

REPORTS OF SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

a) Environment Select Committee – 7 June 2011

This was the first meeting of the committee in the new municipal life.

The terms of reference were presented and noted by all members. A training DVD was shown to outline the general process of the system and its key aims.

A more detailed report on how the Services Select Committee held an in depth scrutiny in 2008 on empty housing and its result was provided. How Councillors could ask for items to be called in was explained, and it was highlighted that they must be within our terms of reference. We then split in 3 groups and carried out an exercise on a case study at Reddich BC.

The charging regime for the provision of on-street disabled parking was before us and after some discussion and also considering the small numbers involved it was resolved that it should be at no cost to the applicant - this to be reviewed in 12 months.

The future work plan was discussed and the LDF was put in. Hopes for a representative from KCC to attend in September for their winter maintenance program were doubtful. The annual review of parking charges was penciled- in and the bus and rail companies are to be invited to attend a future meeting

The budget will appear in January 2012 meeting, and aviation issues would be considered when the consultation paper has been received from Gatwick.

Street furniture will be considered in January or March 2012.

Councillor Ian Bosley

14 July 2011

b) Social Affairs Select Committee – 16 June 2011

As this was the first meeting of Social Affairs since the May elections, members took the opportunity to review the Committee's Terms of Reference and following a short training session discussed possible areas for in-depth scrutiny as part of the overall future workplan. Topics included the position of Mental Health Provision within the District and Maternity services at the new Pembury Hospital. Members agreed they should be better prepared to ask searching questions when inviting people to appear before the Committee. They also felt it would be

of value to invite relevant Voluntary Bodies to discuss their work where this linked into key strategic aims of the Council.

Lesley Bowles, Head of Community Development then introduced the Community Safety Strategic Assessment and invited members to recommend the annual Community Safety Plan to Cabinet. She explained that the Safety Partnership had been set up some eleven years ago with membership from the District Council with membership from the District Council, Kent County Council, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, the Primary Care Trust, Probation and the various Housing Associations. For the past two years, the Community Safety Unit had been housed in the Council Offices which had greatly enhanced communication and the sharing of intelligence. Seven priorities were outlined in the current Action Plan around young people, anti-social behaviour, burglary/car theft, the perception of crime, vehicle speeding, substance misuse and domestic violence. The Committee had earlier indicated that the new District Chief Inspector should be invited to discuss Community Safety at a future meeting.

Alison Cook

c) Services Select Committee – 21 June 2011

At the first meeting of the new committee, the main discussions centred around the future programme and work plan. It was decided that the scrutiny role could best be fulfilled by concentrating on Task and Finish activities and reviewing the main decision making processes (ie Budget) of the Municipal year.

It is proposed that wherever possible other issues will be covered by regular concise information reports from the relevant officer, who will not need to attend the meeting unless specifically required.

The first “Task and Finish” scrutiny will cover “under occupation in residential properties”. The sub group assigned to this topic has five members. It has already started work and is scheduled to produce its final report early in the New Year.

The next topic under scrutiny will be the “single credit” system. A sub group will start work in the New Year to coincide with the Govt’s introduction to the new policy.

The IT subgroup will continue to operate but with an emphasis on Task and Finish studies, the first being the District Council’s IT strategy.

Richard Davison.
Chairman Services Select Committee.
11th July 2011.