

Local Planning & Advisory Portfolio Report to the Scrutiny Committee

1 Over the summer months the core of the work has been on the Allocations and Development Management Plan and the Waste Regulations 2012.

2 As regards the former, the Council has been responding to issues raised by the Inspector (mainly a commitment to review housing numbers and land at Fort Halstead and Edenbridge) and progressing the Gypsy and Travellers Plan. The assessed need is 71 pitches and 82 options have been identified and the remaining 33 of these will go out to consultation in December. The government has since issued a separate consultation on the impact of G&Ts giving up travelling permanently and it has revised the National Planning Practice Guidance to state that unmet need is unlikely to outweigh harm to the Green Belt.

3 As regards the Waste Regulations, these require certain dry recyclables (paper, glass, plastic and metal) to be collected separately from next January, unless it is assessed that collecting co-mingled (SDC collects paper, metal and plastic co-mingled) produces high quality recyclate. An independent assessment in October 2014 confirmed SDC's current collection method produces high quality recyclate and hence there is no requirement to move to a separate collection of these materials. Glass is already collected separately via glass banks. As part of this the "Recycle Right" campaign will be launched this winter promoting high quality recycling by residents to increase capture rates and improve quality of recyclate collected. The Pledge4Plastics campaign is to be launched to capture more plastic bottles. Leaflets will be sent to every household. These campaigns are externally funded. The good news is that in the very near future it will be possible to put other plastics into the clear sacks, such as tubs pots and trays.

4 Another key issue is to involve members more in Development Management and Planning Policy and make the system more transparent.

- Local members now have a greater involvement in appeals, in the preparation and presentation of the Council's case, particularly in DC overturns.

- Members are now sent details of the over 600 Enforcement cases, ward by ward, and a paper will be going to the Advisory Committee in January updating the management of the Enforcement register and local members will be involved in closing files etc.

- Many consultations are received from government and other public bodies and summaries will be circulated inviting member participation. Many are technical but some members have particular knowledge that the Council should take advantage of eg drainage.

- The revised Statement of Community Involvement in Planning is due to be adopted before Christmas and gives more emphasis to the role of district councillors, as well as explaining in detail the planning function. A copy will be sent to all town and parish councils, libraries etc.

5 In the immediate future

- The Advisory Committee has set up a sub committee to discuss the development of governance arrangements for the Community Infrastructure Levy and make appropriate recommendations. Key

issues include the role of KCC , district wide projects , out of district projects (eg education) etc CIL has been charged since early August having had our charging schedule found sound following independent examination in late 2013 .This enables the Council to secure the funding needed to support development and to provide 25% of receipts to local town and parish councils . It is estimated that between 2014 and 2026 the CIL may raise £5-6m but projects previously proposed could cost £30m!

- There will also be a review of the process to provide affordable housing , specifically the viability appraisal , to see if SDC can obtain greater provision , closer to our aspiration of 40%. It is looking at creating a joint Housing & Planning post , funded by s106 monies , to maximise the potential gain from the viability proposals .

6 Other concerns include

- Fly tipping . To the end of September 458 incidents were reported, a 3% increase .SDC had responsibility to remove 294 , an increase of 35%! Kent Highways is reviewing its policy on removing commercial fly tipped waste from next April . They are currently consulting and it may impact SDC's responsibilities and costs .

- Difficulties in recruiting and retaining planners , in both Policy and Development Management . SDC continues to struggle to be competitive with nearby local authorities and the private sector . Having said that , planning application processing time performance has increased significantly . Currently the performances for major , minor and other are 94% , 82% and 91% , compared with 68% , 74% , and 89% this time last year. We have also determined 149/12% more applications in the same time period with fewer officers . Appeal performance has also improved and 70% of those challenged are currently won by SDC.

R L PIPER 9/11/14