

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 March 2023

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 13 March 2023 at 6:30pm.

Committee Members present: Councillors P.N. Osborne (Chair), Mrs V. Cook (Vice-Chair), J. Barnes, Mrs M.L. Barnes (substitute), C.A. Clark, S.J. Coleman, P.C. Courtel, P.J. Gray, K.M. Harmer (ex-officio) (remote) and C.A. Madeley.

Other Members present: Councillors C.A. Bayliss, K.M. Field (in part), A.K. Jeeawon (remote), L.M. Langlands (remote), D.B. Oliver (remote), G.F. Stevens (remote) and H.L. Timpe (in part).

Advisory Officers present: Deputy Chief Executive, Interim Chief Finance Officer, Director – Place and Climate Change, Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety (in part), Planning Policy Manager (in part), Community Safety Coordinator (in part), Operations Team Leader (in part) and Democratic Services Manager.

Also present: Chief Inspector Jay Mendis-Gunasekera, Sussex Police and 13 members of the public via the live webcast.

OSC22/51. **MINUTES**

The Chair was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 January 2023 as a correct record of the proceedings.

OSC22/52. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors J.J. Carroll, C.R. Maynard and M. Mooney.

It was noted that Councillor Mrs M.L. Barnes was present as substitute for Councillor Maynard.

OSC22/53. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

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

Barnes	Agenda Item 9 – Personal Interest as Chair of Etchingam Parish Council.
Clark	Agenda Item 7 – Personal Interest as a Director of Rother District Council Housing Company Ltd.
Field	Agenda Item 8 – Personal Interest as an elected Member of East Sussex County Council and a member of the Planning Committee that considers Traffic Regulation Orders.

OSC22/54. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROTHER COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP**

The Head of Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety outlined the annual report to Members 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 Chair welcomed Chief Inspector Jay Mendis-Gunasekera and the Council's Community Safety Coordinator to the meeting who were present remotely to answer Members' questions.

Members were advised of the key initiatives delivered during 2022/23 to reduce crime, the impact of crime and Anti-social Behaviour (ASB), which included: Making the Streets and Businesses safer by tackling street related crime and ASB; Protecting Vulnerable People (not tolerating modern slavery and human trafficking and not condoning violence against women and girls); and Identifying Those at Risk of Harm (by ensuring those with substance misuse issues were supported and not condoning domestic abuse to all (White Ribbon)).

The joint Board met quarterly to identify changes in crime and ASB of strategic significance to both areas, wider trends and review the work delivered against these priorities. The Rother Joint Action Group (JAG) (an officer group) met monthly to oversee the delivery of the local priorities for Rother which in 2022/23 included: ASB and youth crime; rural crime (linking in with East Sussex priorities and cross border work with Wealden and Kent); and drug related harm (including drug supply (both local and county lines) and the impact on the local community). Work on domestic abuse and road safety was also included as a focus for work, but not as specifically identified priorities.

The Rother JAG continued to support and deliver work to address issues that were business as usual through the work of partnership agencies and were priorities, such as cuckooing; domestic abuse (including the White Ribbon Campaign); high and medium risk ASB and all hate crime cases; modern slavery; and road safety. In addition, work that came about through the work of the partnership agencies and were priorities such as Operation Radcott (Camber) Herbrand Walk, Serious and Organised Crime, Safeguarding, Multiple and Complex Needs, Civil Parking Enforcement, Fly Tipping, Criminal Damage, Fire setting were also supported. The work plan for the Rother JAG for 2022/23 was attached to the report at Appendix D.

There were 5,590 crimes in Rother reported to Sussex Police during the 12 months to the end of January 2023, which was 363 more than in the previous year. This was a similar pattern across East Sussex and Sussex. Rother had the second lowest percentage increase in reports (6.9%) in East Sussex, with Hastings having the lowest (4.6%) and Wealden the highest (11.2%).

Rother District had 12 CCTV Cameras (Public Facing/Static) which were monitored by Sussex Police. The Council paid for the

transmission, maintenance and the electricity supply for these cameras as part of a partnership arrangement with Sussex Police, Local Authorities including some parish councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Repair or replacement had historically been funded through the SRP budget.

In 2022/23, the SRP funded a range of projects to address priorities in Rother, namely: airtime agreement for deployable CCTV; replacement Nomad camera for deployable cameras; contribution to Domestic Homicide Reviews; hire of variable messaging signs; White Ribbon Film and social media project; Time 2 Talk; security marking equipment; and community events.

