

Reports of the Select Committee Chairmen

a) ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Report of the meeting held on 13 April 2010

To Follow

Report on the meeting held on 17 June 2010

Since the date of the last Council meeting the Committee has met only once on 17th June.

The Committee first of all considered a report on Development Control Performance, which was welcome after a long gap. It was suggested that there could be improvements in the breakdown of information for regular comparison. Members then considered a report on Building Control. It was suggested by the Committee that closer working with the Development Control teams could provide an improvement in efficiency.

A report on Parking was considered and a number of questions answered. We then had a very interesting presentation on progress in tackling climate change under the Nottingham Declaration. A considerable amount of information was provided and many questions answered. Members felt that there remained more to do in the direction of transport emissions.

The Committee then considered a range of suggestions from the Development Control Members Working Group, three of which Members adopted to feed in as comments for the review of the new Development Control system.

R.F.C.Walshe
8/7/10

b) SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

To Follow.

c) SOCIAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE

Report of the meeting held on 23 March 2010

Formal Response from Cabinet

The committee, in common with other select committees, makes any recommendation to Cabinet after careful consideration. However the responses as currently reported in the Agenda Papers do not adequately detail Cabinet's reasoning when rejecting such proposals. It was therefore agreed that in future the relevant portfolio holder should be requested to attend the next meeting of the Select Committee to explain the Cabinet's decision.

It was also resolved that in the event of the Council showing a surplus in its year end accounts, serious consideration should be given to making up to £10,000 available in additional grants to voluntary organisations to compensate for the reduction in the year 2010/11 allocation.

A small working group was set up to review the criteria used to assess grant applications to report back to the July meeting. It was suggested that the views of the voluntary sector should also be sought as part of the process.

Stag Community Arts Centre

The complex has completed its first operating year under the management of the Sevenoaks Town Council and Mrs Linda Larter, Chief Executive of the Stag Community Arts Centre gave a presentation to members outlining its progress and achievements to date.

The major challenges were to believe that the centre could work effectively and viably and that the general public could be sufficiently convince to support its activities.

The shadow of bad debt left by the previous owners had left much ill will. This had been a particularly difficult problem to overcome especially when negotiating with film distribution companies but management was working hard to repair the damage caused. The national indicator for cinema audiences was a 25% capacity rate. She said the SCAC had been averaging around 18% although the fourth quarter figures showed an improvement.

Various initiative had been introduced including the opening of the Lodge Café, the launch of the Stag Youth Theatre and the licensing of the centre for weddings. Outreach programmes had been well received and bookings to hire the theatre itself were rising. Although on its own it could never break even. It was essential to pursue other business opportunities and to use the complex for a wide range of community activities and exhibitions. Future developments would include a move to develop on-line booking, the rehousing of the Tourist Information Centre and a Youth Café, assuming a successful bid to Kent County Council. In the meantime they await the Charity Commissioners endorsement of their charitable status.

Although the report did not include any financial statement Mrs Larter said she anticipated the year end figures to be better than forecast and that the results would shortly be published for the general public to scrutinise.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Members received an update on the Council's three year Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureaux following the first year of operation.

Feedback from the two CABs varied in presentation but, in essence, respondents' surveys showed a high level of satisfaction with the services being provided. It was however noted that because of lack of demand, the Outreach service to Westerham was being withdrawn and that as the current additional hours of opening for the Sevenoaks and Swanley offices were no longer being funded by the CitA their hours would be reduced accordingly.

As an amendment to the Committee's work plan it was agreed that representatives of the Citizens Advice Bureaux be invited to attend the Committee in either January or March 2011.

Cllr. Alison Cook
Chairman

Report of the meeting held on 20 May 2010

To Follow.

Council – 20 July 2010

Item No. 10