

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 November 2017

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 27 November 2017 at 4:00pm and 6:30pm.

SESSION 1 (commencing at 4:00pm)

Committee Members present: Councillors P.N. Osborne (Chairman), S.D. Elford (Vice-Chairman), J. Barnes, Mrs M.L. Barnes (ex-officio), G.S. Browne, C.A. Clark, G.C. Curtis, S.H. Earl, R.V. Elliston, J. Potts, Mrs S.M. Prochak, G.F. Stevens and M.R. Watson.

Other Members present: Councillors Lord Ampthill, A.K. Azad, Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams, K.M. Field, I.R. Hollidge, Mrs B.A. Hollingsworth, Mrs J.M. Hughes, I.G.F. Jenkins, G.P. Johnson, Mrs E.M. Kirby-Green, D.B. Oliver and C.J. Saint.

Advisory Officers present: Executive Director of Resources, Executive Director of Business Operations, Service Manager – Corporate and Human Resources, Marketing and Communications Account Manager (in part), Policy Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: Robin Patten – Chairman of Community Governance Review Steering Group and 31 members of the public.

The Chairman announced that Session 1 of the meeting was being video recorded by D4B and, that the Council would have no control over the content, editing or broadcasting of the recording.

OSC17/30. **MINUTES**

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 October 2017 as a correct record of the proceedings.

OSC17/31. **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C.R. Maynard (Leader of the Council).

OSC17/32. **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW FOR BEXHILL** (5.1)

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director of Resources that set out the background, progression and consultation results of the Community Governance Review (CGR) of Bexhill-on-Sea, as well as the recommendations of the Community Governance

Review Steering Group (CGRSG) to full Council via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) and Cabinet.

The following four options were proposed for the OSC to consider:

- i. Option 1: no change.
- ii. Option 2: the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council).
- iii. Option 3: the creation of an Area Committee for Bexhill.
- iv. Option 4: the creation of four Parish Councils – North, East, South and West Bexhill, based on the current (May 2017) East Sussex County Council Divisional boundaries.

It was noted that should a consensus view not be reached, Members had the provision to submit one “minority report” to Cabinet from the Committee, setting out an alternative recommendation. Cabinet would then consider both recommendations. Members noted that a minority report would need to be submitted to Democratic Services by no later than Wednesday 29 November for consideration by Cabinet at its meeting scheduled to be held on Monday 4 December 2017.

Due to the large response to the consultation and the overwhelming support of responders for a Town Council, Councillor Mrs Prochak proposed an amendment to the Motion, seconded by Councillor Earl that only Options 1 (no change) and 2 (the creation of one Parish Council for Bexhill to be styled a Town Council) be put forward as the recommendation to Cabinet and full Council.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.5 a vote by roll call was taken on the amendment to the Motion.

FOR (5): Councillors C.A. Clark, S.H. Earl, Mrs S.M. Prochak, G.F. Stevens and M.R. Watson.

AGAINST (5): Councillors J. Barnes, G.S. Browne, C.G. Curtis, S.D. Elford and J. Potts.

ABSTAIN (1): Councillor R.V. Ellison and P.N. Osborne.

The Chairman exercised his casting vote and the amendment to the Motion on being put was declared **LOST**.

Consideration was given to the option of referring the recommendation directly to full Council. Following officer advice and confirmation that the CGRSG was originally established by Cabinet and that its Terms of Reference stated that recommendations would be made to the OSC, then Cabinet and full Council, it was agreed that the original process be adhered to.

Members noted that approximately 80% of Bexhill residents had not responded to the Stage 2 Consultation process. Concerns were raised that costings identified within the report for a Town Council were only

estimated. The Executive Director of Resources advised that a basic model for a Town Council had been used to arrive at these estimates. Until a Town Council was established and devolved services agreed, the true figures would be unknown at this stage. Precepts would be dependent on the amount of services a Town Council was delivering and could fluctuate year-on-year.

At the conclusion of debate and given the importance of the decision, which included the potential to establish an additional tax raising body, on a permanent basis for the residents of Bexhill-on-Sea, Members agreed that all four options be put forward to Cabinet and full Council to enable a full and thorough debate without any steer or influence from the OSC or Cabinet. Therefore the original recommendation was put to the Committee and **CARRIED**.

