

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 October 2019

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 14 October 2019 at 6.30pm.

Committee Members present: Councillors P.N. Osborne (Chairman), B.J. Drayson (Vice-Chairman), J. Barnes, T.J.C. Byrne (ex-officio), J.J. Carroll, Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel, S.J. Errington, P.J. Gray, A.K. Jeeawon, L.M. Langlands, M. Mooney and G.F. Stevens (Substitute).

Other Members present: Councillors Mrs M.L. Barnes, C.A. Clark, S.J. Coleman, K.D. Dixon, K.M. Harmer, Mrs S. Hart, C.A. Madeley, S.M. Prochak and J. Vine-Hall (in part).

Advisory Officers in attendance: Executive Director, Executive Director, Assistant Director Resources, Head of Service Strategy and Planning (in part), Head of Service Housing & Community and Democratic Services Officer

Also Present: 1 member of the press.

OSC19/26 **MINUTES**

The Chairman was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 September 2019 as a correct record of the proceedings.

OSC19/27 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C.R. Maynard.

It was noted that Councillor G.F. Stevens was present as substitute for Councillor C.R. Maynard.

OSC19/28 **PROPOSED CHANGES TO PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Members considered the report of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee which had been considered by the Planning Committee at its meeting held on 12 September 2019, detailing a number of proposed changes to public speaking at the Planning Committee.

The Chairman welcomed the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee to the meeting, who led Members through the report.

The proposed revised scheme no longer required the submission of a petition, included a slot for Parish and Town Councils, non-Planning Committee Ward Members and up to three speakers in support or

against for major applications (up to two for Minor/Others and one speaker for and against for household applications). It was advised that speakers would be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis; registration would start on the day of the agenda publication and close at 4pm on the Monday of the Committee meeting week.

In order to ensure adherence to the time constraints and for Ward Members to feel that they had sufficient time, non-Planning Committee Ward Members speaking under the scheme would be encouraged to submit a brief summary of the issues they would raise in advance of the meeting which would be circulated to the Planning Committee.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- the maximum speaking time for interested parties per application detailed in Appendix 3 to the report did not include Members of the Planning Committee;
- Ward Members should have the ability to intervene in discussions if they felt misinformation had been given;
- it should be made clear in the Code of Practice at Appendix 4 to the report that presentations made by public speakers were to amplify the submitted written representation;
- Members were concerned that speakers being accepted on a first-come-first-served basis may all come to the Committee with the same information;
- it was suggested that a Member calling-in an application attend the site visit as well as the Committee meeting;
- site visits were intended to give the opportunity for Members to gain a further understanding of the application and to ask questions of the officers. Discussions about the application were to take place in the public forum of the Planning Committee meeting;
- new information should not be brought to the Planning Committee meeting, but be submitted by the Monday of that week;
- it was suggested and agreed that the word 'interspersed' be added in the Ward Member column in the table at Appendix 3 to the report;
- Members raised concerns about Ward Members becoming pre-determined by submitting the issues they planned to raise in writing, if that application was ever referred to full Council for a decision;
- Members requested that the report on Proposed Changes to Public Speaking at the Planning Committee be combined with the previously discussed report on Proposed Operational Changes to the Planning Committee when referred on to the next full Council. The Executive Director advised that the procedures may need to be kept separate, as the changes to public speaking were based on the proposed operational changes being agreed. However, the request was noted;

- if a Ward had more than one Member, the Member with the most relevant information should speak at the meeting, but the Chairman may allow both; and
- a further recommendation was proposed and agreed to review the new scheme after 12 months.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be requested to recommend to Council that:

- 1) the proposed revised public speaking scheme as set out in Appendix 3 to the report and revised Code of Practice document as set out in Appendix 4 to the report be agreed; and thereafter any minor changes to the public speaking system and/or the Code of Practice to be delegated to the Executive Director in consultation with the Chairman of Planning;
- 2) non-Planning Committee Ward Members speaking under the scheme be encouraged to submit a brief summary of the issues they would raise in advance of the meeting to be circulated to the Planning Committee;
- 3) the word 'interspersed' be added in the Ward Member column in the table at Appendix 3 to the report;
- 4) Members calling in an application must attend the relevant Planning Committee, send a Member on their behalf or provide an apology / reason for non-attendance; and
- 5) the revised scheme be reviewed after 12 months.

OSC19/29 **POVERTY IN ROTHER**

Members received the report of the Executive Director which responded to questions raised by Members to establish the scale of child poverty and its effects within the Rother District, and how Council policy and services impacted on poverty, particularly when delivering key service functions such as the Housing Needs and Housing Benefit services.

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Service Housing and Community to the meeting, who led Members through the report. Councillor Clark was also in attendance in his capacity as Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing, Welfare and Equalities.

The causes of poverty and child poverty were multiple and complex and the report focussed on poverty in general and not on child poverty exclusively. The environment in which partners operated to tackle poverty had changed in recent years, with new challenges to face following the financial crisis of 2008. While in the intervening period a welcome increase in rates of employment nationally had been seen, there had also been a reduction in public sector budgets as a result of the austerity agenda. The reductions in funding for public sector

services had occurred in parallel with a rise in demand for social care and health services associated with supporting an ageing population.

The report recommended a more formal review of the causes of poverty be undertaken with an investigation of the role of Council services in supporting the delivery of effective solution with its partners. Members were therefore asked to consider establishing an anti-poverty Task and Finish Group to that effect. Members were also asked to consider as an alternative if changes could be made to existing Council policies or if discussions could be incorporated within the upcoming review of the Corporate Plan.

Members had the opportunity to ask questions and during the discussion, the following points were noted:

- the recently published Indices of Deprivation 2019 provided further detailed information on poverty across the district, broken down by Ward and it was noted that many factors affecting poverty were beyond the control of the Council;
- the Council's current Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) provided relief from Council Tax up to a maximum of 80% for working households whilst pensioners remained on a nationally set scheme, which provided up to 100% relief from Council Tax;
- residents deserved to feel part of society by contributing and it was likely that many eligible pensioners had not accessed the CTRS;
- Members felt that the focus of the Task and Finish Group should be on factors that the Council could change rather than analysing the causes of poverty, and to look at what practical measures could be taken locally; and
- it was recommended and agreed that officers develop Terms of Reference for an Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group comprising of six Members to bring back to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That Terms of Reference be developed and brought back to the next meeting for an Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group comprising of six Members to investigate the causes and effects of poverty locally and make recommendations to Cabinet to inform future Council policy.

OSC19/30 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.

The following amendments to the Work Programme were noted:

- Environmental Policy Proposals moved to 27 January 2020 meeting;
- Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference be added to 25 November; and

- Questions from Members on the Performance Progress Report: Second Quarter 2019/20 and Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring to September 2019 to be submitted prior to 25 November's meeting.

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

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WORK PROGRAMME 2019 – 2020

DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM (Capitalised)	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
25.11.19	REPORT OF SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Progress Report: Second Quarter 2019/20 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring to September 2019 • Housing (including affordable and social) • Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2023/24 • Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference 	Clark Oliver
27.01.20	DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2020/21 KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2020/21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Policy proposals 	Field Oliver
16.03.20	CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE: TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Progress Report: Third Quarter 2019/20 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring to January 2020 	Brewerton Oliver
27.04.20	WASTE CONTRACT REVIEW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council • Review of Task and Finish Groups / Outcomes 	Oliver Prochak
ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION		
Tourism Review [Minute OSC18/52 – 29 April] Regeneration		