

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 March 2019

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 18 March 2019 at 6:30pm.

Committee Members present: Councillors P.N. Osborne (Chairman), M. Mooney (Vice-Chairman), J. Barnes, C.A. Clark, Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams, S.D. Elford (in part), R.V. Elliston, J. Potts, Mrs S.M. Prochak and M.R. Watson.

Other Members present: Councillors Mrs M.L. Barnes, K.P. Dixon, I.G.F. Jenkins (in part) and Mrs E.M. Kirby-Green.

Advisory Officers present: Executive Director (MJ), Assistant Director Resources, Head of Service Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration (in part), Head of Service Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety (in part), Community Safety Co-ordinator (in part) and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: Inspector Jonathan Hartley, Sussex Police (in part) and 3 members of the public.

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### OSC18/43. **MINUTES**

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 January 2019 as a correct record of the proceedings.

### OSC18/44. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G.S. Browne, G.F. Stevens and Dr Anthony Leonard, Executive Director.

### OSC18/45. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SAFER ROTHER PARTNERSHIP** (5.1)

Members received the Executive Director's annual report of the Safer Rother Partnership (SRP) which provided information on the work of the SRP for the Committee to review, scrutinise and make reports or recommendations to the responsible authorities of the SRP, in line with the Council's statutory responsibilities under the Police and Justice Act 2006. Councillor Mrs Kirby-Green, the Council's nominated representative, Chair of the SRP and Co-Chair of the Joint Hastings and Rother Community Safety Partnership was also in attendance.

The Chairman welcomed Inspector Jonathan Hartley to the meeting, who led Members through the report. Members were advised that the 5,080 crimes in Rother reported to Sussex Police during the 12 months to the end of January 2019 was 100 fewer reports on the previous 12 months, the decrease (-1.9%) being twice that for East Sussex as a whole. As a comparison, Lewes had seen the largest increase at

+3.8% (+198) and Wealden the largest decrease of 400 crimes (-6.2%).

The following crimes had seen a decrease in the 12 months to the end of January 2019: all anti-social behaviour (ASB) categories Personal, Nuisance, Environmental; Burglary, Serious Acquisitive Crime; theft of a motor vehicle, pedal cycle and from a person; vehicle interference; and criminal damage of buildings and vehicles. There had been slight increases in reports of other crimes, e.g. shoplifting (14), arson (18) and violent crime (252); of the violent crimes recorded, 109 were reports of domestic abuse, victims of which the Partnership assisted to access vital services.

Key initiatives delivered during 2018/19 to reduce crime and the impact of crime and ASB included: commissioning of Seaview and partners to identify, engage and support rough sleepers in Rother; '16 Days of Action', which built on the previous year's white ribbon campaign; training session on tools and powers available to address ASB; implementation of the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) (Number 2), to address Nuisance Behaviour and the Consumption of Alcohol in a Public Place; operational and educational initiatives to address modern slavery and cuckooing across Rother; inter-departmental working within the Council to address ASB, which resulted in the resolution of a wide range of cases; and an increase in Council officers using the tools and powers to address ASB.

Emerging Police Issues identified were: rural crime (including cross border crime), drug supply and 'cuckooing' in both urban and rural areas and the use of cocaine across Rother. The following continued to be prioritised in Rother, with interventions continuing during 2019/20: delivering interventions under the ASB tools and power (PSPOs and Community Penalty Notices), drug supply and 'cuckooing', modern slavery and human trafficking (Discovery) and rough sleepers and the street community.

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

- Police Community Support Officers were considered essential resources to tackling crime in rural locations;
- the police organisation in Rother was expanding. A presence could not be guaranteed in rural areas every day, but on a regular basis;
- speeding in rural areas was raised as a concern by Members;
- Speedwatch was praised for previous work;
- Youth Engagement Officers had been working within secondary schools to raise awareness of County Lines and the issues of drug supply and cuckooing;
- the Community Safety Co-ordinator advised Members that structures and processes were in place within the Partnership to enable the sharing of information between agencies to assist police with tackling crime across the district. Information could also be fed through the Community Safety Team at [communitysafety@rother.gov.uk](mailto:communitysafety@rother.gov.uk);

- Neighbourhood Watch was a significant resource for the police and opened up opportunities for further collaboration and communication;
- the Community Safety Co-ordinator confirmed that operators of 'scams' were being targeted at a county level through a multi-agency approach, working with vulnerable people within the community; and
- Members agreed that expanding the statutory duty beyond the blue light services was essential to community safety and noted the importance of the Local Government Association raising the issue with central Government.

