

Report to	-	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date	-	23 April 2018
Report of the	-	Chairman, Councillor Paul Osborne
Subject	-	Draft Annual Report to Council

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**Recommendation:** It be **RESOLVED:** That the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Draft Annual Report to Council be considered and recommended as appropriate to Council.

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## **Introduction**

1. The Local Government Act 2000 states that where councils operate an executive style administration, there must be at least one committee that has the power to review or scrutinise decisions or actions which affect the authority's area or its residents. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) acts as a critical friend to the Cabinet (Executive) and other local service providers, helping to monitor performance and develop policies. The OSC also has the power to hold the Cabinet to account by "calling in" decisions before or after they have been taken.
2. The OSC cannot make decisions or policies themselves, but they have the power of influence. They make recommendations informed by partner and public opinions, performance information, examples of best practice and professional advice.
3. In accordance with Article 6, paragraph 6.3. (d) of Rother District Council's (RDC) Constitution, the OSC must report annually to Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amend working methods, if appropriate.
4. In compiling this report, consideration has been given to the terms of reference contained within Article 6 of the Constitution and how the OSC has fulfilled its role under these terms.
5. This report covers the period from April 2017 through to the end of March 2018; the report has been prepared before the last scheduled meeting of the OSC for the 2017/18 municipal year has been held.

## **Scrutiny at Rother**

6. Rother District Council has 38 elected Members who represent 20 wards within the boundaries of Rother. With 10 Cabinet Members, this enables 28 Members to have the opportunity to be involved in Scrutiny.
7. During the period of this report, 70% of non-Cabinet Members have been involved in Scrutiny either through membership of the Council's Scrutiny Committee or in the Task and Finish Group(s).

## Structure of Scrutiny Committees

8. During the period of this report, two Task and Finish Groups have been in operation. In addition to Scrutiny meetings, the Council can have up to four active Task and Finish Groups in place at any one time.
9. There are 12 Members appointed on the OSC and they meet formally eight times a year. The OSC is politically balanced in that its make-up reflects that of the Council as a whole and its Chairman and Vice-Chairman are elected annually from amongst its membership.

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

10. Membership as at 23 April 2018 is:

P.N. Osborne (Chairman), S.D. Elford (Vice-Chairman), J. Barnes, 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.
11. The Committee has met eight times between April 2017 and the end of March 2018. This figure does not include the meeting of the Committee directly following the Annual Council Meeting when the Chairman and Vice-Chairman were elected.
12. Attendance at meetings by Members appointed to the Committee has been good with an average of 86% of the Committee attending the meetings during the period of this report.
13. The average number of reports on the agenda for each meeting was five and the average length of a meeting was two hours and seven minutes. The press attended no meetings and a total of 58 members of the public were in attendance at eight of the Committee meetings held during the period of this report.
14. Between April 2017 and the end of March 2018, the OSC received reports on a number of issues including:
  - Bexhill Hive – update
  - Business Rates – Reducing the financial burden on local businesses
  - Cemetery Provision and Charging Structure
  - Civil Parking Enforcement
  - Community Governance Review of Bexhill-on-Sea
  - Council Chamber Audio/Visual Equipment Upgrade
  - Disability Access/Access for All
  - Fuel Poverty
  - Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
  - Housing Overview
  - Income Generation and Asset Management Plan
  - Locate East Sussex Presentation
  - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2022/23
  - Opinion Research Services Presentation – Findings of Rother’s Strategic Housing Research Project
  - Rother District Council Corporate Programme Update

- Rother Housing Associations, Letting of Homes Policy, Refusal of Accommodation Policy
- Tourism Information Services Contract Re-tender
- Welfare Reform

15. Standing items reviewed by the Committee included:

- Annual Work Programme
- Call-in and Urgency Procedures
- Draft Annual Report to Council
- Draft Revenue Budget
- Key Performance Targets
- Quarterly Progress Reports on the Annual Performance Plan
- Revenue Budget and Capital Monitoring Programme

### **Informal Annual Work Programming Meeting**

16. The meeting for the 2018/19 municipal year has been scheduled to take place on Tuesday 22 May at 3:00pm in order to highlight Council priorities for the year. All current non-executive Members have been invited to this meeting whether or not they will be appointed to the new OSC. The Work Programme items identified during this informal meeting will be considered alongside the Annual Work Programme report that will be received by the new OSC at its first meeting on 11 June.

