

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 March 2020

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 16 March 2020 at 6:30pm.

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

Other Members present: Councillors Mrs C.A. Bayliss (in part), S.J. Coleman, C.A. Madeley and H.L. Timpe.

Advisory Officers in attendance: Executive Director (MJ), Executive Director (AL), Assistant Director Resources, Head of Service Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration, Head of Service Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety (in part), Housing Development, Programme Office and Policy Manager and Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: Inspector Jonathan Hartley – Sussex Police and 1 member of the public.

OSC19/55 **MINUTES**

The Chairman was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 January and 26 February 2020 as correct records of the proceedings.

OSC19/56 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Barnes, J.J. Carroll and G.F. Stevens (substitute).

OSC19/57 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SAFER ROTHER PARTNERSHIP AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

Members received the Executive Director's annual report which provided information on the work of the Rother Community Safety Partnership [known as the Safer Rother Partnership (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.

The Head of Service Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety advised Members of the key initiatives delivered during 2019/20 to reduce crime and the impact of crime and Anti-social Behaviour (ASB), which included: providing support for high and

medium risk victims of ASB through multi-agency monthly meetings and Community Protection Warning letters; funding for the Safe from Harm Service; provision of safe space after school for young people in Sidley at the Pelham; CCTV coverage outside the Devonshire Square toilets, Bexhill Museum (covering Egerton Park and the public toilets); continued Community Safety Partnership (CSP) funding for the Seaview Outreach Service and partners to identify, engage and support rough sleepers in Rother; White Ribbon and Deer Awareness campaigns, Safety in Action workbooks for school children, support for Community Speedwatch, start up equipment and bedding packs for people leaving a refuge, victim domestic abuse support and tackling modern slavery (project Discovery) and cuckooing across Rother.

The Council had a legal duty to co-operate with East Sussex County Council and the East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) on matters relating to the safeguarding of adults (and children). Work of the SAB and that of the Council was directed by legislation under the Care Act 2014 which became law on 1 April 2015 and The Mental Capacity Act 2005. All councils were required to produce a revised Safeguarding Policy which reflected this legislation and the Competency Framework (The Mental Capacity Act). The Community Safety Coordinator was working with colleagues across East Sussex to deliver this. The Policy would also reflect new areas of work such as Modern Slavery, County Lines, and Cuckooing.

The Rother priorities for 2020/21 included: acquisitive crime within retail, rural crime including cross border crime (especially burglary and speciality thefts) and County lines (drug supply and cuckooing in both urban and rural areas of Rother). The following continued to be prioritised in Rother, with interventions continuing during 2020/21: drug supply and cuckooing, modern slavery and human trafficking (Discovery) and rough sleepers, the street community and delivering interventions to reduce the impact of ASB through multi agency interventions, Council interdepartmental working, use of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) and Community Protection Notices.

The Chairman welcomed Inspector Jonathan Hartley to the meeting who advised Members that the 6,112 crimes in Rother reported to Sussex Police during the 12 months to the end of January 2020 was 1,044 more reports on the previous 12 months, the increase (20.6%) being nearly twice that for East Sussex as a whole (10.4%). As a comparison, Eastbourne had seen the smallest increase at +5.8%. The reporting of crimes had been very low in 2018/19, thought to be due to public frustration with the 101 non-emergency telephone number; the 2019/20 figures were similar to the 2017/18 figures. Crime within retail, which had increased by 32% on the previous year, was one of the priorities for 2020/21 and the police would be working closely with retailers. In addition, the culture of response teams had changed, and more intelligence was being shared with neighbouring districts resulting in good results when tackling County lines and vehicle crime.

The following crimes had seen a decrease in the 12 months to the end of January 2020: arson; robbery business; serious sexual offences;

and anti-social behaviour (ASB) against a person. There had been increases in most crime types, however high percentage increases in certain crimes were actually only small numbers. Of the violent crimes recorded there was an increase of 481 crimes, 199 of these were Domestic Violence Crimes.