The SRP JAG agreed the priorities for 2023/24 at its March meeting: using crime and ASB data; consultation from the PSPO process; Rother Reputation Tracker Survey Report; priorities of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner; and local and East Sussex Policing priorities.

Since August 2022, NES Ltd officers had been authorised to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for environmental offences. The income received from the concessionary agreement with NES Ltd was £18,000 to January 2023, which was used to fund graffiti removal, signs and waste removal.

Environmental Services and Licensing and Community Safety staff, the police and other agencies continued to carry out successful operational and education initiatives across Rother and Wealden, as detailed within the report. The Community Safety Team also worked with other Council departments to both fulfil the Council's duty and responsibilities and cases and enquires from residents and Members, such as Housing, Planning and Planning Enforcement and Customer Services.

In December 2022, the Government announced details for the Protect Duty, to be known as 'Martyn's Law' in tribute to one of the victims of the Manchester Arena terrorist attack in 2017. The duty would place a requirement on those responsible buildings and venues that fit certain criteria to consider the threat from terrorism and implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures. The Protect Duty would require review of relevant premises across Rother. A new Serious Violence Duty had also commenced from 31 January 2023 which required Community Safety Partnerships to formulate and implement a strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence to be in place by 31 January 2024; work was already underway in this regard.

During the debate, the following points were noted:

- the level of shoplifting had not increased as much as had been anticipated due to the cost of living crisis; good partnership working with the local business community was in place; the number of successful prosecutions as a percentage of shoplifting reports was unknown but could be provided to Members;
- CCTV was only useful for identifying perpetrators if clearly seen on camera, many wore scarfs / hoods to disguise their appearance,

- rendering identification via CCTV impossible; there appeared to be multiple people carrying out acts of vandalism in Bexhill and a local operation to try and identify persistent vandals was underway;
- the number of FPNs issued by NES Ltd for dropping cigarette butts seemed disproportionate to all other environmental offences; the majority of litter dropped was cigarette butts and the incidents of this offence had not reduced in the first six months, despite the large number of FPNs issued; improved communications and a campaign to encourage responsible cigarette butt disposal would continue;
 - the level of FPNs at £150 was considered by some to be excessive for a cigarette butt and some Members were keen to explore a sliding scale of fees with NES Ltd when the opportunity arose, potentially linked to ability to pay, as well as a lenient approach for those who pick up and apologise;
 - fly-tipping of domestic waste had possibly been made worse by the removal of recycling bring-centres, however, the decision to close these had been made due to contamination issues at the sites and the provision of domestic kerbside for all recycled materials; better engagement with the business community may have resulted in less negative press for the Council when NES Ltd commenced work; there was now improved information on the Council's website advising new businesses about their legal responsibilities for waste disposal;
 - it was felt that a level of local intelligence had been lost following the removal of local PCSOs; the Council's public convenience maintenance contract workers could be a good source of useful intelligence;
 - the local Member for Sidley had witnessed a drop in anti-social behaviour since the BMX / Skate Park had been opened, although there was still a perception that it was not worth reporting low level anti-social behaviour as nothing would be done;
 - the importance of reporting crime, no matter how small, was encouraged, this would enable hot spots to be identified by geographical area and targeted by the SRP; Members needed to encourage reporting within their areas for all crimes and ASB; and
 - the recording of domestic abuse had changed over the years as it was a much more complicated issue than originally thought, including such behaviours as stalking, harassment, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control; Sussex Police was 100% committed to protecting victims of domestic violence and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

The Chair thanked Chief Inspector Jay Mendis-Gunasekera and the Community Safety Coordinator for their attendance and helpful contributions to the debate.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be fed back to the Safer Rother Partnership;
- 2) the Council's work in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour, crime reduction and Community Safety be noted; and

- 3) the possible impact of the Serious Violence Duty and Protect Duty be noted.

