

New reviews

Scrutiny

Welcome to our annual report. This year has been a productive one for scrutiny with the completion of four reviews, the development of the Health Scrutiny Panel, and a new programme of reviews produced following a period of public consultation. The first two reviews in the new programme are detailed below.

The year has also seen a programme of training to enable the newly-elected councillors to understand their role in scrutiny.

Debt counselling review

Currently the council does not provide such a service. However, with the level of personal debt increasing, should the council do so?

The review will look at local and national debt patterns and see if the council is providing sufficient resources to enable people to make use of debt counselling services. The review will also look into how we identify potential debtors and how we help them to get the right advice.

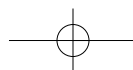
Please see page 37 if you would like to contribute to this review.

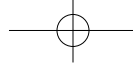


Beach Huts Review

Scrutiny is currently looking into the beach hut service. Beach huts are an integral part of the character of our seaside towns. There are many concerns surrounding the service – the licensing system currently in place, meeting the demands of prospective users, and identify potential growth in the service.

The review hopes to come up with a strategy for developing the service over the next five years, and clarify how best to provide the service.





Past reviews

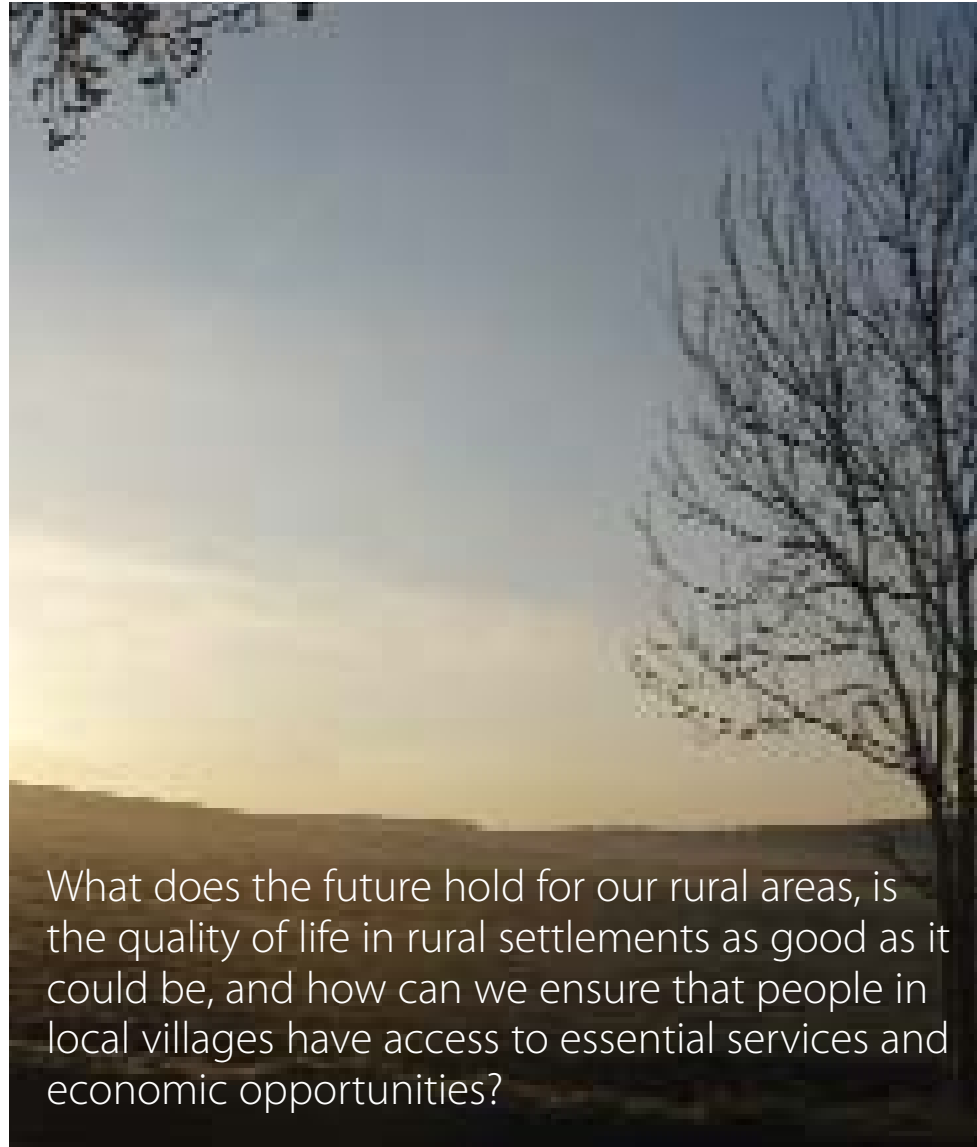


Highways

The aim of the review was to look at the highway maintenance arrangements before and after April 2005, when responsibility transferred back to Kent County Council.