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

- crime statistics were available on the Police UK website;
- PSPO's were used as a last resort with support measures offered in the first instance;
- work on tackling County lines had included raising awareness amongst children and increasing knowledge in the community. There still appeared to be a high demand for cocaine, deemed an acceptable drug within the middle classes, which was a key area to target;
- it was clarified that the three types of ASB figures quoted in the report were total numbers rather than just number of increases;
- 'ASB Personal' referred to an act or incident relating to a dwelling, 'ASB Environmental' an act or incident impacting on the surroundings and 'ASB Nuisance' an act or incident impacting on the community;
- Members requested that Inspector Hartley reiterate their invitation to the Police and Crime Commissioner to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Members were concerned that the work of the CSP did not appear to be communicated to the general public enough. Inspector Hartley confirmed that discussions were ongoing about methods of communication;
- cross-border intelligence had improved significantly over the previous 6-12 months;
- the number of police officers was increasing, with a greater presence in local communities. Work was required on re-building confidence in the police force; and
- Members requested that the total amount of crimes be reported in the next year's annual report, in addition to percentage increases.

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

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the Council's work in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety be noted; and
- 2) the legislative changes to Safeguarding work on Council Policy and Procedure be noted.

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director on the Performance Report of the Third Quarter 2019/20. Members were given the opportunity to scrutinise progress towards the Council's stated aims, outcomes and actions in the Corporate Plan and make any necessary recommendations to Cabinet for future service delivery.

The Head of Service Acquisition, Transformation and Regeneration led Members through a summary of the Council's performance against the selected indicators across four key areas (Housing and Homelessness, Benefits Performance, Waste and Recycling and Asset Income), giving the position at the end of the third financial quarter (1 October to 31 December 2019) for 2019/20. There were no significant changes from the previous quarter.

During discussion the following points were noted:

Housing and Homelessness: During Quarter Three, one measure was slightly off target/forecast (Affordable Homes Built (gross) Supply Target). This was due to the target having been increased since the last quarter; the amended target would be met by the end of the year. Four did not meet their target (Affordable Homes Built (gross) Local Plan Target, Net Additional Homes Provided Supply Target, Net Additional Homes Provided Local Plan Target, Weeks in Temporary Accommodation (TA) and Homelessness Prevention Cases per 1,000 homes). The number of weeks spent in TA was often longer due to better quality self-contained units used rather than hostels or hotel rooms, which enabled other services to be accessed at that time. The Council was looking to split this type of accommodation into 'emergency' and 'interim'.

Benefits Performance: Both of the performance indicators relating to benefits performance had met or exceeded their targets and the service continued to work on improvements in its systems and processes in accordance with the adopted business improvement plan. Members advised of several cases of possible missing documentation and it was requested and agreed that officers investigate and report to a future Cabinet meeting.

Waste and Recycling: Two of the indicators had met or exceeded their targets (Re-use, Recycling, Composting: Contractor and Missed Bins per 100,000 homes) and one was slightly off target (Re-use, Recycling, Composting: East Sussex County Council). The figures had decreased over the year, a trend seen nationally, and the Government was looking to address this with legislation. Increased promotion of recycling and re-use was required and would be addressed through the Environment Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan. Recycling rejection rates were within tolerance levels, but these could become stricter in time.

Asset Income: Following the acquisition of the Jempson's Supermarket and Market Square, Battle as part of the Property Investment Strategy, the net income from investment assets would

increase by a further £71,000 / annum. This would add £17,750 to the year's target to be collected in Quarter Four. The Council was not likely to acquire any further properties in the current financial year and would not meet its expected target for asset income. A number of properties were under consideration which were the subject of negotiation and may come forward in 2020/21.

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

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) a report on possible missing documentation in benefit claims cases be reported to a future Cabinet meeting.