Councillor Mrs Kirby-Green advised that the SRP was working successfully in delivering interventions to deal with crime and raise awareness across Rother. Tribute was paid to Chief Inspector Steve Curry and Inspector Dan Russell for their previous work with the Partnership and to Inspector Jonathan Hartley for his work since taking over the role.

The Head of Service Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety advised Members that 2.5 full time equivalent Community Wardens had been recruited.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Jonathan Hartley for his update and praised the outstanding partnership working that was taking place.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) the work of the Safer Rother Partnership be noted and commended;
- 2) the Chair of the Safer Rother Partnership be requested to consider the issues raised from the report; and
- 2) the Council's work in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety be noted.

**OSC18/46. (5.2) PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT: THIRD QUARTER 2018/19**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director on the Third Quarter 2018/19 Performance Report. Members were given the opportunity to scrutinise the progress of a basket of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) previously selected for monitoring.

The Head of Service Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration advised that there were eight KPIs reported for the third quarter (up to 31 December 2018). Five met or exceeded target (green), one was slightly off target/forecast (amber) and two did not meet their targets/forecasts (red); these were: The number of homelessness relief applications received and new homes built in the district (net gain).

During discussion the following was noted:

**New Housing Benefits Claims on Time:** The average number of calendar days to process a new housing benefit claim from the date the claim is received to the date the decision is taken. The target was 35 days, result was 24.62 calendar 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 11.23 days (lower was better).

**Homelessness Applications Received:** The number of applications of homelessness from Rother households that had come into the Council. The quarter target was 51, the result was 64 (lower was better). The Head of Service Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration reported that the overall trend continued to be an increase in the number of households applying as homeless, mirroring wider national trends. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act was always likely to create a greater number of homelessness applications. The Act defined a person as threatened with homelessness if it was likely that they would become homeless in 56 calendar days; prior to April 2018 this period was 28 days.

**Net Additional New Homes in Rother:** The number of all new homes in Rother, allowing for demolitions and change of use, to give a net gain. The target for 2018/19 was 238 new homes and the target for the third quarter was 60. The result was 38 new homes, giving a total of 151 for the year to date, against a target of 180. The Head of Service Strategy and Planning had reported that the figures were provisional. The results for quarter one and quarter two were updated at the end of January 2019, following production of the most recent Housing Land Supply position statement. There was an increase in quarter one from 33 to 54 homes and a reduction in quarter two figures from 69 to 59. In order to be on target by the end of the year there would have to be a net gain of 87 new homes during quarter four.

**New Affordable Homes:** The gross number of new affordable homes that had been completed in the district. The target for 2018/19 was 10 new homes. This target was based on anticipated delivery at the time of setting the target. The annual target had already been exceeded with 51 new homes built in the last three quarters. The target for quarter three was three new homes. The result was eight new affordable homes.

**Households in Temporary Accommodation (TA):** The number of households placed in TA by the Housing Needs Team as measured on the last day of the quarter. The forecast for 2018/19 was 60 households. The result at the end of quarter three was 40. Members agreed that continued work on the recommendations of the Housing Task and Finish Group would be needed.

**Return on Investment from Investment Assets:** The return on investment from the income, expenditure and value of the Council's investment assets, reported in cash terms as well as achieving the target percentage return on investment that was agreed at Cabinet and

Full Council. The Council had forecasted a net income of £195,210.77, in quarter three, the result was £242,510.57 (net). This gave a total income for the financial year so far of £997,627.23 (net). The Head of Service Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration advised that the income generated from the leasing of the Colonnade would not commence until the beginning of the next financial year.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

OSC18/47. **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING**  
(5.3) **QUARTER 3 2018/19**

Members received and considered the report of the Executive Director on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 3 2018/19, which had been presented to Cabinet on 11 March 2019. The report contained details of the significant variations of the Revenue Budget and updated Capital Programme.

Overall it was expected there would be an underspend on services of £411,000. This was attributed to underspends/savings on staff vacancies, Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), planning policy, land charge income, building control shared service, rent reviews, beach hut sales, refuse collection, increased car parking income and telephone costs. Overspend/deficits were attributed to office space rental, reduced planning fees income, property management, temporary accommodation, external audit fees, overtime costs for the implementation of the new financial system, software costs and interest from investments.