There was a concern that since the transfer there has been a change in the level of service for our district, and that the current arrangements have meant that the service had become less responsive to the needs of the district. There is a fear that this could affect the council's strategic regeneration projects.

The review found that the change had affected lines of communication in some areas, with the relocation of highways services to distant sites hindering communication between the district and county. In addition, partnership in development projects, which had been a strong feature of the relationship up until 2005, has been weakened.



What does the future hold for our rural areas, is the quality of life in rural settlements as good as it could be, and how can we ensure that people in local villages have access to essential services and economic opportunities?

West Gate Towers



The review looked into the current use of the West Gate Towers, and traffic impact, and considered a range of options for the future use of the West Gate Towers and how it would affect the local area.

Protection of the West Gate Towers has become the focus of public debate, with regular column inches in the local papers dedicated to it. The council also has taken an interest in the future of the West Gate Towers because of their contribution to Canterbury's cultural identity.

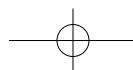
The review recommended that the council supports the pedestrianisation of the West Gate Towers, and incorporate this into a broader heritage area including the Westgate Gardens, the river, Tower House, and the Guildhall.

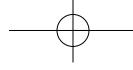
Rural sustainability

This review undertook a health check of our rural communities, asking: "What does the future hold for our rural areas, is the quality of life in rural settlements as good as it could be, and how can we ensure that people in local villages have access to essential services and economic opportunities?"

We wanted to ensure that the council is doing all it can to meet the challenges facing our rural settlements, to secure a prosperous and secure future for all our communities.

The review identified the wide variety of organisations concerned with rural issues, the challenges facing rural communities, and the need to develop a strategy with our partners to ensure the viability of a rural way of life.





City centre

This review was concerned that development of the city centre may produce a conflict between the needs of current and future residents, and the council's aim to create a diverse cultural offering and a vibrant late night economy.

This review looked into how different types of development in the city are integrated, and how the council can influence this to achieve the best balance between two contrasting priorities.

The review recommended a multi-disciplinary officer group that co-ordinates and improves the council's approach to the city centre. It identified a lack of late night public transport and dedicated music venue, and recommended a move away from establishments where the primary purpose is drinking alcohol.

Health scrutiny

The Health Panel has continued to monitor the move towards Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) as the way for local people to become involved in monitoring and shaping the health services they receive. The panel has worked with Kent County Council to help shape the way the LINK is developed. The panel will continue to keep a close eye on the implementation of the LINK for Kent.

One function of the health panel is to monitor changes in the health service locally and nationally – that's why the panel was looking at the proposed polyclinic in

Whitstable, and its impact on residents.

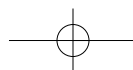
The review heard evidence from a broad range of witnesses including NHS professionals, representatives of various health service user groups, and Whitstable Medical Practice, who are leading the proposal.

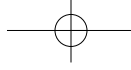
The panel also heard from Kent Student Union and the Primary Care Trust on the downgrading of sexual health services at the University of Kent. This gave representatives of the Student Union the opportunity to present the issue, and for a discussion to take place about the benefits of preventative care.

Future work

The health panel will continue to monitor developments within the NHS to ensure that any changes will not have a negative impact on services. We shall be seeking ways to strengthen the Health Scrutiny Protocol with Kent County Council and other district councils, and keep an eye on developments within the recently formed Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust.

We also intend to conduct a short topic review into a subject that affects the district. In particular we may be looking at the provision of school nurses – what role do they fulfil, are there enough, and where are their efforts focused?





The Entertainment Economy

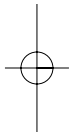
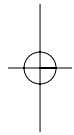
When the current scrutiny reviews have concluded, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be embarking on an in-depth review of the district's provision of entertainment, both evening and daytime.

This will include an evaluation of the overall contribution of venues such as pubs, clubs, bowling alleys, theatres and other places of entertainment.

The review will consider the role of the council together with the economic and social benefits of this sector, how it is managed and if there are any other areas where it could make a contribution.



Aladdin, The Marlowe Theatre, 2007. ©Photo courtesy of Evolution Productions and Limelight Studios.



Can you help us with the Debt Counselling review?

We would like to hear about your experiences.

Have you ever been in debt?

Did you know where to turn for advice?

Do you work for an organisation that helps people in debt?

If you feel you could help in any way please either complete this form and send it to:

**Policy & Improvement Division,
Canterbury City Council,
Freepost 41,
Military Road,
Canterbury, CT1 1BR**

or contact us via scrutiny@canterbury.gov.uk
or complete the online form at
www.scrutiny.canterbury.gov.uk
or call **Charlotte Smith** on **01227 862005**

Your experience

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Name and address (not compulsory, but will help us keep you updated on the review)

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