OSC19/59 **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - QUARTER 3 2019/20**

Members received and considered the report of the Executive Director on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 3 2019/20, which had been presented to Cabinet on 9 March 2020. The report contained details of the significant variations of the Revenue Budget and updated Capital Programme.

Since the last report to Cabinet, there had been one reportable virement following a review of the Council's capital expenditure financing requirement.

Overall, the cost of services identified a deficit of £698,000 which represented a decrease of £390,000 from the Quarter 2 forecast reported in November 2019. The voluntary redundancy programme was likely to cost in the region of £450,000 to £500,000 but would deliver on-going savings in excess of this amount. If these costs were incurred in the 2019/20 financial year, they would be additional to the £698,000 above.

The main reasons for the variations since the last forecast report were attributed to additional income from the Community Infrastructure Levy administration, Land Charges and rent income as well as lower than anticipated spend on waste services, homelessness, staff vacancies and Housing Benefit payments recovered from the Department for Work and Pensions. However, these reductions were offset by further spending in respect of legal costs for planning appeals, payroll consultancy costs, the replacement of broken play equipment in Rye and accountancy restructuring costs.

Investment returns were in-line with the budget although the final year end position would depend on treasury management and property investment decisions made between now and finalising the financial year accounts. Reserves would be used to meet £650,000 of capital expenditure, which was a small reduction of £46,000 compared to the

last forecast. Delays in acquiring properties under the Property Investment Strategy had reduced the anticipated level of external borrowing, which in turn reduced the amount required to be set aside for the Minimum Revenue Provision by £428,000.

The council tax part of the Collection Fund was currently forecast to be in surplus by £744,000 at year end and Rother's share was estimated to be £91,000. This has been reflected in the 2020/21 budget.

Business rates were forecast to be in surplus of £1.8m by year end and Rother's share was estimated to be £758,000. This had also been reflected in the 2020/21 budget.

Capital spend to the end of December 2019 totalled £13.6m which included the purchase of the freehold of Market Square, Battle, as identified in Appendix A to the report.

Monitoring spend and income would continue in order to mitigate additional costs and its impact on the Council's reserves.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

OSC19/60 **CORPORATE PLAN AND DELIVERY PROGRAMME
CONSULTATION EXERCISE**

Members received the report of the Executive Director which presented a draft Corporate Plan 2020-2027 for a 12-week period of consultation. The aim of the consultation was to ensure residents, statutory partners, voluntary partners and interested parties had an opportunity to comment on whether the Council had identified the correct vision for the district and to give a wide audience the opportunity to forward their views on what the priorities for the district should be.

Since the Corporate Plan (2014-21) was agreed there had been a number of changes; political, social and economic, which together, with increasing demand for Council services, had proved challenging and would require a change in priorities. A State of The District report had been produced which summarised data into the areas of: Population; Health & Wellbeing; the Local Economy; Housing; and the Environment. This report enabled the Council to ensure decisions about what the Corporate Plan priorities should be were based on evidence of need.

The Council met for a series of presentations and workshops in November 2019; discussions from these sessions had been summarised into action plans set out to compliment the Corporate Plan and designed to deliver on the visions and four priority areas identified, namely; Growing People; Growing Prosperity; Growing Places; and Growing Performance.

The new administration had since provided further direction in the form of a set of 10 strategic objectives which had also been included within the draft Corporate Plan. To ensure these objectives were given a

higher priority, they had been included within the action plans as overall 'priority targets'.

The consultation exercise would last 12 weeks and then a period of analysis of the results would be required to prepare a final draft Plan for Cabinet to consider on 2 November 2020. External consultation was to consist of an on-line survey (back up postal survey). Internal consultation would focus on developing the delivery programme.