OSC22/55. **PERFORMANCE REPORT: THIRD QUARTER 2022/23**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director – Place and Climate Change on the Performance Report of the Third Quarter 2022/23. 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) five themes (Housing and Communities, Finance Performance, Economic Development and Poverty, Environment and Planning) at the end of the third financial quarter (1 October 2022 to 31 December 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 three, three measures had met their target (Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) (supply target: end of year), Homelessness Prevented and Homelessness Relieved) and Cost of Temporary Accommodation (TA)) and two measures had not met the target (Number of all Households in TA and Number of Households on the Housing Register. The Council had a limited ability to influence the various factors that increased homelessness and the number of households in TA and Members were advised to focus on homelessness prevention measures as an indicator of performance for the Housing Service.

Finance Performance: During quarter three, both measures had met the target (Net income from all investment assets and Additional Income Generation). There were no changes to the income from assets to report however, there was an increase in additional income generation from £55k to £93,856. This included the previously reported income from renting the second floor of Amherst Road and the new fairground attraction. The additional income was from third party works by the maintenance team and the re-charging of Council staff's time to the Housing Company.

Economic Development and Poverty: During quarter three, all three measures met the target (Number of Council Tax Reduction Claimants, Council Tax Collection Rates and Business Rates Collection Rates). The Council Tax collection rate was at 84.13% at the end of December compared to 84.54% for the same period last year; the Business Rates collection rate was at 84.57% at the end of December compared to 77.72% for the same period last year.

Environment: During quarter three, one measure had not met its target (East Sussex County Council Waste re-used, composted and recycled, reported one quarter in arrears), the other measure did not currently have a set target (Carbon Baseline); the summer drought had also affected garden waste tonnages. Several actions were being taken to improve recycling and re-use rates including closing the most

contaminated bring sites, improved communications around small electrical item recycling and the introduction of food waste collections in the future would no doubt have a significant impact. The ability for residents to place additional recycling material next to their recycling bin on collection day was not considered to be widely known.

Planning: During quarter three, both measures had not met the targets (Major Applications weeks/calendar days to process and Minor Applications days to process) but were improving towards the targets. Returns continued to show a downward trend and work continued processing improvements.

Members were reminded that these KPIs were those that applied to the last financial year (2022/23) and a new set of more focussed KPIs for 2023/24 had been recommended by the Committee and agreed by Cabinet in January / February this year. The new set of KPIs would better reflect indicators over which the Council had direct control and report other more wide-ranging factors through an annual state of the district report, including information such as the number of households in TA.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

OSC22/56. **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING AS AT QUARTER 3 - 2022/23**

Members received and considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 3 2022/23. The report updated Members on the Council's finances as at the end of December 2022 and projected provisional outturn for 2022/23. The Revenue Budget, Capital Programme Statements and impact of the forecast on the Council's reserves were summarised at Appendices A, B and C to the report respectively.

At the end of Quarter 3, the Revenue Budget showed a surplus of £0.133m, against the approved budget drawdown from reserves of £3.187m which would reduce the reserve drawdown to £3.054m at the year end. The report detailed the material variances and the forecast was summarised at Appendix A to the report.

Since Quarter 2, there was an increased deficit of £29,000 within the Financial Stability Programme which was attributed to a review of existing agreed savings, with a deficit of £531,000 in total. Work to identify savings was on-going with Service Managers including looking at reductions in service which had a low impact on customers. A reshuffle of the staffing structure was currently taking place to ensure that effective project and programme management was in place to enable efficiency and continuous service improvement to meet the savings required in the FSP; Members would ultimately decide where the savings would be made.

The revised Capital Programme budget was £136.7m, the actual spend as at December 2022 was £17.2m. It was noted that the Beeching Road Hotel and Food Store Development was in its initial stages and was scheduled to progress in the next financial year. The Barnhorn

Green GP Surgery was progressing well, and planning permission was submitted in December 2022 but would not be submitted to the Planning Committee until after the elections. A high-level review of the projects within the Capital Programme was being reported to the Audit and Standards Committee in due course. The Property Investment Panel would continue to monitor all projects.

The Council Tax collection rate at the end of Quarter 3 was 75.55% of the collectable debit, which was 0.16% lower than the corresponding figures in 2021/22. The Business Rates collection rate at the end of Quarter 3 was 77.69% of the collectable debit which was 12.413% higher than the corresponding figure in 2021/22. It was noted that the collection rates continued to hold well despite the cost of living crisis. The next few months would provide a clearer picture on the impact of the current economic crisis on the Collection Fund rates.