The Chairman thanked Robin Patten, the CGR Steering Group Members and supporting officers for the excellent work they had undertaken.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be requested to refer the following four options to full Council to enable a full and thorough debate:

- i. Option 1: no change;
- ii. Option 2: the creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (to be styled a Town Council);
- iii. Option 3: the creation of an Area Committee for Bexhill; and
- iv. Option 4: the creation of four Parish Councils, North, East, South and West Bexhill, based on the current (May 2017) East Sussex County Council Divisional boundaries.

Session 1 closed at 5:15pm.

SESSION 2 (commencing at 6:30pm)

Committee Members present: Councillors P.N. Osborne (Chairman), S.D. Elford (Vice-Chairman), J. Barnes, Mrs M.L. Barnes (ex-officio), G.S. Browne, C.A. Clark, G.C. Curtis, S.H. Earl, R.V. Elliston, J. Potts, Mrs S.M. Prochak, G.F. Stevens and M.R. Watson.

Other Members present: Councillors K.P. Dixon, Mrs J.M. Hughes, I.G.F. Jenkins, G.P. Johnson, J.M. Johnson and C.R. Maynard (in part).

Advisory Officers present: Executive Director of Resources, Executive Director of Business Operations, Service Manager – Finance and Welfare, Service Manager – Corporate and Human Resources, Service Manager – Community and Economy, Service Manager – Strategy and Planning (in part), Planning Policy Manager (in part), Economic Development Manager (in part), Programme Office and Policy Manager (in part), Revenues and Benefits Manager (in part), Housing Needs Manager (in part), Housing and Asset Development Officer (in part) and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: Nigel Moore – Opinion Research Services (in part), Martin Fisher – Rother Voluntary Action (in part), Angela Prickett – Optivo (in part), Richard Watson – NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (in part) and 5 members of the public.

OSC17/33. **PRESENTATION BY OPINION RESEARCH SERVICES ON FINDINGS OF ROTHER’S STRATEGIC HOUSING RESEARCH PROJECT**
(6)

Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned by the Council to undertake housing research in the district. The Chairman welcomed Nigel Moore of ORS to the meeting who led Members through a presentation on results of the Council’s Strategic Housing Research Project. He provided Members with a brief overview of the company and explained that ORS carried out specialised research and surveys in the following service areas: health, housing, local government, policing and fire and rescue.

During the presentation the following key points were noted:

- **Survey:** Carried out during the winter period of 2016-17 covering a wide range of housing condition indicators in the private sector, plus a detailed housing needs and aspirations survey; overall 1,148 households were surveyed.
- **Housing Stock:** Higher proportion of owner occupied dwellings in Rother than the national average. 19% private rented sector.
- **Overcrowding:** Rother was 3% above the national average (predominately in the private rented sector).
- **Decent Homes Standard:** All properties should meet the following four national standard criteria: A – above the legal minimum standard for housing; B – reasonable state of repair; C – reasonable modern facilities and services; and D – provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. Failure to meet any of these criteria would render the property as “non-decent”. 30.2% of Rother stock failed the national criteria, with thermal comfort being a particular issue. This result was attributed to the age of stock as older properties were more likely to fail.
- **Costs to Repair:** Loft insulation was the most common requirement for both owner occupied and private rented dwellings.
- **Energy Efficiency:** 71% of Rother stock used mains heating fuel (higher than the national average).
- **Conclusions and Implications:** The private rented sector was growing with worsening stock conditions compared to owner occupied sector and social housing. Significant improvements to properties had been realised with resources primarily focused on heating systems and insulation, as well as tackling excess cold and thermal comfort failures. Equipment adaptations would be necessary for older / disabled occupiers.
- **Affordability:** Since 1983, the number of homes delivered had not met national projections. Over the past 15 years, affordability had declined sharply across England. A Government Housing White Paper (HWP) was seeking to address this, as follows: delivering more housing (limited in Rother by land constraints); community led housing schemes; increasing self and custom build plots; second

home council tax exemptions; returning empty homes back to use; and increasing social housing.

