technologies and treatments without recourse elsewhere. The Trust would have a Board of Directors and scrutiny would be carried out by a Council of Governors made up from local people, staff and representatives of key statutory bodies such as the police. The Authority is also seeking to recruit up to 4,500 people from the community by April 2010, to feed back comments to the Council of Governors. To date there has been a positive response but further volunteers are still being sought.

Budget 2010/11

Members received a well researched study, undertaken by the working group set up at the November meeting to examine potential savings / income generation in respect of the CCTV service. The conclusions reached included recommendations to reduce staffing levels by two through natural wastage, which would not compromise the effectiveness of the service, partnership working with other authorities and possible

Item No. 10

future funding from other councils to provide their out of hours services. It was agreed to recommend these measures to Cabinet.

Other issues included the potential for charging the Police rent for their use of office space at Argyle Road, reducing the number of In Shape editions, making them more informative, less glossy with fewer photographs, and a careful review of the use and cost of postage.

Members also voiced concern over the proposed savings in respect of voluntary grants, Sencio and the Summer Play Scheme, all of which were highly valued by the community.

Sustainable Community Action Plan Monitoring Report and the Draft Plan for 2010 – 2013

It was hoped that those targets which were currently shown as either amber or red would be carried forward into the new Community Plan. It was understood however, that that would depend on whether they had been identified as priorities during the recent consultation period for the updated Plan.

In order to simplify this process only thirteen targets would be included. These would be based on National Indicators but would cover the whole gamut of issues affecting the District. There was some dissatisfaction expressed that these indicators were inviolate; however if members so instructed, local indicators could be created although this would involve additional work.

Community Safety Partnership

It was noted that over 90% of the actions had been achieved and that the reported rise in domestic burglaries was now decreasing although that was not yet reflected in the 2nd quarter report.

Members expressed concern that, not for the first time, Kent County Council had not yet provided information on targets for which it was the lead partner. Officers were requested to convey these concerns in writing to the Authority.

Cllr Alison Cook. Chairman