The Capital Programme was forecast to underspend by £114.7m against the revised budget with slippage relating to schemes in 2022/23. The Chief Finance Officer and Heads of Services would review and carry forward slippage into future financial years, if required.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

OSC22/57. **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFF-STREET CAR PARKS TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Members considered the report of the Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group (OSCPT&FG) which summarised the work since the last report in January 2022 and final recommendations of the Group in reviewing usage of Manor Gardens car park and East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) response to the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) annual review. Since February 2022, officers had met monthly on an informal basis with the Chair of the OSCPT&FG to review progress, and then with the OSCPT&FG on 26 September 2022.

The Group had reviewed Manor Gardens car park data and received a general update on revenue collected since the payment machine was installed in November 2021. The Group agreed that the payment machine had improved service and would prove a popular method of payment. A moratorium remained in place for school 'drop offs' and 'pick ups' and local Doctors' surgery flu clinics, which worked well.

In March 2022 the Council had responded to ESCC's on-street CPE first year public consultation that had concluded that CPE was felt to have been well received in the town centres and feedback from the Police was positive.

Following the public consultation process ESCC completed an informal public consultation (which ran from 22 July until 12 August 2022) on their proposed changes to the existing parking restrictions and the introduction of additional measures, such as double yellow lines where appropriate. Members of the OSCPT&FG were encouraged to submit their responses to the proposed changes directly to the ESCC Rother

Parking Review, and to the OSCPT&FG for discussion at their meeting on 26 September 2022.

The Group agreed that many points raised had been addressed and included in the proposed changes, but concerns were raised by some Members, as detailed in the report. Clarity had since been sought from ESCC on three of the points raised and ESCC's response was shown in the report.

Attached at Appendix A to the report was Rother's proposed formal response to the ESCC changes and includes reference to the areas of concern for their further consideration.

ESCC had received an overwhelming response (some 1,300 submissions) to the informal consultation, which following review, would form the proposals for the formal consultation; any unresolved objections would go to ESCC Planning Committee, scheduled to take place in June 2023.

As the Group's Terms of Reference had been fulfilled it was agreed to recommend that the OFCPT&FG be disbanded. All other issues relating to the day-to-day operational management of car parks would be dealt with as "business as usual", liaising with and responding to concerns of local Ward Members. The annual 'fees and charges report' submitted to Cabinet in December each year would provide the mechanism for the review of car park charges.

The Chair of the Group, Councillor Cook thanked the Members and officers for the excellent work carried out by this Member-led Group; a minor amendment to recommendation 2) concerning signage was proposed and agreed. It was also requested by the local Members present that improved signage be provided for Little Common Car Park and directional signage at Canada Way to the Sidley car park, which was noted.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be requested to consider that:

- 1) the formal response to East Sussex County Council, attached at Appendix A to the report, regarding the proposed changes to Civil Parking Enforcement across the district following their annual 'informal' consultation, be approved;
- 2) increased directional signage at the De La Warr Pavilion car park, signposting users to Wainwright Road car park, and the installation of additional signage for Gibbet Marsh, Rye and Lower Market Battle car parks promoting use as 'all day/long stay' parking, with final wording and location to be approved by East Sussex Council;
- 3) officers investigate the issue of shared Houses of Multiple Occupation and whether there is anything that can be done to increase the number of parking permits permissible in these circumstances;

AND

It be **RESOLVED**: That:

- 4) the outcome of the East Sussex County Council Parking Review and implementation date be confirmed to all Members as soon as possible; and
- 5) the Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group be disbanded as the Terms of Reference have been met.

(Councillor Field declared a Personal Interest in this matter as an elected Member of East Sussex County Council and a member of the Planning Committee that considers Road Traffic Orders and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

OSC22/58. **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Members considered the report of the Health and Well-Being Task and Finish Group (H&WB T&FG) which summarised the work and final recommendations of the Group in identify opportunities for promoting healthier, more active lifestyles, and how Council operations and strategies might be better aligned to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for residents. The Chair of the Group, Councillor Cook had produced the report before Members and thanked the Members and officers for their contributions to the work of the Group.

