

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 June 2022

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 6 June 2022 at 6:30pm.

Committee Members present: Councillors P.N. Osborne (Chair), Mrs V. Cook (Vice-Chair), Mrs M.L. Barnes (substitute), J.J. Carroll, C.A. Clark, S.J. Coleman, P.C. Courtel (remote), Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams, K.M. Harmer (ex-officio) (remote), C.A. Madeley, C.R. Maynard, M. Mooney and R.B. Thomas (substitute).

Other Members present: Councillor L.M. Langlands

Advisory Officers present: Deputy Chief Executive, Director – Place and Climate Change and Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: 11 members of the public, via the live webcast.

OSC22/4. **MINUTES**

The Chair was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 April and 16 May 2022 as correct records of the proceedings.

OSC22/5. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Barnes and Gray.

It was noted that Councillor Mrs Barnes was present as a substitute for Councillor J. Barnes and Councillor Thomas was present as a substitute for Councillor Gray.

OSC22/6. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Declarations of interest were made by Councillors in the Minutes as indicated below:

Thomas	Agenda Item 5 – Personal interest as Chairman and Company Executive Director of the Council's Housing Company.
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OSC22/7. **PERFORMANCE REPORT: FOURTH QUARTER 2021/22**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director – Place and Climate Change on the Performance Report of the Fourth Quarter 2021/22. 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.

A summary of the Council's performance against the selected Key Performance Indicators (KPI) areas (Housing and Communities,

Economic Development and Poverty, Waste Collection, Additional Income and Planning Processing) at the end of the third financial quarter (1 January 2022 to 31 March 2022) was set out in the report. Performance was compared to the previous quarter result and to the same quarter the previous year.

Housing and Communities: During quarter four, one measure had met its target (Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) (supply target)) and four measures did not meet their target (Number of all Households in Temporary Accommodation (TA), Average Weeks in TA, Number of Households on the Housing Register and Net Additional Homes Provided Supply target).

Economic Development and Poverty: During quarter four, one measure had met its target (Number of Council Tax Reduction Claimants) and two measures did not reach their target (Council Tax Collection Rates and Business Rates Collection Rates).

Waste Collection: The reported figures were for quarter three as the data received was one quarter in arrears from Waste Data Flow. This measure (East Sussex County Council Waste re-used, composted and recycled) did not meet its target. The most recent Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) report dated 15 December 2021 stated that the recycling rate nationally fell by 1.5% for the year 2020/2021. Reasons why had not been given in the report, other than factors related to COVID lockdown. The report for 2021/2022 was due in December 2022.

Additional Income: During quarter four, one measure met its target (Net Income from all investments assets) and one measure did not (Additional Income Generation). The pandemic had had a negative effect on the Council's ability to implement proposals for achieving additional income, but progress had been made and the situation was expected to improve markedly in 2022/23. For example, the Planning pre-application advice service had been re-launched in the current financial year and rental income from the Amherst Road building was now being generated.

Planning Processing: During quarter four, both measures did not meet their targets (Major Applications days to process and Minor Applications days to process). However, the last quarter had continued to see the reduction in the overall caseload, especially older cases, and a continued improving trend in terms of time taken to process planning applications. This was expected to continue into 2022/23 as the overall caseload and number of older cases continued to decline.

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

- Members were concerned that the waste re-used, composted and recycled rate had decreased and what the reasons were for this. Detailed data was not available at the meeting but the issue would be researched by officers;
- progress was sought on the inclusion of food waste collections; the UK Environment Bill was still outstanding and guidance on

when food waste should be implemented was still unknown. Members were advised that new legislation would have significant implications for the Council and the Joint Waste Partnership;