- **Tenure:** Since 1983, social housing delivery had fallen sharply. In many areas affordable housing stock had fallen due to right to buy sales not being replaced. There were only 300 more social rented homes in Rother from 1991 to 2011. The Government's HWP proposed to fix rents at 20% below market rents and new build starter homes sold at 20% below market prices. Funding would be made available to local authorities to build affordable housing. Other options to help create or release affordable housing were reducing long-term empties; rural exception sites; incentivise downsizing; and prioritising 35% affordable housing planning applications which could be adopted in line with Rother's Affordable Housing Policy.
- **Homelessness:** Changes to welfare reform had seen maximum weekly benefits for non-working households and maximum housing allowance capped, as well as the introduction of Universal Credit. Buy-to-let investment had become less attractive due to tax changes. The options available to local authorities to deal with the issues included: discretionary payments to help with housing costs; prevention measures to stop homelessness; conciliation services for young people and their parents to try to keep them at home; and social service pathways for dealing with complex needs for former service personnel, prisoners, care leavers etc. in order to try to prevent homelessness.

Members had an opportunity to put forward questions and the following comments were raised / discussed:

- Sold council housing stock during the 1980s had not been replaced.
- Complex infrastructures and management arrangements would need to be established and implemented should local authorities decide to start rebuilding their own housing.
- Genuine shortage of builders / apprenticeships throughout the country.
- Ratio of income to property prices had risen. Households required more than 10 times average income to afford a property in Rother.
- Age of stock (listed building, thatched properties and caravan parks) more likely to fail national "decent home" standards.
- Increase affordable housing by converting empty flats above and / or redundant commercial premises.
- Prevent developers from land-banking sites; apply taxation dividends increasing year-on-year should development not commence.

Members requested that a copy of the presentation be emailed after the meeting.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chairman thanked Nigel Moore for attending the meeting and providing a comprehensive presentation.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

OSC17/34. **HOUSING OVERVIEW**
(7.1)

Members considered the report of the Executive Director of Business Operations which provided an overview of housing in relation to lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, lack of 5-year land supply, impact of second homes' and private sector housing conditions, as well as an update on work to increase affordable housing delivery.

Population size, growing life expectancy, reduction of household sizes (more single occupancy), high demand and low supply of housing, tenure imbalance and delivery of private housing schemes were all key factors in the requirement to increase and improve affordable housing supply across the district. Demand for affordable social housing was increasing and supply was struggling to keep up with demand which was leading to homelessness, sofa surfing, poor quality living conditions and rough sleeping.

In February and May 2017, the Government launched a Housing White Paper "Fixing our Broken Housing Market" consultation. Its aim was to boost housing supply, create a more efficient housing market and support economic prosperity. A summary of the main proposals were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. In addition, the Government would also be publishing reviews on local plans, rural planning, changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, housing for rent and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The following significant challenges would be faced by the Council, these included: reduction of affording housing; impact of second home ownership; affordability / accessibility of social and private rented housing; changes to welfare reforms; good quality accommodation; lack of land supply and the number of stalled planning schemes.

During 2017/18, 109 affordable homes were being delivered across the district in Bexhill, Burwash, Guestling, Peasmarch and Sedlescombe. Members noted that delivery / completion rates were the highest in over 10 years. Development would remain a high priority for the Council as demand currently outweighed supply.

Rother continued to work proactively with all relevant registered partners to focus on and deliver affordable housing supply throughout the district. These partners were Hastoe Housing Association (rural specialists), Optivo (main housing development partner) and the Local Strategic Partnership which included Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, East Sussex County Council, NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Sussex Coast College, as well as representatives from voluntary and business sectors. Representatives from three of these organisations were in attendance at the meeting, as follows: Martin Fisher of Rother Voluntary Action, Angela Prickett of Optivo and Richard Watson of NHS CCG. Suitable Council owned-sites were also being considered for affordable housing development.

Other initiatives such as the Community Led Housing (CLH) scheme had been considered to increase supply. In December 2016, Rother received a £748,899 Community Housing Fund to support the delivery of CLH projects. Future funding opportunities were anticipated.

To achieve a comprehensive understanding and analysis of housing issues across the district, it was proposed to create a politically balanced Housing Issues Task and Finish Group (HIT&FG) consisting of eight members (six Conservative, one Association of Independents and one Liberal Democrat). Substitute Members could be appointed, if required. The HIT&FG would carry out a robust examination of one or more of the above issues identified with a view of what would make the most difference or impact on the current housing situation. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the HIT&FG were attached at Appendix 2 to the report. The Committee agreed the ToR with the following amendments:

- Scope d) to include the words ‘development options’ – *“Land supply issues / development options.”*
- Scope d) to include the words ‘and social’ – *“Affordable and social housing delivery.”*
- Political balance to be removed.

