

Appendix B

Centre for Public Scrutiny Development Activity

Email from Jessica Crowe, Executive Director, Centre for Public Scrutiny

Thanks for getting in touch. We can certainly provide the revised approach that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee are seeking. To really make the session as useful as possible there will need to be commitment from Cabinet to be part of it as well as scrutiny – is there agreement to this from the members? Without Cabinet present, it is hard to envisage how we could usefully understand and overcome any perceived barriers to building a stronger relationship between the two, as it would be a one-sided discussion and would leave lots of issues raised but not resolved.

If we can arrange a joint event with Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny I would suggest something along the lines of:

- Initial small groups session seeking to build a shared consensus around the vision and purpose of O&S in Maidstone, what works and what could improve from both perspectives
- [if we can identify it] case study joint presentation of where a cabinet member and their relevant committee have worked productively together – it would be a powerful message if everyone could hear from their own colleagues about the benefits of closer working. From the Update report it sounds like it is working well in some areas if not all, so it would be good to identify a positive experience that could be shared. If there is no local case study we can identify some good practice examples from elsewhere (eg of where Cabinet have asked scrutiny to investigate an issue, or where O&S have picked up on a key council priority and done work to develop the council's approach on it) but would be good to find a local one that would have more resonance
- Facilitated discussion on priorities and emerging work plans for the coming year to identify practical opportunities for closer working between Cabinet and O&S (each cabinet member and committee to highlight 3 priority issues to see if there is overlap or potential for collaboration)
- Facilitated discussion on how the scrutiny / holding to account element is working and what might need to change to enhance it.
- Agreement on what each member will do differently and personal actions to take away. We will capture these and record them (could use the approach of writing a postcard to themselves which we would then post to them in 3 months time to remind them of what they agreed they would do)

This could be a very productive, practical and interactive session, but as I say needs commitment from Cabinet as well. Could you let me know what you think and if this is along the lines of what the Coordinating Committee wanted? Ed is back on Tuesday so can pick this up, and I think the initial proposal stemmed from an LGA request to provide some support so we probably need to check out with them the basis on which we'd be doing this work.

Best wishes

Jessica