

SOCIAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Social Affairs Select Committee held on
8 March 2011 commencing at 7 p.m.

Present: Cllr. Mrs. Cook (Chairman)
Cllr. Wigg (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Bosley, Brookbank, Mrs. Broomby, Brown, Darrington, Mrs. Lowe, McInnes, Mrs. Moore, Orridge, Mrs. Parkin, Pett, Mrs. Purves and Waller.

Apologies were received from Cllr. Brigden and Cllr. Cooke.

43. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Social Affairs Select Committee held on 18 January 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

Cllr. Brookbank declared a personal interest in Minute Item 50 as a Non-Executive Director of the Swanley Citizens' Advice Bureau.

Cllr. Mrs. Broomby declared a personal interest as a trustee of West Kent Mediation.

Cllr. Mrs. Cook declared a personal interest as a trustee of West Kent Mediation and Chairman of Sevenoaks District Arts Council.

Cllr. Orridge declared a personal interest in Minute Item 50 as a trustee of Edenbridge and Westerham Citizens' Advice Bureau.

45. FORMAL RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET FOLLOWING MATTERS REFERRED BY THE COMMITTEE (Report No. 3)

None.

46. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (Item No. 4)

The actions from the previous meeting were noted.

47. WORK PLAN 2010-11(Report No. 5)

The Chairman suggested 3 items which could be added to the Work Plan, perhaps in September:

- an update on maternity services at Pembury Hospital, after reports of a significant rise in demand;
- an update on GP consortia and how they interact with reforms of the National Health Service; and
- an update on arts outreach work.

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A Member suggested that Chief Inspector Futers be asked to give a presentation on 999 services, after a poor experience she had.

Another Member requested an update on the South East Coast Ambulance Service now it had foundation status.

48. STAG COMMUNITY ARTS CENTRE PROGRESS (Item No. 6)

The Chairman welcomed Linda Larter, Chief Executive of the STAG Community Arts Centre, to the meeting. Mrs. Larter gave a presentation about the performance of the STAG Community Arts Centre in the financial year to date.

She was pleased that theatre bookings had reached 190 when the target was 100 and some bookings were in place until the end of 2012. She said the theatre covered a diverse programme.

The sponsor-a-seat scheme was doing well but was only in the early stages. She noted that 3D was installed into Screen One at considerable expense and although it had been expected that costs would be recovered over a year, this was achieved in 5 months. Kiosk sales were such a success that she felt too much burden was being put on volunteers and was considering hiring permanent staff to work with volunteers.

The expansion online, in marketing and bookings, had been expensive but significant business came through it. The Future Jobs Fund had helped provide assistance in online marketing. The STAG had succeeded in raising £180,000 in grants and sponsorships, including the Future Jobs Fund. Mrs Larter expected to print 40,000 copies of the next What's On Guide, up from 25,000. She noted that there was a surplus of £12,022 even after £30,000 had been put into reserves.

The Chairman congratulated Mrs. Larter for the STAG's tremendous turnaround.

A Member was concerned how widely the STAG had been advertised in the north of the District. Mrs. Larter replied that she advertised in the Dartford Messenger and the mailing list went to people from a wide area. Some Members reported they had not seen the advertising and had not seen the Guide in libraries as Mrs. Larter had been assured they should be. Mrs. Larter told the meeting she would check with Sevenoaks Library on this matter. She confirmed the STAG did work with schools in the north.

In response to a question she said The STAG did post the full Guide to those who requested it. The STAG had succeeded in achieving a mailing list of 3,500 this year by collecting email addresses from cinema visitors and those who booked online.

With respect to evening car parking charges, Mrs Larter confirmed to a Member that it was Sevenoaks District Council who had control over the charges.

Factors like the Olympics meant Mrs Larter could not fully predict how The STAG would perform into the future and she thought that if a significant maintenance cost arose then difficulties would be faced.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Larter and hoped the STAG Centre continued to go from strength to strength.

49. SENCIO ANNUAL REPORT (Item No. 7)

Mark Whyman, Chief Executive of Sencio, gave a presentation on Sencio's annual performance. Accounts were still being audited but initial results included a small surplus on the Sevenoaks trading account.

It had been a difficult year with the economic problems, the severe weather and the rising cost of utilities. The weather meant no income was taken from the golf course between 2 December 2010 and the New Year. Once the snow was cleared work had to take place to restore the greens to their high standard. Recently a JCB had vandalised the course causing considerable damage but this had been dealt with.

He believed Sencio was adding value to customers where large private leisure providers would not. The programme included encouraging families, rewarding loyalty and improved catering. Costs were being lowered by joining a flexible purchasing scheme.

For the sixth successive year satisfaction levels had increased and the "50+" scheme had become very popular.

Mr. Whyman highlighted some achievements over the year. In the latest energy survey all buildings were now rated as Grade C. Sencio had established a programme of support not just for disabled children but also their whole families. Sencio had also been accredited with a Social Enterprise Mark, having proven good business and environmental management. Mr. Whyman believed Sencio may be the largest Social Enterprise in West Kent.

He was concerned the recession may now affect the leisure sector but believed Sencio had a good reputation and strong base. He was also encouraged by surveys which suggested 95% of the public now believed exercise was important. He wanted to encourage these people to use the leisure centres.