### **Crime and Disorder Committee**

17. In 2009, the Scrutiny Committee was designated as the Council's 'Crime and Disorder Committee' under section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006. This is not a separate working or steering group; it simply means that on an annual basis, as part of their regular Scrutiny business, the OSC reviews the work of the Rother and Hastings Community Safety Partnership (RHCSPP) as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee.
18. The opportunities and challenges for 2017/18 included: impact of crime and anti-social behaviour awareness, white ribbon campaigns, crime reduction for young people, drug taking, victim domestic abuse support, rough sleeper / street community assistance, road safety initiatives and tackling modern slavery. Work had also been undertaken to improve communications by using various social media platforms. Joint opportunities for the RHCSPP were public reassurance, improved communications with Neighbourhood Watch, increased coverage and exchange of information, as well as enhancing community safety through partnerships. RHCSPP continued to deliver against local priorities, financial resources and monthly Joint Action Group operational meetings were held to specifically deal with Rother's priorities.

### **Scrutiny Reviews**

#### **April 2017**

19. **Fuel Poverty:** The OSC received a report on fuel poverty from the East Sussex Energy Partnership and the actions being undertaken to reduce fuel poverty across the Rother District.

## June 2017

20. **Disability Access / Access for All:** The OSC received a report from Councillor Clark which highlighted disabled access issues in Bexhill's town centre. The following issues were noted: 52 shops lacked disabled access, 10% of Rother's residents were registered disabled, accessibility to public transport required improvement and the Council supported partnership working with all relevant agencies to improve disability access within the town centre. Members were encouraged to forward any specific concerns to the Bexhill Town Centre Steering Group. Members acknowledged that disability access was a growing problem as the population was increasing and people were living longer. It was, therefore considered important that the Council actively supported all relevant partners and community groups to ensure mobility and equality access for all of Rother's residents.

## July 2017

21. **Civil Parking Enforcement:** The OSC considered East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) draft business case which set out implications of introducing Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in Rother. Due to the complexity of the subject, it was proposed that a CPE Task and Finish Group be established. The OSC agreed the Membership and Terms of Reference.

## October 2017

22. **Locate East Sussex:** Philip Johnson, Director of Locate East Sussex (LES) updated Members on the work of the organisation. LES was funded by ESCC and the local authorities of East Sussex. LES's purpose was to encourage growth of East Sussex companies, encourage companies to move into East Sussex and to promote East Sussex as a "space for growing business".
23. **Rother District Council Corporate Programme Update:** Members were updated on 29 key projects linked to the four aims within the Council's Corporate Programme 2014-2021. Eight projects had been completed, four were currently in planning phase with completion due between 2018 and 2021 and seven projects were due for completion in 2016/17; the remainder were all underway. The cost to deliver all projects amounted to £20.3m, however not all funding had been secured. The Committee were shown a short video which highlighted a number of key project milestones. It was confirmed that to meet project timescales / deadlines reassignment / redeployment had and would be applied, as well as additional resources introduced, where appropriate.

## November 2017

24. **Opinion Research Services on findings of Rother's Strategic Housing Research Project:** Nigel Moore of Opinion Research Services led Members through a presentation on results of the Council's Strategic Housing Research Project which included housing stock, overcrowding, decent homes standard, costs to repair, energy efficiency, conclusions and implications, affordability, tenure and homelessness.
25. **Housing Overview:** Members considered a report on the Council's 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. The Council faced significant challenges which included reduction of affordable houses; impact of second homes 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. To achieve a comprehensive understanding and analysis of housing issues across the district, it was proposed to create a Housing Issues Task and Finish Group and provide a report back of their findings to the OSC in July 2018.

