

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 April 2017

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 24 April 2017 at 5:30pm.

Committee Members present: Councillors I.G.F. Jenkins (Chairman), C.J. Saint (Vice-Chairman), R.K. Bird, G.S. Browne, G.C. Curtis, S.H. Earl, Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams, S.D. Elford, R.V. Elliston, K.M. Field, Mrs B.A. George, T.W. Graham, B. Kentfield, P.N. Osborne (ex-officio), J. Potts and Mrs S.M. Prochak.

Other Members present: Councillors Mrs S. Hart, Mrs E.M. Kirby-Green and M.R. Watson.

Advisory Officers present: Executive Director of Business Operations, Executive Director of Resources, Service Manager – Finance and Welfare, Service Manager – Corporate and Human Resources, Service Manager – Environmental Health and Licensing (in part) and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: Marie Jones, East Sussex Energy Partnership Fuel Poverty Co-ordinator (in part) and 1 member of the public.

OSC16/54. **MINUTES**

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 March 2017 as a correct record of the proceedings.

OSC16/55. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.K. Azad, J. Barnes, Mrs M.L. Barnes, J.J. Carroll and G.F. Stevens.

The Chairman announced that due to the representative from East Sussex County Council being unable to attend the meeting, Agenda Item 5: High Speed Broadband Update would be deferred and reported at a future meeting.

OSC16/56. **FUEL POVERTY** (6.1)

Fuel Poverty referred to a household unable to afford an adequate standard of warmth and pay for other energy needs to maintain their health and wellbeing. Those living in homes that were difficult or expensive to heat, were likely to be cold and damp, were more likely to suffer from poor health such as asthma, chronic respiratory diseases and conditions which affected the immune system. Living in a cold home was a factor to the number of excess winter deaths (EWD);

these were additional deaths that occur in winter months when compared to non-winter months.

Members noted that in the last five years an average of over 300 more people in East Sussex died in the winter period with nearly one third of which were believed to be because of the impact of cold temperatures in the homes of vulnerable people.

Currently 9% of households in Rother were defined as being fuel poor. Since November 2015, the East Sussex Energy Partnership (ESEP) received 228 referrals from Rother district; a number of properties required minor (insulation) and major (heating systems) upgraded renewable energy equipment installed. The Council's Corporate Plan action 4.3 referred to actions to reduce fuel poverty. As Fuel Poverty was a significant public health issue, the Council was participating in a number of programmes and partnerships in order to deliver energy improvements to households in the district. These included:

- **Government Grants:** Government grants were still available, normally to households on income related benefits. The grants were normally funded directly by energy companies or indirectly through the National Energy Action organisation.
- **East Sussex Fuel Poverty Reduction Programme:** The Council was a member of the ESEP which co-ordinated the East Sussex Fuel Poverty Reduction Programme that aimed to promote energy efficiency, insulation and renewable measures and protect individuals and communities in East Sussex from the effects of living in a cold home. Marie Jones, ESEP Fuel Poverty Co-ordinator was present at the meeting to answer Members' questions on fuel poverty in Rother and the actions being taken to reduce fuel poverty in the district. Her role included engaging with national and local organisations such as community energy organisations, the Energy Saving Trust and National Energy Action, monitoring the Winter Home Check Service and providing training to organisations and volunteers.
- **Healthy Homes Scheme:** As part of the East Sussex Better Together programme a "Healthy Homes" scheme was underway to tackle fuel poverty. Central Ward, Bexhill was one of the areas identified; the programme provided grants to eligible households for thermal insulation and replacement boilers. In addition, where necessary, Environmental Health Officers in the Private Sector Housing Team could take enforcement action if a property was excessively cold and categorised as a hazard.
- **Winter Home Check Service:** The Winter Home Check Service was provided by Osborne Energy and carried out winter warmth home assessments to identify how to keep warm and well by carrying out preventative measures. The service was available to households in receipt of income related benefits.
- **Rother Energy Switch:** The Council had been actively promoting a scheme where households could join a community energy auction which facilitated houses changing their energy supplier and potentially reducing their energy bill.

The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) required the Council to produce a report every two years which detailed home energy

efficiency in the district and laid out energy conservation measures that the Council considered practicable, cost-effective and that would result in improvement in energy efficiency. The Council's plan was attached to the report for Members consideration which detailed current and future actions for 2017/19.

Members had an opportunity to put forward questions and the following points were noted during the discussion:

- important to improve communication with local communities and raise awareness of renewable energy measures. Members were encouraged to promote and refer their communities to the ESEP's website <http://www.eastsussexenergypartnership.org.uk/>;
- it was suggested that the ESEP send copies of their promotional leaflets to the Parish and Town Councils across the district;
- difficult sometimes to upgrade Grade I and II listed properties with modern energy efficiency systems, therefore it was essential that landlords, residents and energy companies sought advice from Local Authority Planning Departments and Conservation Officers prior to upgrading any equipment;
- encourage low income households to change from pre-payment to credit metering as paying by direct debit was the cheapest way to pay for fuel; and
- £698m of ECO European Union funding was spent over the last 18 months; it was anticipated that this funding would diminish as a result of BREXIT.

The Chairman thanked Marie Jones for her comprehensive report and attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

OSC16/57. **CALL-IN AND URGENCY PROCEDURES**
(6.2)

The Committee received the report of the Executive Director of Business Operations on the Council's Call-In and Urgency Procedures. In accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Rule 17 (b) of the Constitution, the operation of the provisions relating to call-in and urgency was monitored annually through a report submitted to full Council via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC).

The Call-In procedure was the mechanism by which the Council's OSC could challenge decisions made by the Executive that were not yet implemented. Thirteen Executive meetings had been held during the period of the report from 7 March 2016 up until 13 February 2017. Members noted that no Executive decisions had been called in, and no decisions of Cabinet, within the approved budget and policy framework had been deemed and resolved as urgent decisions.

