

## **SOCIAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE**

### Minutes of the meeting of the Social Affairs Select Committee held on 16 June 2011 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr Mrs A Cook (Chairman)  
Cllr Ms M Lowe (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr. L Ayres, Cllr. I Bosley, Cllr. R Brookbank, Cllr. Ms I Chetram,  
Cllr. K Maskell, Cllr. Mrs D Morris, Cllr. A Pett, Cllr. Mrs E Purves,  
Cllr. T Searles, Cllr. Miss L Stack, Cllr. J Thornton and Cllr. P Towell

Apologies for absence: Cllr. A Eyre, Cllr. Mrs A George,  
Cllr. M Horwood and Cllr. S Raikes

Cllr. Mrs E Bracken were also present

#### **1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Social Affairs Select Committee held on 8 March 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

None

#### **3. COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE - FOR INFORMATION**

Noted.

The Chair reminded members that there were a number of ways of placing items for discussion on the agenda: through the Chairman; the discussion of the Committee's work plan; and the formal call-in procedure in section 5.10 of the Terms of Reference.

#### **4. FORMAL RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET FOLLOWING MATTERS REFERRED BY THE COMMITTEE:**

The Committee noted that Cabinet had incorporated their comments in the Council's response to Public Health White Paper.

#### **5. FORMAL RESPONSE OR CONSULTATION REQUESTS FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:**

The Chairman noted that this was now a standing agenda item. There were no items to report.

#### **6. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING.**

None

## **7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRAINING**

The Chairman welcomed the Housing Policy Manager and Casual Support Officer.

The Casual Support Officer explained that Scrutiny training session was being undertaken by the three Select Committees. Members then watched a DVD, produced by the Local Government Information Unit, which outlined the general process and key aims of Scrutiny.

The Housing Policy Manager briefed Members on the Services Select Committee's in-depth scrutiny exercise on Empty Homes in 2008. Before the exercise, Democratic Services had created a Guide to In-depth Scrutiny which was distributed to Members. It was noted that the Committee formed a sub-group to consider the issues. Housing Officers supported the sub-group with case studies to consider and background information. The sub-group had decided to set up a Panel of experts, which had included the Manager of the Kent County Council's "No Use Empty Scheme", the Director of West Kent Housing Association and the Chair of the Landlords' Association. The sub-group had devised questions to ask the Panel and had carried out a question and answer session at a meeting of the Committee.

The Housing Policy Manager informed Members that, at the time, there had been 600 empty properties in the District with ten properties per year being brought back into use. He noted that the question and answer session had led to an Action Plan being produced at the meeting. The outcomes were a Empty Homes Officer being created within the Housing team; an amount of funding secured; and a new target to bring 20 properties per year back into use.

The Casual Support Officer outlined the main functions of Overview and Scrutiny. He also noted that the new Localism Bill might lead to County Council seeking district members to sit on the proposed Police and Health Boards.

Members were then split into three groups to complete a scrutiny exercise. They were given a case study relating to Crawley Borough Council and the management of their Allotment Service and were asked to consider how they would scrutinise this issue. Following the exercise they reported their ideas back to the Committee. Should they wish to view further case studies, they were available on the Centre for Public Scrutiny website.

## **8. WORK PLAN 2011/12**

Members discussed the Committee's work plan and agreed to update the work programme with the following items.

Community Safety

- Meet with the new District Chief Inspector, Peter Steenhuis for a discussion on Community Safety and the police handling of 999 calls. (September),

#### Personal Health

- Mental health provision in the District – a discussion with providers (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)), and users (Sevenoaks Mind) (November 2011)
- Implications for the District on the merging of Dartford and Gravesham and Medway NHS Trusts (January 2012)
- Update on provision of Maternity Services in Pembury (September)
- South Coast Ambulance Service response to 999 calls and impact of Paramedic Service – possible visit. (Date TBC)
- Future of NHS in the District (Spring 2012)

#### Social Inclusion: Young People

Impact on young people in the District of the closure of the Conexions Direct (advice on education, careers, housing, money, health and relationships for 13-19 year olds) in July 2011. (November 2011)

Leisure and culture

- Visit to a Leisure Centre: discussion with Sencio and possible Committee meeting (January 2012)
- Visit to Stag Theatre: discussion with Stag management (Spring 2012)

Action: Officers to update the work programme and make arrangements for future meetings.

Members agreed that voluntary bodies should be invited to committee to discuss their work with members. The Chairman felt that it would be helpful if the Voluntary bodies were listed against the most relevant Select Committee.

Action: Officers to draw-up a list of voluntary bodies for the Committee to consider at the next meeting.

Members agreed that there should be better preparation for a more robust and thorough questioning of people appearing before the Committee, including sending questions in advance so that there would be a better understanding of the scope of the Committee's inquiries.

Action: Officers to discuss with the Chairman how to best improve the questions and dialogue with people appearing before the Committee.

## **9. COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND ANNUAL COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTION PLAN**

The Head of Community Development introduced the Community Safety Strategic Assessment and annual Community Safety Plan and asked members to note that Sevenoaks has the lowest level of crime in Kent. She noted that there had been a Community Safety Partnership in Sevenoaks since 1998, set up in response to the 1998 Crime & Disorder Act. It was reported that the current Community Safety Partnership included Sevenoaks

District Council, Kent County Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, the Primary Care Trust, Probation and housing associations.

Members were informed that two years ago the Community Safety Unit was co-located set up bringing Police and Council officers together, with KCC Community Warden, the Power Project and Trading Standards adding to the partners involved. Daily tasking meetings have been set up to coordinate the work of the Unit and identify current issues for the Partners to deal with. Intelligence from the daily tasking meeting, engagement with partners and the Monthly Crime & Victimization Survey informed the priorities for the Action Plan.

The Head of Community Development briefly outlined the propose priorities in the Action Plan:

Anti Social behaviour

Young People

Burglary and vehicle crime

Public perception of crime

Speeding Vehicles

Substance Misuse

Domestic Violence.

Members raised the issue of Kent County Council officers not being able to attending local PACT meetings in the evening. The Chairman suggested that District members should suggest their County Councillor attends the local PACT meeting.

After the discussion Members

Resolved: That the Council's actions in the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Action Plan 2011/12 be approved by Cabinet.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.17 pm

Chairman