26. **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017:** The OSC was advised of changes to the Council's responsibilities as a result of the introduction of the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA). The Act focused on prevention and relief rather than the provision of new affordable homes. Training had been received and standardised procedural documents would be compiled to ensure the requirements of HRA were implemented consistently. The number of homelessness was anticipated to rise therefore, it was important that the Council's prevention programme was robust at improving households' access to health, social care and support services. A grant of £128,000 would be awarded to the Council and additional resources implemented to support operations. Members agreed that issues raised within the report should be considered by the Housing Issues Task and Finish Group.
27. **Welfare Reform:** Members received information on the impact of welfare reform changes which included freezing of local housing allowance rates, the benefit cap, under occupation and Universal Credit, as well as the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Members agreed that issues raised within the report should be considered by the Housing Issues Task and Finish Group.
28. **Rother Housing Associations, Letting of Homes Policy, Refusal of Accommodation Policy:** The OSC received a report from Councillor Clark which highlighted housing issues across the district. The following was noted: Housings Associations (HA) were created to provide housing for low income families, concern that Council referrals were being turned down for re-housing by HA, rent arrears and debt were predominately associated with low income families and high cost of housing families in temporary accommodation. It was agreed that the Council should actively support all relevant partners to assist low income families in sourcing appropriate accommodation and to reduce the number of homeless households across the district.

## March 2018

29. **Bexhill Hive:** The OSC received a presentation and update on the new Creative Arts and Education Hub in Bexhill following receipt of £30,000 Rother District Council Community Grant in 2017.
30. The OSC also scrutinised the performance of services and the resources they use on a quarterly basis. In conjunction, the OSC looked into the wider, strategic implications for the district and the lives of residents that are represented by individual indicators and targets. Just some of the themes addressed over the period were:
  - **Benefit Claims:** Members debated the issues experienced regarding targets not being met for processing benefit claims. External contractors were assisting with the backlog of work. Performance improvements were

anticipated 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.

- **Business Rates:** Members raised concerns and questions regarding the financial burdens small businesses might experience with increased rateable values and whether the Council was in a position to assist these organisations financially should they require it. Advice was disseminated about rate relief opportunities and Members noted that movements in business rates would have a significant impact on the Council's income, highlighting the importance of delivering commercial regeneration. Members requested that they received a report on the Council's strategy for attracting businesses/commercial activities to the district.
- **Homelessness:** The OSC raised concerns regarding the anticipated rise of homelessness applications received by the Council as a result of new legislation introduced in 2017 (Homelessness Reduction Act). Applications were expected to exceed numbers experienced in the past. Members agreed it was important that the Council monitored performance to ensure that numbers were kept to a minimum.
- **Temporary Accommodation:** Members were advised that access to temporary accommodation continued to be an issue with placements increasing due to large numbers of homeless applications being received against a low number of vacancies being available from the Council's housing partners. The impact of the roll out of Universal Credit continued to be assessed. Members noted that the supply of accommodation was limited, with less property available through Housing Associations. It was essential that the Council worked with all relevant agencies to support people in housing need.
- **Tourism Events:** Supporting arts, cultural and tourism events ensured economic stability and increased prosperity to the district. Members felt there was further scope for more events to be held within the district and, particularly, within Bexhill.
- **Website/Communications:** Members were encouraged by the significant increase of hits made by the public on the Council's website. It was apparent that Rother's strategy to increase and redirect the public to contact the Council via the website was succeeding. The Council's 'My Alerts' initiative to send email messages to residents on relevant Council issues was well received, effective and extremely successful, and had mitigated the level of customer contact received.

## Recommendations to Cabinet

31. During the period of the report a total of 15 recommendations were made to Cabinet. These recommendations were supported by Cabinet with a number of the recommendations made being supported with minor amendments. Details of all recommendations made to Cabinet by the OSC can be seen at Appendix 1.

## Call-In

32. The OSC has only found it necessary to Call-In one decision of the Cabinet for further scrutiny during the last year. This Call-In was for the purchase of audio and visual equipment for the Council Chamber which had been considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 6 November 2017. The Call-in enabled the OSC to scrutinise the decision and invite the Members who had

initiated the Call-in to explain their reasons to clarify their opposition to the Cabinet decision.

