

## **7.1 MBC Parish Liaison Meeting – Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

The meeting was hosted by Councillor John A Wilson, Cabinet Member for Community Services. Presentations were given as follows:-

Setting the scene “working together” – Sue towns Okorodudu, Chief Executive and Charlotte Osborn-Forde, Manager of Voluntary Action Maidstone gave a brief outline of VAM’s work and its many links with volunteers and agencies in the Maidstone Area. The context of “The Big Society” was touched upon but more questions than answers were evident. The Government would make payment on outcomes which could cause difficulties to voluntary organisations. Expectations on citizens will be very high but the key to the future will be good relationships amongst organisations. The government would be funding 500 Community Organisers for one year to encourage a further 5,000 volunteers to become COs when responsibility would pass to the local community. This Big Society network was nothing new to VAM which has been supporting volunteering and training schemes for sometime. It was suggested that the U3A group could provide support to volunteers.

MBC Strategic plan priorities – Angela Woodhouse, Head of Overview and Scrutiny spoke on the 2011-2015 SP priorities. The Service Design principles which had been used began with the question “Was MBC the best organisation to deliver?” The SP was outward looking towards Parish Councils and Voluntary Organisations. Priorities for MBC have focussed on where cuts could fall and many “back office” cuts have already been made. The plan has focussed on 3 priorities with 6 outcomes, even though some of these areas are not within the usual remit of MBC, they could be achieved through partnerships:-

1. Growing Economy – transport and employment.
2. Decent place to live – housing and environment.
3. Corporate and Customer Excellence – reduce deprivation and value for money services.

MBC Local Strategic Partnership Update – Sarah Robson, Community Partnerships Manager spoke on how the aspirations of the Sustainable Community Strategy are being translated into action. Again this involved partnership working. The plan of 2009-2020 oversees delivery in stages and can be seen at [www.maidstonematters.org.uk](http://www.maidstonematters.org.uk) They envisage a co-ordinated approach in partnership with others to work together with the community to ensure better outcomes. It was mentioned that Speed Watch may in future be called Road Watch as it may include monitoring drivers using mobile phones whilst driving.

Supporting Young People – Switch Café Project – Roy Laming, Manager of Switch Café Maidstone spoke on the work to provide a place in which young people could “Hang Out”, now being run as a charity. It has Lottery funding until 2015 and has many milestones and outcomes to achieve. It has many aims, including a desire by young people to bring about change. It is run by and for young people, makes Maidstone Town Centre more youth-friendly, creates positive views about young people and improves their health and well-being. Young people have been encouraged to involve themselves in charitable work, local elections and produces a quarterly “Vibe” Magazine. The venue is used by many partner agencies who meet with young people such as; connexions, libraries, youth offending services, Kenward Trust, Mid Kent College and those with learning difficulties. Smoking tests, health issues and quit smoking courses and a safe haven project have been launched. The Café has supported Macmillan fund-raising (Big Coffee Morning), held creative writing courses and has a Jazz Festival project. The Café project hopes to share its knowledge and experiences to develop satellite cafes within existing Youth Clubs and parishes through the “Youth Café in a Box” project. It hopes to continue and get better all the time.

Tackling Anti-social behaviour – Alan Newman, Community Safety Officer, MBC. spoke very briefly on his work. It was understood that the Government was now moving away from Anti-social behaviour orders (which were often worn as a “badge of honour” by the young person), probably into community-based initiatives. Priorities would in future be recognised as 5 incidents to one person or 5 reports of the same type of incident in one area. A Government Pocket Guide entitled “Information Sharing” was circulated and can be downloaded at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications) Search using the ref: DCSF-00808-2008 A brief review of S17 and 115 Crime and Disorder Act was handed out together with a “Children Playing football” policy was circulated (both available from the Clerk). Community conferencing (getting all parties together) to resolve issues was now commonly used to deal with incidents of anti-social behaviour. The Safer Maidstone Partnership ASB Group had 113 new cases since January 2008, had successfully resolved 101 with 12 live cases going forward in January 2011 but the workload was increasing but so was efficiency (statistics were circulated and are available from the Clerk).

Maidstone Older Persons Forum – Peter Spearink gave an update on the work within Maidstone and his wish to see this enthusiasm build in parishes. It was a friendly group of up to 140 people over 55 who met quarterly to engage in a variety of leisure activities, discuss topics such as public services and listen to representatives of local organisations such as the Fire Brigade. Meetings included refreshments on arrival and a light lunch. Next meeting 20<sup>th</sup> April 2011 at Hazlitt Theatre Exchange Studio (formerly the Corn Exchange). The events were free but bookings needed to be made through VAM 01622 677337 for catering purposes.

Age Concern Update & Community Hubs – Paul Coles of Age Concern Maidstone outlined the services that Age Concern provided within its 12 Day Care Centres in the Maidstone Area. These included Dementia Day Care at Bearsted (100 places p.w.), Voluntary Transport, Home bathing service (108 clients p.w.), Community Footcare (no longer subsidised), Independent Living Service, Computer classes, Sign posting, Information services and advocacy. Age Concern also had a wheelchair hire service, organised social activity sessions, had a trusted traders' list, Heat and Eat crisis kits (in case of breakdowns), Counselling services, Community Hubs and Well-being Clinics.

The Community Hub project had funding for one year and hoped to set up Good Neighbour Schemes, Dog Walking volunteer groups and assist with Parish Emergency Plans through meeting at coffee mornings.

The Well-Being Clinics offered free Health checks and advice on health matters for 50-75 year olds and worked with the PCTs. It wished to expand the Wii & Tea project into parishes and volunteers to run these were needed.

Contact: [www.ageconcernmaidstone.org.uk](http://www.ageconcernmaidstone.org.uk)

#### Any Other Business

1. Clerks' Training Day - ? June 2011 Suggestions were requested by Sarah Robson.
2. Annual Parish Conference - 22 October 2011 to be held at Headcorn.
3. Parish Websites – MBC envisaged adding a central portal link to/from parish websites to enable parishes to pick up more easily information from the MBC website.

Meeting closed at 4.10 p.m.  
Sue Bassett, Parish Clerk  
Reported to Full Council on 21/03/11