Mr. Whyman responded to Members' questions. A Member was concerned by the effect of cuts on White Oak and Mr. Whyman said that White Oak had managed to hold its own in the first 3 months of the year. To another question he stated the Sports Development Officer would continue to be funded by Sencio but he could not speak for the contribution from schools.

He clarified that he did not think direct links to the Olympics would help Sencio. If Sencio had become a training camp local users would be displaced and it would cost money to ensure premises met all expected specifications. Instead Mr. Whyman was trying to find ways to allow workers to volunteer for the Olympics, while using the public enthusiasm for the Games to tackle obesity and promote healthy life styles.

A Member wanted to know what could be done to create larger blocks of time for pool use. Mr. Whyman felt it was important to be clear to customers and Sencio published as much information as possible. The blocks were reviewed regularly but would continue to be guided by income maximisation.

The Chairman enquired whether the 2 rear rooms at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre were in much use. Mr. Whyman confirmed they were used frequently.

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Mr. Whyman renewed his invitation to Members to be shown around Sencio's Sevenoaks building on 13 April. He also widened this to anyone who may be interested. Several Members indicated immediate approval.

50. CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT (Item No. 8)

The Head of Community Development reminded Members that this followed the presentations given at the last meeting.

She informed the meeting that the Citizens' Advice Bureaux (CABx) had assisted more people than it had clients because only people from the District and those eligible for homelessness advice were counted as "clients". Although people from outside the District were being helped she felt a similar number of Sevenoaks residents were going elsewhere for advice.

Volunteer hours worked had continued to rise with only minor changes in paid hours worked.

On 4 May 2011 a virtual Gateway was planned to take all incoming calls. A Member, who was a trustee of a bureau, said that calls could be taken elsewhere in the country if a local bureau did not have capacity to answer. Personal details were then relayed to the local office. The Head of Community Development added that calls taken for other bureaux would be spread evenly between Bureaux by time-limiting the telephone work.

She highlighted the statistics for client satisfaction in the Edenbridge & Westerham and Sevenoaks & Swanley bureaux. Clients thought Advisers understood them and their problem very well 96% and 95% of the time respectively. They thought the information/advice was very easy to understand 97% and 96% of the time respectively. She thought this was indicative of the high quality of their work.

A Member enquired whether savings could be made by using computer technicians from the District Council. A Member who is a trustee of a bureau said this had not been explored but was pleased with the work of their own technician. That Member believed the larger building Sevenoaks CAB was in contributed to the larger water rates they faced when compared with Edenbridge and Westerham, but he would check this.

Members noticed that more work-hours were being used to help fewer clients. Most agreed that this reflected an increase in complex, multi-faceted cases. They also noted the rise in immigration queries.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

51. YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTION PLAN MONITORING REPORT APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2010 (Item No. 9)

The Regeneration and Youth Manager pointed out that the 182,468 attendances at monitored youth clubs, projects and services in the District demonstrated that significant activities were taking place. There were 2,050 attendances at the Zone Family Fun Days, which was the highest ever.

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The Chairman raised the concern that this was the last Young People's Action Plan. She informed the Committee that she had used the 8-12s Project as an example of good practice when giving a presentation at a Council of Europe meeting. She felt all Members hoped the project would continue. The Regeneration and Youth Manager confirmed it was funded to March 2012 and she, in conjunction with West Kent Xtra, intended to submit a lottery bid for future funding in the next few months.

The Regeneration and Youth Manager confirmed some private schools were involved in the projects but it varied between the programmes. The Head of Community Development highlighted that there was a very low attainment for those who went to school in the District in comparison to those who lived in the District.

The Regeneration and Youth Manager confirmed she had held a workshop attended by 12 or 13 parish councils and other organisations to give advice on organising future Fun Days.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

52. PUBLIC HEALTH WHITE PAPER – HEALTHY LIVES, HEALTHY PEOPLE – FUNDING COMMISSIONING AND OUTCOMES (Item No. 10)

The Head of Community Development reminded Members that this was a follow up to the report submitted to the Committee in October. Members views were invited on the draft responses to the consultation for formal submission on 31 March 2011. She paid tribute to the work of the Health and Leisure Manager in forming the responses.

The Head of Community Development set out aspects of the proposed NHS framework. Public Health England was to be established under the Department of Health to focus on national public health and emergency preparation. The NHS Commissioning Board was also to have a public health mandate. She expected work to be organised through increased incentives; the Commissioning Board would encourage GPs to play a role in public health and the Department of Health would encourage reductions in health inequalities.

The "Transparency in Outcomes" paper had a greater focus on local involvement. She said a clear message had been given that upper tier authorities could not deliver goals by themselves. They would need others, like district councils, to identify local needs.

The Chairman made it clear she hoped that any responsibilities handed down by county councils would be accompanied by funds. She also hoped financial cuts would not degrade expertise currently held.

In response to a question the Head of Community Development stated that it was important to make it clear at county level that there was a great diversity in need within the District. Unless needs were assessed at a local level some pockets of health inequality would be missed. She also highlighted the difficulty of measuring success when those who have been helped moved out an area and were replaced by new individuals who similarly faced great needs.

She informed the Committee that 3 GP consortia were likely in the West Kent area, with the District split across 2. She did not believe this would hamper the ability to

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form strategic partnerships with them.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

The Chairman thanked Members for their hard work on the Committee over the 4 years. She also thanked Officers for the support they provided. Members thanked the Chairman for her leadership.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8:42 P.M.

Chairman