Due to slippage on items within the Capital Programme funded through revenue, there was expected to be a final spend of £1.493m, a reduction of £0.822m compared to the original budget. Additional income of £105,000 had been received in respect of Section 31 grants, neighbourhood planning and New Burdens Growth Fund. The Council would also be receiving an additional £35,000 in preparation for BREXIT.

The council tax collection rate was slightly lower compared to previous years and a surplus was expected of £1,238,900 as at 30 September 2018.

Business Rates collection performance was slightly higher compared to previous years. However as at 31 December 2018 there was an expected deficit of £1,226,400 attributable to adjustments to previous debt and the settlement of appeals by the Valuation Office Agency. Rother's share of the deficit was estimated to be £490,550.

The provisional outturn for the Capital Programme was £7.246m spend against a £10.262m budget, an underspend of £3m. The estimated outturn for the Capital Programme was appended to the report as Appendix A. Some costs/spend would fall into future years including

East Parade Project; solar panels at Amherst Road and Bexhill Museum; development at Blackfriars, Battle; two property investments; community led housing schemes; sale of beach huts; Bexhill Leisure Centre; and Sidley Sports and Recreation. A further £1.5m DFG had been received in 2018/19 with £797,000 already in earmarked reserves, the actual end of year spend was anticipated to be £1.3m.

Members expressed concerns over the reported underspends/savings on staff vacancies and if recruitment had become difficult. The Executive Director advised that the savings realised had been due to gaps between staff leaving posts and new staff members taking over.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

OSC18/48. **FORMAL SUBSTITUTE SYSTEM FOR COMMITTEES**  
(5.4)

Members received and considered the report of the Executive Director on the prospect of a formal substitute system for committees, to consider whether a review should be undertaken for its introduction and if so, the timescale taking into account the current Work Programme and officer availability. Members agreed that a review be undertaken in July 2019 and to consider the County Council scheme currently in use. Cabinet would be requested to consider any recommendations from a review, for the onward approval of full Council.

**RESOLVED:** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertake a review of a substitute system for formal committees and be added to their Work Programme for 22 July 2019.

OSC18/49 **WORK PROGRAMME**  
(5.5)

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

- Finance Outturn Report to be added to 10 June 2019;
- Housing Allocations Policy to be added to 10 June 2019;
- Review of Voluntary Sector Service Level Agreements to be added to 10 June 2019;
- Colonnade Review be added to 22 July 2019; and
- Review of formal substitute system for committees to be added to 22 July 2019.

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

**CHAIRMAN**

The meeting closed at 8:25pm

OSC190318/lh

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

| <b>WORK PROGRAMME 2018 – 2019</b> |   |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>DATE OF MEETING</b>            | <b>SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM (Capitalised)</b>  | <b>Cabinet Portfolio Holder</b> |
| <b>29.04.19</b>                   | <b>TOURISM TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call-in and Urgency Procedures</li> <li>• Draft Annual Report to Council</li> <li>• Property Investment Panel Activity Report</li> </ul> | <b>Hart</b>                     |

| <b>WORK PROGRAMME 2019 – 2020</b> |  |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>DATE OF MEETING</b>            | <b>SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM (Capitalised)</b>   | <b>Cabinet Portfolio Holder</b> |
| <b>10.06.19</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Work Programme</li> <li>• Performance Progress Report: Year End and Fourth Quarter 2018/19</li> <li>• Finance Outturn Report</li> <li>• Housing Allocations Policy</li> <li>• Review of Voluntary Sector Service Level Agreements</li> </ul> |                                 |
| <b>22.07.19</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Formal Substitute System for Committees</li> <li>• Colonnade Review</li> </ul>  |                                 |
| <b>9.9.19</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Progress Report: First Quarter 2019/20</li> <li>• Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring to July 2019</li> </ul>   |                                 |
| <b>14.10.19</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2023/24</li> </ul>  |                                 |
| <b>25.11.19</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Progress Report: Second Quarter 2019/20</li> <li>• Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring to September 2019</li> </ul>   |                                 |
| <b>27.01.20</b>                   | <b>DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2020/21</b><br><b>KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2020/21</b>  |                                 |
| <b>16.03.20</b>                   | <b>CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE: TO RECEIVE AN REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Progress Report: Third Quarter 2019/20</li> <li>• Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring to January 2020</li> </ul>            |                                 |
| <b>27.04.20</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call-in and Urgency Procedures</li> <li>• Draft Annual Report to Council</li> <li>• Review of Task and Finish Groups / Outcomes</li> </ul>  |                                 |
| <b>ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION</b>    |  |                                 |
|                                   |  |                                 |