Members discussed the four action plans in turn and the following points were noted during the discussion:

Growing People

- not necessary to use the word 'continue' throughout;
- rented housing had been identified in the actions points as residents using the private rented sector had little choice themselves in how to improve accommodation. The Council would look to work with landlords;
- the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group would be considering the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Members suggested changing priority target 1 to read 'Enact the agreed outcome from the recommendations of the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group concerning the Council Tax Reduction Scheme'; and
- action point 'Review the council tax reduction scheme to support the most vulnerable residents' implied that support was not already being provided through the scheme. It was suggested and agreed that the wording be changed to 'Review the council tax reduction scheme to ensure it supports the most vulnerable residents'.

Growing Prosperity

- the suggested priority target would mean achieving a 16% increase in the average wage by end of 2023. Members suggested amending the target to '...National league table...' from '...East Sussex league table...' which was more achievable. Officers agreed to review the target and suggest an appropriate level before reporting to Cabinet;
- Members were advised that the aim 'Support businesses to comply with legislation (e.g. food businesses)' was included within the action plan to help grow the local economy through business support services and to ensure jobs were maintained;
- it was suggested and agreed that action point 4 of aim 2 be amended to read 'Encourage appropriate eco-tourism (e.g. glamping, biking holidays)'; and
- 'Hastings Advice and Representation Centre' and 'Hastings Furniture Service' to be added to action point 5 of aim 4.

Growing Places

- Members were concerned that as socially rented affordable homes were a very specific tenure and would have had to have been on site or in the planning system at the time to be completed by 2023, priority target 2 would not be achievable. Members suggested therefore to amend the target date to 2025;

- Members suggested amending priority target 3 to read 'Improve the Housing Land Supply position for the district to maintain a 5-year land supply by the end of 2023, as per the review of the local plan';
- Members suggested adding 'Build integrated transport initiatives' to the action points for aim 2, 'Deliver carbon reduction initiatives'; and
- Members suggested adding 'amongst others' to action points for aim 4, 'Promote strong partnership working'.

Growing Performance

- Members suggested and agreed to amend priority target 2 to read 'Further open the Council to the public ensuring transparency at meetings, better consultation and better visibility by the end of 2023'
- Priority target 3, 'Rectify the inherited financial deficit and bring the Council to a secure financial footing by the end of 2023' would involve an additional £1m in savings and was not in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), recently agreed by Cabinet. Members suggested and agreed to adjust this target to 2025 in line with the MTFP and delete the words 'Rectify the inherited financial deficit and bring...'; and
- members of the public were referred to as clients, customers and residents throughout the action plans according to whether they were business owners, worked in the district or lived in the district. Members requested this was clarified in the action plans.

Members requested that the sentence 'a place where housing is available to meet housing needs' of the Strategic Vision be amended to read 'a place where good housing is available to meet all housing needs' and paragraph 6 of the report amended accordingly. In addition, the Bexhill Town Forum and Equality Groups to be added to the Voluntary Sector Partners with whom to be consulted with in the Consultation Plan document.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be requested to agree the draft Corporate Plan 2020-27, as amended, for a 12-week period of consultation.

OSC19/61

WORK PROGRAMME

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

Members were advised that progress of the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group's timetable would be looked into.

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

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 8:32pm.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2019 – 2020		
DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM IN BOLD	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
27.04.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Contract Review • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council 	Oliver Prochak
WORK PROGRAMME 2020 – 2021		
8.06.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations of the Community Governance Review Steering Group • Performance Progress Report: Year End and Fourth Quarter 2019/20 • Annual Work Programme 	
20.07.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 4 2019/20 	
14.09.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Progress Report: First Quarter 2020/21 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 1 2020/21 	
19.10.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2025/26 	
23.11.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group • Performance Progress Report: Second Quarter 2020/21 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 2 2020/21 	
25.01.21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget Proposals 2021/22 • Key Performance Targets 2021/22 	
15.3.21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime and Disorder Committee: to receive a report from the Community Safety Partnership • Performance Progress Report: Third Quarter 2020/21 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3 2020/21 	
26.4.21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council 	
ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION		
Tourism Review [Minute OSC18/52 – 29 April] Regeneration CPE Task and Finish Group – December 2020		

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