Members agreed that each item identified under the heading “scope” should be considered by the HIT&FG. The Chairman advised that the following Members had been proposed to serve on the HIT&FG Councillors J. Barnes, Browne, Clark, Earl, Mrs Prochak, Potts, Stevens and Watson including a substitute system. Membership was formally agreed. Due to the amount of work involved, the HIT&FG would report back their findings to the Committee in June 2018 or on an interim basis should more time be required.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) a Housing Issues Task and Finish Group consider the following subject areas: a) land supply issues / development options; b) affordable and social housing delivery; c) homelessness; and d) managing the impact of welfare reforms;
- 3) a Housing Issues Task and Finish Group be established comprising of Councillors J. Barnes, Browne, Clark, Earl, Mrs Prochak, Potts, Stevens and Watson including a substitute system;
- 4) the Terms of Reference for the Housing Issues Task and Finish Group be approved, as amended; and
- 5) the Housing Issues Task and Finish Group report back their findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2018 or on an interim basis should more time be required.

OSC17/35. **HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT 2017**
(7.2)

Housing Act 1996 identified the Council’s responsibilities to the homeless (and those threatened with becoming homeless). A number of reasons contributed towards homelessness which included financial, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, parental eviction etc. The most common being landlord eviction, usually through a notice to quit or a

Section 21 Notice (contained in the Housing Act 1988). Dependent on circumstances, the Council would provide temporary accommodation prior to rehousing in social or private sector. Before rehousing, each household would have to pass stringent criteria prior to the Council accepting responsibility to rehome. Advice, assistance e.g. financial and solutions would be sought for each applicant to either remain in their current home or to find suitable accommodation.

To deal with these rising numbers, the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 was introduced and focused on prevention and relief rather than the provision of new affordable homes. The HRA contained 12 separate sections; a description of each was detailed at Appendix A to the report. Consultation on guidance of the HRA was scheduled to close on 11 December 2017. Officers had undertaken training, attended information events and a specialised consultant recruited to support the Housing Needs team. Standardised procedural documents would be compiled to ensure the requirements of HRA were implemented consistently.

Numbers of homeless were anticipated to rise further in 2017/18, with the potential of increases in excess of 600 per year. Therefore it was important that the Council's prevention programme was robust at improving households' access to health, social care and support services.

Members were advised that additional resources would be implemented to support the HRA e.g. upgrading of the Information Technology (IT) system (needed to deal with an at least 40% increase on workload), staffing to deal with prevention and investigations, as well as dealing with potential appeals and legal challenges.

Issues in accessing emergency accommodation were also anticipated under the new HRA. A 'relief duty' upon authorities to accommodate homeless households for a period of 56 days (currently 28 days) had been introduced. This duty applied to households who were in priority and non-priority need. The University of York had been commissioned by the East Sussex Authorities to research the provision of emergency accommodation across the county.

For 2017/18 to 2019/20, Rother would receive a grant of £128,000 to support new duties, including any additional staffing, IT and operational costs. Exact IT costs were awaited.

The Council's Housing Allocations Policy detailed priorities and procedures for allocating social housing across the district. The objectives were to ensure that social housing was allocated to those in greatest need and those who had a location connection to the district, either through residence, family connection, employment or voluntary activity. It aimed to give the highest priority to those residents in unsuitable housing or who were less able to provide for their housing needs. 1,202 households were currently on the Council's social housing register. Priority households were broken down into four Bands A to D, with A being the highest priority. Band A was allocated to anyone who was potentially homeless. Currently there were 163 households in Band A, of which 58 were homeless. To date, 153

households had been housed in 2017/18. Members noted that it was unlikely any household in Bands B to D would be housed during the year.

Lack of/reduced affordable private sector accommodation, low turnover of social housing stock and depleted numbers of affordable housing being built, all contributed to increased delays for rehoming households. The current average stay in temporary accommodation was over 11 weeks, almost double the average in 2015.

Members agreed that monitoring and rehousing homeless households were key factors for the Council. Therefore continuing to focus on prevention was considered essential in order to reduce numbers and achieve financial savings. It was agreed that the Housing Issues Task and Finish Group considered these factors, as well as exploring compulsory purchase orders, modular housing schemes, lack of national / local building skills and conversion of redundant commercial properties during their review of the Council's housing issues.

RESOLVED: That the:

- 1) report be noted; and
- 2) homelessness issues identified within the report, as well as compulsory purchase orders, modular housing schemes, lack of national / local building skills and conversion of redundant commercial properties be considered by the Housing Issues Task and Finish Group.