Member were advised that as the Council was considering reformatting the OSC to consist of 12 Members from the new civic year, it would be opportunistic to consider reducing the number of Committee Members required to call-in a decision. Therefore it was recommended to reduce the number from three to two. The Committee was in agreement with

the recommendation and noted that the Call-In and Urgency Procedures and Constitution would be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED: That subject to the proposed changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure being agreed by full Council, that Cabinet be requested to recommend to Council that the number of Committee Members required to call-in a decision be reduced from three to two in recognition of the reduction of Committee Members, with effect from the new civic year and the Constitution be amended accordingly.

OSC16/58. **COUNCIL CHAMBER AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT UPGRADE**
(7.1)

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director of Resources which advised on upgraded Audio/Visual (AV) equipment for the Council Chamber. The current wireless microphone system was approximately 10 years old, unreliable and in urgent need of replacement.

As previously reported to Members, as a result of changes in legislation, in particular the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, the Council was keeping under review the audio and video recording of formal Council meetings. Members noted that funding had been set aside in the Capital Programme to fund the Rother 2020 programme which included upgrading the (AV) equipment however this did not include the £12,000 annual licensing fee to webcast live meetings. The Service Manager – Finance and Welfare advised that additional funding would need to be incorporated into the Revenue Budget in future years should webcasting be commenced.

Advice for a complete overhaul of the AV equipment had been sought from one of the industry's leading suppliers and the report detailed the options proposed with indicative prices:

Option 1: Conference and Audio System Upgrade: to deliver 25 Bosch Dicontis wireless microphone unit system, with application protocol, digital signal processor, battery packs and charges would approximately cost £34,000.

Option 2: Video/Presentation System Upgrade: to install and deliver two 75" TV screens and 4 x outlet plates around the Chamber to allow movement flexibility would approximately cost £20,000.

Option 3: Camera & Webcasting Encoder Installation: to install cameras and streamlining software would approximately cost £14,000 plus £12,000 per annum to live stream meetings.

The Executive Director of Resources advised that purchasing all three options at the same time would be cost effective; provide enhanced technology e.g. high definition screens and an improved sound system; provide additional flexibility regarding usage of the Chamber; generally improve the experience for all who attended Council meetings; and a reduction in price was anticipated.

The Committee considered the advantages and disadvantages of upgrading the system and following discussion, agreed to recommend to Cabinet that all three options be purchased for the Council Chamber and that live-streaming of Council meetings not be pursued at this point in time but kept under review.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be requested to approve that Options 1: Conference and Audio System Upgrade; 2: Video/Presentation System Upgrade; and 3: Camera & Webcasting Encoder Installation be purchased for the Council Chamber and that live-streaming of Council meetings not be pursued at this point in time but kept under review.

OSC16/59. **DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL**
(8)

Members received the draft Annual Report to Council as submitted by the Chairman, Councillor Jenkins. In accordance with Article 6, Paragraph 6.3 (d) of the Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) was required to report annually to the Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amend working methods, if appropriate.

The report covered the period from April 2016 through to the end of March 2017 and gave examples of the various subjects that the OSC had considered during this period as well as the in-depth scrutiny reviews that had been conducted.

The Chairman thanked his Vice-Chairman, Councillor Saint and all fellow scrutiny Members and officers for their contributions over the last 11 months.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's draft Annual Report, be approved and recommended to Council.

OSC16/60. **WORK PROGRAMME**
(9)

Consideration was given to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme and the following points were noted.

- a report on Disability Access Issues and would be reported at the meeting scheduled to be held on 12 June 2017; and
- an update on High Speed Broadband would be reported at a future meeting.

Members were reminded that the informal annual work programming meeting had been arranged for Monday 22 May 2017 at 10:00am in the Council Chamber and all non-executive Members had been invited to attend. At this meeting Members would give consideration to the items they wished to see included within the Work Programme and to consider these with the Strategic Management Team and Service Managers in attendance.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme, as attached at Appendix A, be agreed.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 6:50pm

OSC170424/jh

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2017 – 2018	
DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM (Capitalised)
12.06.17	DISABILITY ACCESS ISSUES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Work Programme • Community Governance Review • Performance Progress Report: Year End and Fourth Quarter 2016-2017
24.07.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Parking Enforcement • Tourist Information
11.09.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Progress Report: First Quarter 2017-2018 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring to July 2017
16.10.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Governance Review • Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2022/23
27.11.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Progress Report: Second Quarter 2017-2018 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring to September 2017
29.01.18	DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2018-2019 KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2018-2019
19.03.18	CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE: TO RECEIVE AN REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Progress Report: Third Quarter 2017-2018 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring to January 2018
23.04.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Programme Update [Minute CB16/58 – 5 December 2016] • Attracting businesses/commercial activities and tourism to the district [Minute OSC16/42 & 44 – 30 January 2017] • Bexhill Hive [Minute CB16/16 – 4 July 2016] • Cemetery Provision/Charging System [Minute CB16/58 – 5 December 2016] • Emergency Motions at Council Meetings [Minute C16/24 – 11 July 2016] • Executive Priorities for 2016/17 and performance of 2015/16 (Leader of the Council) • High Speed Broadband Update • Leisure and Recreational Areas: Commercial Fitness Operator's Registration Scheme [Minute OSC16/32 – 28 November 2016] • Locate East Sussex [Minute CB16/56 – 5 December 2016] • Rother Public Realm Strategic Framework progress [Minute OSC16/25 – 17 October 2016] • Tourism (impact of second homes) [Minute OSC16/07 – 13 June 2016]