

Committee system best for everyone



Cllr Fran Wilson (Lib Dem)
is Group Leader and
Leader of Maidstone
Borough Council.

becomes the chairman of the lead policy and resources committee. Other chairmen and vice chairmen are appointed by the committees but the constitution demands that the chairman and vice-chairman of each committee have to be from different political groups.

We were reluctant to change from the committee system to cabinet and scrutiny but, when the change was forced upon us, were one of the first to do so. Determined to get the best out of the system, we gained a reputation for excellent scrutiny work, producing influential reports about motorway noise and abandoned vehicles, amongst other subjects. This, however, has not outweighed the disadvantages of cabinet governance which became apparent over the years.

With buy-in from all political groups we believe our new committee system of

governance can retain the benefit of timely decision making but with the added advantage that all councillors will now have the opportunity to be fully involved in policy formulation and decision making. This will build experience and expertise across the council chamber, leading to smoother succession when frontbenchers leave the council or there is a shift in the political balance of power.

The partnership between officers and councillors will also benefit more councillors receiving advice first hand from officers and more councillors contributing knowledge about local matters.

The new system involves all our councillors in our decision making. It will be more democratic, inclusive and transparent, and that has got to be better for our residents.

Maidstone Borough Council has returned to a committee system of governance.

We have made the change because many of our back benchers felt disenfranchised under Cabinet with most decisions made by just six of our 55 councillors. Most decisions will now be taken by four service committees.

Under our new constitution the leader of the council is elected at full council and automatically



Cllr James Abbott (Green)
is a member of the
Development and
Regulation Committee
on Essex County Council.

It's an intriguing pitch that there are major economic "opportunities" for a community that accepts the proposed high level radioactive waste disposal facility.

The cost of radioactive waste disposal