OSC17/36. **WELFARE REFORM**
(7.3)

The Committee received and considered the report of the Executive Director of Resources which detailed the impact of welfare reform including freezing of local housing allowance rates, the benefit cap, under occupation and Universal Credit (UC), as well as the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Other changes to welfare benefits since 2016 were detailed in Appendix A, to the report.

Members noted that out of the 45,000 households in Rother, 4,670 were claiming Council Tax Reduction and housing benefit, with only 2,400 claiming Council Tax Reduction. The total caseload was therefore approximately 7,070 households of which 3,658 were working (1/3 in employment) and 3,416 pensionable age.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) was the maximum amount that would be paid under housing benefit for residents renting property in the private rented sector. In Rother, approximately 41% of households claiming housing benefit were renting privately.

In April 2016, the Government froze LHA rates for four years and stated that they should not increase above rates applied in April 2015. However, rates could decrease should local rents reduce. Legislation also stipulated that social landlords reduced their rents by 1% per annum for the same period of time. Concerns raised over the scheme

had led the Government to recently announce that the system would be reviewed to ensure future viability.

In Rother, three different LHA areas covered the district (east, west and north). The majority of the Council's rented housing stock was in the east area and included Hastings. The report included the rate differences since they were frozen and Appendix B identified individual rates per area. To remain in Rother, low income households in the private sector would have to meet the financial gap between the LHA and actual rents from other benefits / income, or move to another area where the gap was lower or more affordable. This problem was exacerbated for single people under 35 where legislation presumed they would live in shared accommodation; the shared rate in Bexhill was currently £303 per month. In general, social sector housing was below market rents and therefore did not come under the remit of LHAs however affordable rents, charged by social landlords were, at 80% of market rent and might therefore be above the LHA rate.

Benefit caps applied restricting the amount of certain benefits that a working age household could receive; £20,000 for those living in Rother. Households who were receiving more than the cap would have their housing benefit reduced within the limit. At present 50 families were affected by the cap. The Council was currently piloting a joint scheme with Optivo to assist these families by providing additional financial assistance via discretionary housing payments. Optivo also provided support on back to work, training and employment initiatives.

In April 2017, legislation regarding social rented under-occupancy had changed where full housing benefit would be paid when a disabled child or disabled non-dependant adult required care overnight and when a couple was unable to share a bedroom because of disabilities. At present, it was unknown how many social rented properties in Rother were under occupied. Investigation would be required to see how people could be incentivised to move.

Since July 2017, UC – a combination of six legacy benefits had been fully implemented across Rother. Residents requiring help with housing costs would need to claim UC. However, at present there were some anomalies, for example, families with three or more children could also apply for housing benefit. Young adults (age 18-21) who were out of work had no automatic entitlement to apply for UC. There were exemptions and the report detailed the groups who were entitled to assistance. The local Department for Work and Pensions advised that within Rother's areas, payments were generally processed within six weeks. Since the introduction of UC, Council caseloads had fallen however workload had increased to deal with the impact on residents' Council Tax Reduction claims.

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme provided support for people on low incomes and a very similar scheme was operated across East Sussex, apart from Hastings. The East Sussex scheme was currently being reviewed and simplified; implementation was anticipated for April 2019. Members would be kept abreast of developments.

Advisory support from local organisations such as Citizens Advice and Hastings Advice and Representation Centre, as well as financial support from Rother and East Sussex County Council was essential to assisting households with advice and securing entitled financial assistance. Tenant support was also provided by housing associations. The Council continued to work with relevant partners to manage the impact of welfare reform and support low income households despite reduced funding.

The Committee acknowledged the effect welfare reform was having on low income households across the district and, in particular the lack of accommodation at LHA rates, as well as social housing affordability assessments. Members agreed that all of these issues should be considered by the Housing Issues Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) report be noted; and
- 2) welfare reform issues identified within the report be considered by the Housing Issues Task and Finish Group.

OSC17/37. **ROTHER HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS, LETTING OF HOMES**
(8) **POLICY, REFUSAL OF ACCOMMODATION POLICY**

Members received the report of Councillor Clark which highlighted housing issues across the district. The following was noted:

- Housing Associations (HA) were created to provide housing for low income families.
- Concerned that Council referrals were being turned down for re-housing by HA due to historic rent arrears. Social housing should be allocated to those in the highest priority need and not those who were able to pay the rent. There appeared to be no process in place to challenge refusal decisions.
- Rent arrears and debt were predominately associated with low income families. Changes to housing benefit regulations were exacerbating the situation.
- Short-term solution was to place households in temporary accommodation whilst suitable housing was sourced however this could be at considerable cost to the Council (as much as £1,000 per month).