The Group had met on five occasions, receiving presentations on the Impact of the Emerging Local Plan; Public Health Strategic Alignment; Current Leisure Provider; Role of Parish and Town Councils; and the Environment Strategy. The Group had considered that the issues that affected health and well-being focussed around the following:

- **Accessibility**: whether for financial, or physical or mental reasons.
- **Inequality**: in finance and location rural villages and smaller hamlets compared to towns.
- **Lack of connectivity**: between towns and villages and the impact of out-of-area shopping outlets affecting high streets and corner shops, plus the new trend to shop online and the white van syndrome.
- **Unhealthy eating habits**: increase in takeaway shops and online ordering service for delivery.
- **Isolation**: post-pandemic reluctance for many to be out meeting in groups, to access leisure facilities or entertainment venues. Bereavement, isolation and loneliness contributed to a range of mental health issues which in turn affected physical health.

It was considered that there were many cross overs with the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Environment Strategy and the Leisure Facilities Strategy and it was therefore proposed that this strategy should sit alongside these and that all four strategies should form the foundation stones of both the Corporate Plan and Local Plan.

It was noted that whilst the report had stated there were no financial implications to the proposals contained within the report, there would

be cost implication in terms of officer time in supporting and enabling the recommendations within the report, dependent on what was agreed moving forward. How this work would be progressed was very much dependent on the new administration that would form following the elections in May 2023.

The role of the Local Strategic Partnership as a key stakeholder in the monitoring of and delivery of this strategy was also considered and this would need to feed into their work programme in the future, with improved reporting to the Council.

It was also agreed to strengthen recommendation 6) to include specific reference to the provision of swimming facilities and the Council's community leadership role in creating effective partnerships to deliver this for the communities it represented.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be requested to consider that:

- 1) health and well-being be a foundation stone of the next Corporate Plan and Local Plan;
- 2) a partnership with agencies such as ESCC, NHS Sussex and the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector be developed and built on a whole systems approach to avoid duplication, maximise resources and ensure connectivity of approaches;
- 3) a health impact (including health inequalities assessment) section be included in Cabinet reports;
- 4) a register of Leisure Provision in the district be compiled, which could include an audit of footpaths and bridleways, village halls, playing fields and green spaces, in addition to the built leisure facilities that are found in our district, in partnership with parish and town councils;
- 5) a Health and Well-Being section be created on the Council website and the Active Rother Facebook page be promoted;
- 6) in fulfilling its community leadership role, the Council support and work in partnership with parishes and towns to provide leisure facilities, including swimming facilities, by signposting them to relevant funding streams and encourage and promote venues offering facilities for low cost or free meetings/groups and warm spaces in the winter and cool spaces in the summer;
- 7) consideration be given to the introduction of a Healthy Rother marketing event, inviting parishes and towns to promote their provision of leisure and fitness activities, as well as other activities that promote health and well-being;
- 8) healthy eating be promoted by introducing an "I am a Healthy Eating Provider" campaign; as well as linking with the East Sussex Healthy Weight Action Plan;

- 9) consideration be given to introducing grant support for the provision of Early Years Parenting classes by Church groups, Mothers' Union or the National Childbirth Trust, ESCC and NHS Sussex (Maternal Wellbeing Programme);
- 10) planet saving and energy saving schemes be promoted and residents encouraged to join community schemes, such as at Crowhurst;
- 11) to work with Primary Care Networks and ESCC Public Health to alert residents to alternatives to medication through social prescribing and promotion of self- help groups;
- 12) Rother Voluntary Action be supported with the introduction of a Rother Service Hub and compilation of a register of volunteers and their expertise;
- 13) reports to be received that provide effective and relevant data regarding Lower Super Output Areas;
- 14) a report to be received from the Environmental Health Service on air quality across the district and other aspects that affect public health; and
- 15) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review progress after one year and three years.

(Councillor Barnes declared a Personal Interest in this matter as Chair of Etchingam Parish Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Courtel wished it to be recorded that he abstained from voting on these recommendations).

OSC22/59. **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BEXHILL TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The Planning Policy Manager outlined the report and recommendations of the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area Task and Finish Group (BTCCAT&FG) following the one-day Task and Finish Group meeting. The Terms of Reference for the Group was to review the draft Technical Advice Note 3 (TAN) – Windows in Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area (BTCCA) and took place on 22 February 2023.

The Group had received presentations from a number of interested parties and officers including Bexhill Heritage (BH), Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism (BCCT), Councillor Bayliss as a Ward Member for Bexhill Central, Planning Policy Team Leader and Conservation Officer.

