

REPORTS OF SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

a) Environment Select Committee – 7 December 2010 and 8 February 2011

Since my last report the Committee has met twice

On 7th December the Committee devoted most of its time to consideration of the draft budget and savings proposals. A number of comments and concerns were expressed which were duly relayed to the cabinet.

Also discussed were the LDF Annual Monitoring Report and preliminary reports on Local Listing and a forthcoming Conservation Area Appraisal.

On 8th February we had our regular session to consider the local railways and train services. Representatives of the two operators South-Eastern and Southern were present together with various local user groups and Sevenoaks and Edenbridge Town Councils. There was wide-ranging discussion, including recent winter problems and station improvements.

All concerned emphasized the importance of much more forthright representations by this council to the current consultations which will determine the future of rail services in Kent. The Committee unanimously recommended that the Cabinet should adopt a policy of forceful lobbying on behalf of local rail users.

The committee then considered a report on the new street cleaning schedules to start in April.

b) Services Select Committee – 6 December 2010 and 25 January 2011

On 6 December Deborah White from the West Kent Housing Association had been unable to attend the meeting and the Committee agreed to invite her to attend the next meeting in January 2011. Members conducted a wide ranging review of Service and Performance Plans and looked at many of the SCIA's in detail. A number of questions were asked relating to the proposals and clarification was provided at the meeting or passed on to the Cabinet.

The meeting on 25 January 2011 was attended by Deborah White who provided valuable information on under-occupation and downsizing. The Committee has invited Ms White to return in a year's time to update the Committee on these issues. The Committee also considered a revised Work Plan for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

c) Social Affairs Select Committee – 18 January 2011

Members received a presentation from Mr Graham Coldman and Mr Martin Wells on behalf of the Edenbridge and the Sevenoaks and Swanley Citizens

Advice Bureaux respectively. They explained the current situation citing the progress already made to reduce costs and the significant challenges they face over the coming years as statutory funding is reduced further. Possible options to be considered include the potential to deliver services in a different way by working with other bureaux and other local authorities in order to meet the growing demand for their assistance.

The ethos of the CAB has always been to offer free advice and support to all those needing their help regardless of their ability to pay although donations may be asked for. In future they may consider charging organisations / businesses that use their services.

District Chief Inspector Adrian Futers attended the meeting and commented on aspects of the Community Safety Partnerships Action Plan now in its third and final year. At this stage 91% of actions are on target; of the remaining 9% some will not now be achieved due to changing circumstances - for example KCC no longer intends to install 20mph speed limit signs. On a positive note, overall crime in the District has reduced as has the perception of crime with the main concerns now being around speeding vehicles and dangerous parking.

Members received a half yearly report on the Sustainable Community Plan. The new Plan, which is 96% on target, has reduced its priorities to 12 key areas. These include meeting the needs of our population, improving the lives of children and young people, addressing climate change, responding to housing needs and supporting a thriving economy.