33. After debate over the original decision, the OSC recommended that Cabinet be requested to reconsider their decision and approve that audio, visual and camera/webcasting encoder equipment be purchased for the Council Chamber and that live-streaming of Council meetings not be pursued, but kept under review.
34. Cabinet met on 4 December 2017 where, after discussion, their original recommendation made on 6 November 2017 was upheld.

### **Task and Finish Groups**

35. During the period of this report, the OSC established two new Task and Finish Groups: CPE Task and Finish Group (CPET&FG) and Housing Issues Task and Finish Group (HIT&FG). The Public Realm Working Group was still ongoing but had not met during 2017/18.
36. At the Informal Annual Scrutiny Work Programming Meeting held in June 2013, it was requested for this Annual Report to Council to incorporate a cumulative examination of the results of working groups, when they have concluded their work, to see if their recommendations and outcomes have delivered their set objectives.

#### Civil Parking Enforcement Task and Finish Group (completed objectives / disbanded)

37. The CPET&FG was established to review ESCC Business Case for Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in Rother and to consider the establishment of CPE to examine whether this would alleviate parking issues, ease congestion and improve road safety across the district. The Group comprises of Councillors A.K. Azad, J. Barnes, J.J. Carroll, R.C. Carroll, C.A. Clark, S.H. Earl, S.D. Elford (Chairman), K.M. Field, B. Kentfield, J. Potts, C.J. Saint and G.F. Stevens whilst undertaking its Terms of Reference (ToR).
38. Gathering external evidence was a fundamental part of the work programme for the CPET&FG in carrying out its ToR. A Stakeholder Engagement Event was held on 29 November 2017. Representatives from the following organisations attended: Battle and District Chamber of Commerce, Battle Town Council, Bexhill Chamber of Commerce, Bexhill Forward, Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society, Bexhill Wheelers, Federation of Small Businesses, Hastings and Rother Disability Forum, Little Common Traders Association, Rother Neighbourhood Watch, Rye Conservation Society and Rye Town Council. Written representations were also received from 1066 Cycle Club, British Design / British Made (Battle High Street), Icklesham Parish Council, Rother Transport Action Group, Rye Conservation Society, Salehurst and Robertsbridge Parish Council, Sedlescombe Parish Council and Whatlington Parish Council. Councillor Elford also attended meetings of Bexhill Town Forum on 16 November 2017 and Rother Association of Local Councils on 10 January 2018 to raise awareness of the review and implications of CPE across the district.

39. The CPET&FG has met five times and the following recommendations were presented to the OSC on 19 March 2018 for onward recommendation to Cabinet and full Council on 9 April and 21 May 2018 respectively:

That the OSC recommends to Cabinet that:

- that RDC write to ESCC to support an application to be submitted to the Department for Transport for CPE to be adopted;
- in applying for CPE, ESCC attempt to recover shared costs with Wealden District Council (WDC) who are no longer progressing to assist in keeping costs down;
- the current charging structure and tariffs in RDC's off-street car parks remain unchanged until the CPE decision, is taken;
- the Council's off-street parking provision remain under the current management framework of The District of Rother Parking Places Order 1983;
- that when the Council's Planning Core Strategy is reviewed, that Electric Vehicle Charging Points be considered in planning policy, and subject to government advice received, as well as technological and industry advances;
- the indicative timetable for CPE be noted;
- that future ESCC consultation on the detail of the Traffic Regulation Orders changes liaise with the affected Ward Members to obtain the Council's comments for their areas;
- that the CPET&FG be reconvened to consider the first annual review of the CPE Scheme; and
- during the first annual review, assessment of the impact of CPE be considered on the usage and charging structure of the Council's off-street parking operation.

**OUTCOME:** All recommendations were agreed for formal approval by Cabinet apart from ESCC attempting to recover shared costs with WDC. An additional recommendation was also proposed to notify Sussex Police that the Council supported ESCC making an application for CPE and that in the interim the Police continue to enforce illegal and dangerous parking. Cabinet added a further recommendation (in place of the original recommendation 2) that was not supported) that ESCC be requested to establish a parking board similar to those in Hastings and Lewes Councils which would meet regularly to monitor the scheme.