Angela Prickett advised that all Housing Association organisations followed and abided by the Homes and Communities Agency regulations. All Council referrals and applications for social housing were considered with standard criteria applied. References were obtained and financial / previous tenancy history sought. An appeals process was available for all rejected applications. The Executive Director of Resources explained that the Council worked in partnership with all local agencies to resolve housing issues, particularly as services to support households in financial difficulty and assist with returning to work, as well as training and employment initiatives could be provided through social landlords.

Members acknowledged that housing issues were increasing due to low stock and increased rents, particularly in the private sector. It was therefore considered important that the Council actively supported all relevant partners to assist low income families in sourcing appropriate accommodation and to reduce the numbers of homeless households across the district.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Clark for his report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Councillors S.H. Earl, S.D. Elford, P.N. Osborne and Mrs S.M. Prochak each declared a personal interest in this matter in so far as they are landlords and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during consideration thereof).

OSC17/38. **PERFORMANCE REPORT: SECOND QUARTER 2017/18**
(9.1)

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director of Business Operations on the Second Quarter 2017/18 Performance Report. Members were given the opportunity to scrutinise progress of a basket of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) previously selected for monitoring.

The Service Manager – Community and Economy advised that there were seven KPIs reported for the second quarter (up to 30 September 2017). Two met or exceeded target, one was not yet due to be reported and four were currently not on target, these were: New Housing Benefit Claims on Time; Changes to Housing Benefit Claims on Time; Homelessness Applications Received; and Affordable Housing built. The report also contained performance variations to some KPIs that were outside of the indicator set for the financial year.

During discussion the following was noted:

New Housing Benefit Claims on Time: The average number of calendar days taken to process a new housing benefit claim from the date the claim was received to the date the decision was taken. The target was 35 days, result was 38.71 days (lower was better).

Changes to Housing Benefit Claims on Time: The average number of calendar days taken to process a submitted change to an existing housing benefit claim from the date of submission to the date of the decision. The target was 20 days, result was 27.85 days (lower was better).

Performance improvements were anticipated for both KPIs following implementation of the Document Management System (Enterprise) due to be partially launched in December, as well as the roll-out of intensive staff training.

Homelessness Applications Received: The number of applications of homelessness from Rother households that had come into the Council. Quarter forecast was 30, result was 51 (lower was better).

The result was attributed to the increase in number of homeless presenting themselves to the Council. Availability of accommodation continued to be difficult, in both housing associations and the private sector.

New Affordable Homes: The gross number of new affordable homes completed in the district. Result was eight. Members noted that the target for 2017/18 was 102 and was anticipated to be exceeded.

The Committee also noted the KPIs that were exceeding or not on target and particularly mentioned the increase in financial transactions online, number of individuals supported through local employment and skills plans, improved recycling rates, as well as the increasing numbers of households in temporary accommodation.

Assurance was given that all KPIs currently not on target would be continuously monitored.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

OSC17/39. **PROVISIONAL REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME**
(10.1) **MONITORING QUARTER 2 2017/18**

Members received and considered the report of the Executive Director of Resources on the Provisional Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 2 2017/18. The report contained details of the significant variations of the Revenue Budget and updated Capital Programme (Appendices A and B respectively).

Overall it was expected there would be an underspend on services of £0.332m. This was attributed to underspends / savings on private sector housing, Bexhill Promenade and Foreshore, partnership working, external audit fees, communications (telephone), staff costs, interest from investments and welfare grants. An additional £43,000 of income had been received in respect of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The council tax collection rate as at 30 September 2017 was comparable to previous years and the total collectable was currently above the original estimate and a surplus of £603,000 was anticipated by the end of year.

Whilst collection performance of Business Rates was comparable to previous years, it was anticipated that there would be an end of year deficit of £335,000. This was attributed to settlements for appeals, particularly in relation to doctor's surgeries, as well as higher amounts of relief given to small businesses.

