

## **Annual Report by Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee - 2013/14**

As part of the new Governance arrangements agreed by Council in April 2013, the Council has moved to a system of one Scrutiny Committee and five Advisory Committees. The Scrutiny Committee has drawn up and followed a work plan for 2013/14 which has focussed on some key areas. These are:

- Inviting two Cabinet Portfolio Holders to each meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to discuss particular areas of focus/challenge.
- Inviting a number of external representatives to attend Scrutiny Committee to discuss particular areas of concern.
- Setting up a number of In-Depth Scrutiny working groups as task and finish groups to investigate particular areas in detail, reporting back to the Committee so that recommendations can be agreed and reported to Cabinet.

Scrutiny training was also provided to members of the Committee in October 2013, by an external trainer from South East Employers, in order to further inform Members in how to carry out effective Scrutiny.

Based on the above approach, the following is a summary of work carried out during 2013/14 by the Scrutiny Committee.

### **Portfolio Holders**

For their first attendance before the Scrutiny Committee, Portfolio Holders were asked to give an overview of the areas covered by their Portfolios, and were subsequently asked a number of questions by Members of the Committee regarding specific challenges and their approach and views. Portfolio holders attended as follows:

<b>Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Portfolio Area</b>
July 2013	Cllr Peter Fleming	Strategy and Performance
July 2013	Cllr Michelle Lowe	Housing and Community Safety
September 2013	Cllr Ian Bosley	Local Planning and Environment
September 2013	Cllr Roddy Hogarth	Economic and Community Development
November 2013	Cllr Brian Ramsay	Finance and Resources

For the second attendance before the Scrutiny Committee, Portfolio Holders focussed on a more specific area under their remit as follows:

<b>Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Areas of Focus</b>
November 2013	Cllr Peter Fleming	The Corporate Plan and the need to become more financially self-sufficient
February 2013	Cllr Michelle Lowe	Welfare Reform, HERO service and Internet Safety
February 2013	Cllr Ian Bosley	Allocations and Development Management Plan, Community Infrastructure Levy, Gipsy and Traveller Plan Consultation.

## **External Invitees**

November 2013 – Jayne Black, Director of Operations Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

Ms Black gave an overview of the work of the Trust and answered questions from Members including a number regarding Accident and Emergency Procedures and Performance.

February 2013 – County Councillor David Brazier, KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Julian Cook, KCC Highways District Manager for Sevenoaks.

The KCC Cabinet Member explained that the service had been underfunded for a number of years but more recently, following a number of re-organisations was in better shape and had been allocated more funds to support the current Find and Fix programme. The District Manager also highlighted fly-tipping as another significant area of concern.

Members of the Committee sought clarification regarding highway repairs including policies and approach to pothole repairs and resurfacing and the County Council's approach to dealing with fly-tipping

April 2014 – Chief Inspector Cook and Chief Superintendent Corbishly, Kent Police.

CI Cook and CS Corbishly have been invited to the April meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to discuss matters relating to levels of policing and crime across the district and particular issues that they encounter.

## **In-Depth Scrutiny Working Groups**

A number of In-Depth Scrutiny Working Groups have been created to look at specific areas at the request of the Scrutiny Committee, these are as follows:

### Parking

Remit - Parking Issues Relating to the Provision and Management of On Street and Off Street Parking, and Parking Enforcement.

Outcomes - Recommendations considered at Cabinet, 6<sup>th</sup> March

### Budget

Remit – To consider the draft budget presented to Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013

Outcomes – To draw up an alternative terms of reference complete with suggested timeline to carry out scrutiny work in time to feed into the 2014/15 budget process. To be brought to the April Scrutiny Committee meeting.

### Leisure

Remit - To benchmark with other authorities the amount spent by Sevenoaks District Council on the provision of leisure services through the leisure trust. To analyse the amount of subsidy per use of the Council's centres paid by the Council to Sencio – if possible in comparison with other authorities as well as over time. To assess customer satisfaction with the service provided. To

assess the retention rates for fitness users, the key profit-making area of the business. To look at initiatives that are in place or could be put in place to improve income and retention.

Outcomes – To report back to Scrutiny Committee in July 2014

### **Lessons Learned**

1. Not having a fixed membership was not helpful to gaining scrutiny experience.
2. The number of working groups will probably be limited by capacity and interest of members to engage.
3. Officer support for working groups is key.
4. Identifying the areas to challenge and scrutinise is very demanding and is often dependant, counter-intuitively, on officers.

Councillor James London

Chairman