Having fulfilled its terms of reference, the CPET&FG was disbanded.

#### Housing Issues Task and Finish Group (ongoing)

40. The HIT&FG was established to carry out a review of a number of housing issues across the district, namely land supply issues / development options; affordable and social housing delivery; homelessness; and managing the



impact of welfare reform. The main desired outcome of the Group was to present a forward looking and solution-focused report to OSC and Cabinet incorporating innovative ways of addressing housing issues in Rother District. The Group comprised of Councillors J. Barnes (Chairman), G.S. Browne, C.A. Clark, S.H. Earl, Mrs S.M. Prochak, J. Potts, G.F. Stevens and M.R. Watson whilst undertaking its Terms of Reference.

The HIT&FG has met twice already and is scheduled to meet a further four times. Representatives from several organisations have and will be attending the meetings including Brighton Housing Trust, Clinical Commissioning Group, Department for Work and Pensions, Developers East Sussex, East Sussex County Council, Hastings Unity Group, Homes and Communities Agency, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Optivo and Rother Voluntary Action. The Group's recommendations are scheduled to be presented to the OSC on 23 July 2018 for onward recommendation to Cabinet on 3 September 2018.

## **Steering Groups**

### Bexhill Town Centre Steering Group

41. The Bexhill Town Centre Steering Group (BTCSG) has been established by Cabinet to deliver the vision and objectives of the Bexhill Town Centre Strategy June 2013; the Strategy seeks to collaborate with key groups and agencies in the area in its delivery plan.
42. The overarching aims of the town centre strategy are to achieve enhanced commercial vitality; to reduce levels of deprivation and to maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment and public realm. In carrying out its purpose the BTCSG will engage fully with town centre communities and drive collaboration between the key agencies with responsibilities in this area.
43. By working with the community, businesses and partners, there is an opportunity to create a positive, attractive identity for the town centre that will see enhanced commercial and social vitality, reduce levels of deprivation and attract innovative and entrepreneurial people.
44. The BTCSG comprises: Councillors I.R. Hollidge (Chairman), Mrs J.M. Hughes, B. Kentfield and C.R. Maynard and the following officers: Dr Anthony Leonard, Executive Director of Business Operations and Emma Wray, Partnership Co-ordinator.
45. In April 2017, Cabinet agreed the revised Terms of Reference.

## **Overview and Scrutiny Chairman's Statement**

46. From the contents of this report it is evident that this has been another busy and productive year for the OSC. As Chairman, I am pleased with the progress that has been made in terms of improved scrutiny processes and comprehensive contributions from outside representatives. I would like to thank the Members of the Committee for their attendance and their input to the many debates that have taken place.
47. The Task and Finish Groups that we have established continue to do a lot of good work with regard to the individual tasks that they have been set. I would

particularly like to thank the Members of these Task and Finish Groups, as well as outside representatives and officers for their time and input.

48. As Chairman of the OSC, I have been pleased with the reduction of the size of the Committee which has worked well and encouraged increased Member contributions to debate. Inviting Cabinet Portfolio Holders to relevant meetings has also proved useful.
49. I would like to thank Councillor Simon Elford, my Vice-Chairman and Democratic Services, in particular Julie Hollands for their continued support throughout the year.

Councillor Paul Osborne  
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Risk Assessment Statement**

Failure to produce this report would be in breach of Article 6, paragraph 6.3. (d) of the Constitution.

## REFERENCES TO CABINET

From April 2017 until March 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) referred the following reports to Cabinet:

## 24 APRIL 2017

1. **CALL-IN AND URGENCY PROCEDURES:** The OSC received a report on the Council's Call-In and Urgency Procedures. Due to a proposed reduction of membership of the OSC for the municipal year (20 members down to 12) subject to full Council agreement, it was recommended to reduce the number of members able to call-in a decision from three to two. The OSC was in agreement with the recommendation.

Cabinet was in agreement with the recommendation subject to the changes of the membership of the OSC being agreed by full Council.

