

Reports of the Select Committee Chairmen

a) ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Report on meetings held 29/07/09 and 25.8.09 .

On 29th July, a special meeting was held to consider the Consultation Draft of the Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport. Members made a series of comments and suggestions and the final version is scheduled to come back from Kent Highways in December.

At our latest meeting on 25th August, consideration was given to the Gatwick Airport Draft Noise Action Plan. Members felt considerable doubt as to whether this plan would make any substantial steps towards reducing the impact on areas in the southern part of the District. There followed a very thorough examination of the Update to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, with a number of issues raised concerning specific sites referred to in the assessment. There was also discussion about the Update to the Settlement Hierarchy and proposals made to improve the presentation and accuracy.

The Development Control Members Working Group recommended an improvement to current procedures which was endorsed by the Committee and it was also agreed that the group should review the latest changes to the DC protocol and relevant parts of the constitution in the light of current concerns among Members.

R.F.C.Walsh, Chairman 2/9/09

Report of the meeting held on 6/10/09 to follow.

b) SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

Report to follow.

c) SOCIAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE

Report of the meeting held on 28.7.09

SENCIO – Leisure Partnership

Mark Whyman, Chief Executive Sencio, and Colin Hunwick, Sports Development Manager, presented Members with their annual update. Quarterly meetings are held with the District Council to discuss strategic issues but there is also regular monthly contact between officers of both organisations. Sencio is a key member of the multi agency partnership helping to deliver the Sevenoaks District Community Plan including the highly successful Choosing Health initiative. Both Mark Whyman and Merle Bigden emphasised the excellent partnership arrangements which exist with both the statutory

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and voluntary sectors and the added value that is achieved by working together and pooling scarce resources.

Economically the past year has been extremely challenging; figures were down both for swimming and secondary spend with café sales, for example, being adversely affected. By contrast, utility expenses had risen despite careful budgeting and flexible purchasing. Customers had also become more demanding looking for promotional offers such as 2 for 1. Sencio had responded by taking imaginative action to increase its business base through consultancy work, H.R. and training and by attracting clients downsizing from private leisure facilities. Earlier investment in upgrading the gym facilities in Sevenoaks were paying dividends

Investing in the various sites remains high on the agenda with all the cafes being refurbished. Edenbridge had addressed the issue of Disabled Access and work continued to improve the facilities at the Lullingstone Golf Centre. Further energy efficiency savings were also being investigated at all sites.

On the staff side, absenteeism had been reduced to 3% and there was a good retention of employees. The Board had also been strengthened with two new trustees with financial and health expertise.

Sencio had worked with its different client groups to develop leisure activities that recognised what people actually wanted, for instance the introduction of Primetime, catering for the over 50s as well as working with youngsters to provide girls' football, promoting the interactive dance mats and facilitating the increasingly popular game of Futsal, thereby creating new ways to entice and encourage people of all ages to get active and enjoy sport, perhaps for the first time.

There is to be an Open Day of the leisure facilities sometime in October to which members will be invited.

STAG – Heads of Terms

This was debated at some length and resulted in a list of eleven proposed recommendations for consideration by Cabinet. All members were keen for the STAG to be a successful and thriving concern whilst also having regard to their custodial duty as landlords of the site on behalf of all the ratepayers in the District.

There was a general sense that a rent review after five years represented good practice but that stringent mechanisms needed to be in place to ensure that the ongoing viability of the complex as well as its ability to be upgraded would not be jeopardised as a result. The wording of the Heads of Terms needed to be tightened up by the legal team and all accompanying documentation must be unambiguous, clearly setting out all the relevant clauses and conditions.

The Young Peoples Action Plan
The Community Safety Strategy and Action Plan and

The Sustainable Community Plan

All three of these documents were approved and congratulations on the dedicated efforts and achievements were given both to the Council's officers and the many Partner organisations who work closely together to deliver these plans. The young people of the District were also commended for their increasingly active role in helping to shape service priorities and for their growing involvement in the voluntary sector. It was encouraging to see the increased number of Youth Councils now operating throughout the District.

It was requested that two items concerning the current levels of recycling and the below target provision of affordable homes be remitted to Services Select for further consideration.

Alison Cook July 2009

Report on meeting held 8th October 2009

Growth Bids and Savings Proposals

With a predicted budget gap of £800,000, in addition to the known planned savings, members were looking to identify areas where significant savings or income generation could be achieved. CCTV and Community Development were singled out as key spending departments with the Stag Theatre, leisure centres and grants to voluntary bodies accounting for £750,000 of the community budget, excluding staff costs. Other service areas including Healthy Living, Community Safety and youth projects attract external matched funding and resources which could not be guaranteed if staffing levels were reduced. Members did not identify any specific savings but felt there could be opportunities to use Section 106 Agreements and development levies more aggressively to fund these schemes and that charging for the Youth Zone activities should be seriously considered.

Members asked for a paper to come to the next meeting to indicate how a further £20,000 savings could be made from within Environmental Health.

The possible closure of Public Conveniences was also considered as was the potential for further cross authority sharing of staff and services.

There was a strong feeling that Kent Police should bear a far greater share of the cost of providing 24hr manned CCTV coverage; failing this the hours that the control room was staffed should be reduced to those times when criminal / anti-social behaviour was more likely to occur, the remaining hours simply being recorded.

Combined Community Safety Unit

The police have settled in well and the unit is already showing some positive results. Options for further joint co-operation were at an early stage but could include a shared reception facility, and looking further ahead the possible complete relocation of the Sevenoaks Police in Argyle Road.

Currently the police do not pay any rent but made a £50,000 contribution which funded other planned work within the Council offices.

Cllr Alison Cook