- the number of backlogged planning cases continued to decline, although performance had stagnated recently. The Council had seen a significant increase in demand of planning applications. Members were reassured that the figures for Quarter 1 2022/23 would show a significant improvement as backlog cases would no longer be included;
- the on-going national shortage of planning officers meant that the Council continued to employ three full time equivalent agency planning officers. Initial conversations had taken place with neighbouring authorities to look at sharing knowledge;
- Members were concerned that the number of households in temporary accommodation (TA) had increased; however this measure was a reflection of need rather than of the Council's performance. Interventions such as the TA Support Service and the Tenant Finder Scheme continued to be implemented, but the cost of living crisis was compounding longstanding challenges relating to the affordability of housing;
- funding received for the improvement of leisure facilities in Bexhill had been allocated to the Bexhill Town Centre Steering Group and the development of the BMX and Skate Park in Sidley. A report would be presented in July on the draft Built Leisure Facility Strategy before going to Cabinet and out for consultation;
- 28 discretionary TA placements had been made for rough sleepers during the pandemic, funded by an external grant which was expected to end during the first quarter 2022/23. It was recommended to Cabinet that the Council lobby Central Government, through the Local Government Association, to retain funding for rough sleepers;
- Members were concerned that most targets had not been met and some discussion took place about target setting and acceptable threshold levels, as the amber warning triangle did not appear to be being used;
- the number of Council Tax Reduction Scheme claimants was lower than in previous years and below the estimated total for the year. Signposting residents to the scheme may capture those who were unaware of its existence; and
- Members raised concerns about the housing association provider Optivo, who was going through a merger and how their ability to manage properties in the district may be affected. It was recommended that Cabinet monitored the situation closely.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be requested to:

- 1) lobby Central Government, through the Local Government Association, to retain funding to assist rough sleepers; and
- 2) monitor the merger of Optivo and how properties were managed in the district.

(When it first became apparent, Councillor Thomas declared a Personal Interest in this matter as Chairman and Company Executive Director of the Council's Housing Company and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

OSC22/8. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive detailing the Annual Work Programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC).

An informal Annual Scrutiny Work Programming (ASWP) meeting had taken place on 17 May 2022, which afforded the opportunity for Members to discuss areas of concern and for officers to highlight the Council's key priorities for 2022/23. It was noted that the proposed items for inclusion on the Work Programme had originated from Members at various meetings held throughout the year and had been compiled for Members' consideration and discussion at the informal meeting. The notes arising from the meeting were appended to the report at Appendix B, with the proposed Work Programme detailed at Appendix 1.

Members were reminded that any Councillor could make a request for an item to be placed onto the Council's OSC Work Programme.

The following additions to the proposed Work Programme were noted:

- 18 July 2022 – Affordable Housing Policy

Members requested that Healthy Living, to incorporate leisure facilities (inside and outside) and the skate park, as discussed at the ASWP meeting, be taken forward by the setting up of a Task and Finish Group. Officers would therefore bring a report to the September meeting.

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

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 7:55pm

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2022 – 2023		
DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM IN BOLD	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
18.07.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Hall Renaissance Project • Built Leisure Facilities Strategy First Draft • Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Outturn 2021/22 • Affordable Housing Policy 	Oliver Timpe Jeeawon Byrne
12.09.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: First Quarter 2022/23 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 1 2022/23 • Healthy Living Task and Finish Group 	Jeeawon
17.10.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2027/28 • Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2019-2024) 	Jeeawon Byrne
21.11.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Built Leisure Facilities Strategy • Performance Report: Second Quarter 2022/23 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 2 2022/23 	Timpe Jeeawon
23.01.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget Proposals 2023/24 • Key Performance Targets 2023/24 	Jeeawon
13.03.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime and Disorder Committee: to receive a report from the Community Safety Partnership • Performance Report: Third Quarter 2022/23 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3 2022/23 	Jeeawon
24.04.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council 	
ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration inc. Leisure Centre, Fountains, Skate Park and Accessibility of Green Spaces across the district • Review of the Economic Regeneration Strategy • Peer Review • Draft Corporate Customer Services Strategy Proposals • Litter Strategy • Review of the Tourism Strategy and the impact of Airbnbs – date TBC • Impact of Airbnb and second homes in Rye/Winchelsea/Camber • Effectiveness of 'MyAlerts' • Update report from the Local Strategic Partnership • Update report from the Health and Wellbeing Board • Corporate Plan review – to be referred back by Cabinet – date TBC • Two six-monthly reviews of the Environment Strategy – date TBC • Review of the Financial Stability Programme – date TBC • A review of Mental Health across the district – date TBC 		

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