2. **COUNCIL CHAMBER AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT UPGRADE:** The OSC considered recommendations on upgrading the Audio/Visual equipment for the Council Chamber. The current wireless microphone system was approximately 10 years old, unreliable and in urgent need of replacement. Three options were proposed: microphone upgrade at cost of £34,000; video/presentation upgrade at cost of £20,000; and camera and webcasting upgrade at cost of £14,000 plus £12,000 to live stream. Members noted that purchasing all three options at the same time would be cost effective. Following discussion, the OSC recommended that all three options be purchased and that live-streaming of Council meetings not be pursued at this point in time but kept under review.

Cabinet considered the OSC's comments/recommendation and agreed to defer the decision until further evidence was gathered via a full scoping exercise to be completed by Councillors Lord Ampthill, Mrs Kirby-Green and the Chairman of the OSC. Views would be sought from all Councillors and further costings sourced. All findings to be reported to the OSC at a future meeting.

## 12 JUNE 2017

3. **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW:** The OSC considered the Stage 2 consultation options of the Council's Community Governance Review (CGR) for Bexhill. The OSC recommended that three options: 1) no change; 2) creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (styled as Town Council); and 3) creation of an Area Committee. An additional fourth option was proposed: the creation of three Parish Councils subdivided as Bexhill, Little Common and Sidley. Members were supportive of a leaflet drop to every household in Bexhill and agreed that Cabinet provided the potential functions and devolved opportunities for an Area Committee.

Cabinet considered the OSC's comments and were generally supportive of the recommendation, however further refinement was proposed and agreed. Option four be subdivided as per East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) boundaries (North, South, East and West); leaflet drop not be supported; no executive functions/powers be devolved to an area committee; and that public

conveniences and grounds maintenance be devolved to Bexhill Town Council in the first instance.

## 24 JULY 2017

4. **CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT:** The OSC considered ESCC's draft business case which set out implications of introducing Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in Rother. Cabinet's endorsement was sought on the work and investigations already undertaken by the OSC and to forward comments on the draft business case to the CPE Task and Finish Group for consideration.

Cabinet were pleased to endorse the work undertaken thus far by the OSC and were keen for a thorough review of CPE to be conducted. It was also requested that the Task and Finish Group investigated electric vehicle and charging point provisions.

5. **TOURISM INFORMATION SERVICES CONTRACT RE-TENDER:** The OSC gave consideration to the report which detailed proposals for re-tendering the Council's Tourism Information Services Contract and draft specification. The OSC agreed the draft specification, that the Executive Director of Business Operations in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for the Public Realm, Culture and Tourism be authorised to procure a three year contract at a fee of up to £18,000 per annum; that £5,000 per annum be directed towards events and marketing; and officers liaise with Wealden District Council to investigate the benefits of a joint procurement process for Tourism Information Services.

Cabinet considered the OSC's comments and was supportive of the recommendations submitted.

6. **BUSINESS RATES – REDUCING THE FINANCIAL BURDEN ON LOCAL BUSINESSES:** The OSC considered the report of the Executive Director of Resources which updated Members on the progress of alleviating the financial burden on local businesses following the national revaluation of business rates that came into force on 1 April 2017. Members were supportive of the proposed discretionary rate relief scheme and noted that major preceptors, the Federation of Small Businesses and the local Chambers of Commerce would be consulted.

Cabinet was in agreement with the recommendation.

## 11 SEPTEMBER 2017

7. **INCOME GENERATION AND ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN:** Members considered a comprehensive report on the actions in support of and recommendations regarding delivery of the Asset Management Plan (AMP), as well as resources required to achieve savings identified in the Rother 2020 programme. The OSC considered disposals and devolvement; current land and property assets; and additional income generation through investment in property assets. Seven million without the need for borrowing had been set aside for investment purposes. Suggestion was proposed that the Council invested more money in "safer" schemes e.g. Churches Charities Local Authority Property Fund. Careful management and a communication strategy would be required to endorse the benefits of external investment in order to

safeguard services. The OSC endorsed the report and recommendations to Cabinet.

Cabinet considered the OSC's comments and were supportive of the recommendation submitted.