The Capital Programme had been updated in-line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2022/23, but did not include the Council's approved £7m property investment fund. This was due to the potential impact of the Government's consultation regarding legislation changes for local authority property investments scheduled to conclude

by the end of December. The estimated outturn for the Capital Programme was appended to the report as Appendix A.

Members were advised that work continued to resolve the outstanding issues regarding the former Bexhill High School site land swap with East Sussex County Council. Estimated spend on Disabled Facilities Grants was £1.07m compared to £1.385m approved budget; the balance of funds would be transferred to earmarked reserves. Part of the expenditure for the new Enterprise Resource Planning System would slip into the next financial year. The project was scheduled to be launched on 1 April 2018 however it was anticipated that work would continue into 2018/19 to ensure that the Council was maximising functionality of the system. The Corporate Document Image Processing System and outsourced post room contract were scheduled to be launched and operational by end of the year. Members noted that some or all project spend on the Rother 2020 ICT investment scheme, Bexhill Leisure Centre and IT SAN replacement would continue into 2018/19.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

OSC17/40. **CALL-IN – COUNCIL CHAMBER AUDIO / VISUAL EQUIPMENT**
(11.1) **UPGRADE**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Business Resources which detailed what action could be taken following the initiation of the call-in procedure in respect of the Cabinet decision on the upgrade of the Council Chamber's Audio / Visual equipment agreed on Monday 6 November 2017 (Minute CB17/37 refers). The Executive Director of Resources had initiated the call-in procedure at the request of Councillors S.H. Earl and Mrs S.M. Prochak in accordance with the procedure.

Cabinet agreed on 6 November 2017 that Option 1 (Conference and Audio System Upgrade [microphones] and Option 2 (Presentation Equipment [projector and screens] be purchased and installed for the Council Chamber, but that Option 3 (Camera and Webcasting Encoder Installation) be declined.

The reasons for the call-in were confirmed as follows:

- the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) had considered this matter on 16 October and recommended all three Options, as follows: Option 1 – Conference and Audio System (microphones); Option 2 – Presentation Equipment (projector and screens); and Option 3 – Fixed cameras for the videoing of meetings (without live webcasting);
- videoing would give the Council control over video footage of its meetings;
- installing all three options at the same time would provide economies of scale and ensure technical compatibility;
- funding had been allocated in the Rother 2020 programme; and
- it was disappointing to note that Cabinet had not approved Option 3 on the grounds of potential pressure to webcast meetings at an

additional cost of £12,000 per annum, which was not even supported by the OSC.

After discussion and consideration of the call-in reasons, the Committee unanimously recommended that Cabinet be requested to reconsider their original decision and approve that Options 1: Conference and Audio System Upgrade; 2: Video/Presentation System Upgrade; 3: Camera and Webcasting Encoder Installation be purchased for the Council Chamber. Members agreed that live-streaming of Council meetings should not be pursued, but kept under review.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be asked to reconsider their decision taken on 6 November 2017 and approve that Options 1: Conference and Audio System Upgrade; 2: Video/Presentation System Upgrade; 3: Camera and Webcasting Encoder Installation be purchased for the Council Chamber and that live-streaming of Council meetings not be pursued, but kept under review.

OSC17/41. **WORK PROGRAMME**
(12)

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

- Crime and Disorder Committee: Community Safety Partnership and Anti-Social Behaviour, Noise Nuisance/Enforcement Powers, Public Spaces Protection Orders and Community Wardens to be reported at the meeting scheduled to be held on 29 January 2018;
- The findings and recommendations of the Civil Parking Enforcement Task and Finish Group to be presented at the meeting scheduled to be held on 19 March 2018.
- Tourism Strategy be considered during the 2018/19 Work Programme.

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

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 8:53pm

OSC171127/jh

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2017 – 2018		
DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM (Capitalised)	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
29.01.18	DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2018-2019 KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2018-2019 CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE: TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Social Behaviour, Noise Nuisance/Enforcement Powers, Public Spaces Protection Orders and Community Wardens 	Ampthill Kirby-Green Maynard
19.03.18	CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Progress Report: Third Quarter 2017/18 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring to January 2018 	Hollidge
23.04.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council • Review of Task and Finish Groups / Outcomes 	-

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Portfolio Holder Updates • Rother Public Realm Strategic Framework progress [Minute OSC16/25 – 17 October 2016] • Tourism Strategy (creation of a Tourism Task and Finish Group) [Minute OSC17/13 – 24 July 2017] • Waste and Recycling Contract Update