8. **CEMETERY PROVISION AND CHARGING STRUCTURE:** Following a reduction in the income generated by Cemetery Services in 2016/17, the OSC was tasked by Cabinet to review cemetery provision and the charging structure. Members considered the current services and charges, the factors that had resulted in reduction of income, and the results of a number of feasibility studies into developing a crematorium within the district. Results showed there was not a sufficient business case for the Council to develop and operate its own crematorium. As a result of a number of factors annual income was expected to fluctuate and monitoring would be ongoing. Members were supportive of officers continuing to monitor cemetery income and report any significant changes in demand for future consideration.

Cabinet was in agreement with the recommendation.

## 16 OCTOBER 2017

9. **COUNCIL CHAMBER AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT UPGRADE:** In April 2017, the OSC received a report on a number of options to upgrade the Audio/Visual equipment in the Council Chamber. The OSC recommended that all three options proposed be purchased, but that live-streaming not be pursued but kept under review. At that time, Cabinet was not supportive of the recommendations and requested that further investigation be completed. Advice was sought on the procurement process, the systems used by neighbouring authorities, ICT infrastructure and technology advances, as well as a Member survey to gauge the level of support for upgrading the system. Funding had been set aside in the Capital Programme to fund the upgrade, but not the annual license fee to webcast live meetings. The OSC agreed to re-recommend to Cabinet that all three options be purchased and that live-streaming of Council meetings not be pursued at this point, but kept under review.

Cabinet considered the OSC's comments and were generally supportive of the recommendation however, it was agreed that only microphone and video/presentation upgrades be purchased. Cabinet requested that as far as possible, installed equipment be compatible with the fixed cameras and webcasting equipment, should the Council decide at a later date and, in particular after the 2019 elections, to introduce fixed cameras and webcasting.

10. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2018/19 TO 2022/23:** The OSC considered the report of the Executive Director of Resources on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2022/23 which set out the main financial issues affecting the Council's Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Reserves.

Cabinet considered the OSC's comments and were supportive of the recommendations submitted.

11. **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW FOR BEXHILL:** The OSC gave consideration to the report of the Executive Director of Resources that set out the background, progression and consultation results of the Community Governance Review (CGR) for Bexhill, as well as the recommendations of the Community Governance Review Steering Group. Four options were proposed for consideration 1) no change; 2) creation of one Parish Council for the whole of Bexhill (styled as Town Council); 3) creation of an Area Committee; and 4) the creation of four Parish Councils – North, East, South and West Bexhill, based on ESCC's current divisional boundaries. 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.

Cabinet was supportive of the OSC's recommendation submitted.

12. **CALL-IN – COUNCIL CHAMBER AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT UPGRADE:** (see paragraphs 32 to 34 in main report).

**29 JANUARY 2018**

13. **KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2018/19:** The OSC considered the report of the Key Performance Targets for 2018/19, which proposed that the Council measured eight Key Performance Indicators (KPI): benefits claims processing – new claims; benefits claims processing – changes of circumstances; homelessness applications received; prevention of homelessness per 1,000 households, households in temporary accommodation; net additional homes provided, affordable housing provided; and return on investment properties which focused on key outcomes within the Corporate Plan and the impact of both the local economy and efficient delivery of key services to Rother's residents, with in the Council's resources.

Cabinet was supportive of the OSC's recommendations and agreed that the 300 target for Homelessness Applications Received be removed but that the KPI remained and that the numbers be noted. It was acknowledged that the KPIs selected would adequately reflect a review of the Council's performance.

14. **DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2018/19:** The OSC considered the draft Revenue Budget proposals which detailed the financial settlement figures for 2018/19 and made recommendations to Cabinet, to be considered at its meeting on 12 February 2018.

Cabinet noted the OSC's comments, budget consultation responses and agreed to increase Council Tax by £5 or (2.95%) per annum.

**19 MARCH 2018**

15. **CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CIVIL PARKING TASK AND FINISH GROUP:** (see paragraphs 37 to 38 in main report).

Cabinet considered the OSC's comments and were supportive of the recommendations. Cabinet added a further recommendation (in place of the original recommendation 2) that was not supported) that ESCC be requested to establish a parking board similar to those in Hastings and Lewes Councils which would meet regularly to monitor the scheme.