The report outlined the key points considered by the BTCCAT&FG following the evidence gathering from stakeholders and expert advisors. The following points were noted during the debate:

- all features, including decorative mouldings that were on many of the Edwardian buildings in the Conservation Area were already covered by the Conservation Area status; this piece of work had solely focussed on windows;
- the Edwardian architecture within Bexhill-on-Sea should be promoted more as a tourist attraction; and
- wooden framed windows were very costly to maintain and there was a limited supply of good quality, locally grown timber.

The Chair of the Group, Councillor Madeley thanked the Members and officers for the excellent work carried out during the evidence gathering session and all had been supportive of the recommendations before the Committee. Councillor Bayliss wished it to be noted that the sentence attributed to her about the Article 4 direction within the Minutes of the Group's meeting held on 23 February (BTC22/05), should be disregarded as it had been taken out of context.

The Director – Place and Climate Change was hesitant about the recommendation regarding free pre-application advice to applicants within just the Bexhill Conservation Area and could foresee issues with regard to other Conservations Areas across the district and other “protected” environs such as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be requested to agree that:

- 1) the draft Technical Advice Note 3 – Windows in Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area not be published;
- 2) the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area be retained;
- 3) policies relevant to the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area, and its specific issues, be considered and examined through the Council's Local Plan review;
- 4) enforcement be increased within the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area, particularly regarding shopfronts and replacement windows on the front elevations of buildings;
- 5) subject to understanding cost implications, the Council provide free pre-application advice to applicants which related to the shopfronts and windows on the front elevation of buildings within the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area; and
- 6) all potential funding opportunities to support improvements to the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area be explored in collaboration with Bexhill Heritage and the Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism.

OSC22/60. **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ANTI-POVERTY TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Members considered the report of the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group (APT&FG) which summarised the work and final recommendations of the Group to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

At Council on 21 September 2022, a Motion from Councillor Coleman was considered in respect of the Cost of Living Emergency which requested that the former APT&FG be reconvened to give consideration to voluntarily adopting the socio-economic duty to affirm the Council's commitment to preventing and combatting hardship, with particular considerations to any impact on those with protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The APT&FG reconvened for a one-off meeting on 5 January 2023.

Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 introduced a socio-economic duty on public bodies that required them: "when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions" to "have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage".

By voluntarily adopting the duty, the Council would strengthen the ongoing anti-poverty work, support an inclusive economy, and equalities approaches, and contribute to the 'levelling up' agenda. The Council would need to amend its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and processes, including the Equality Impact Assessment process and in doing so, ensure socio-economic inequality was considered in all future policy development such as the new Corporate Plan the new Corporate Plan, Regeneration Strategy, and Housing Strategy. It would also be necessary to ensure appropriate training was in place for Members in having due regard to the duty in decision-making and officer training in how to apply the duty to inform new projects, service, and policy changes.

Since the adoption of the Anti-Poverty Strategy in September 2022, the multi-agency Anti-Poverty Steering Group, governed by the Rother Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and resourced by the Rother Voluntary Association, had been meeting routinely. The LSP would take a more active role in developing future iterations of the Strategy and its vision, together with ensuring its objectives were achieved.

The APT&FG had also received an update from the Digital Transformation Project Manager on the performance of the Cost of Living page on the Council's website, which had been promoted on MyAlerts and through social media platforms as well as a Facebook advert. The APT&FG were pleased to note the effectiveness of the promotion, as the page had yielded a good level of views and was in the top 25 most viewed pages of the Council's website.

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

- 1) the Council adopts the socio-economic duty and has regard to it when making decisions and that relevant policies and procedures be amended to reflect this; and
- 2) the socio-economic duty be reflected in the new Corporate Plan;

AND

RESOLVED: That progression of the delivery of the Anti-Poverty Strategy Action Plan and the effectiveness of the Cost of Living page on the website be noted.

OSC22/61. **WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme. It was noted that the Chair of the Climate Change Steering Group would be providing an update to the Committee at its April meeting, as its first item. It was also intended to bring a report on items that the new in-coming Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider, with the benefit of this Committee's considerations and thoughts.

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

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 9:15pm

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2022 – 2023		
DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM IN BOLD	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
24.04.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council • Climate Change Steering Group Update • Working Practices and Work Programme Review 	Field
WORK PROGRAMME 2023 - 2024		
05.06.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: Fourth Quarter 2022/23 • Annual Work Programme • Housing Allocations Policy 	
10.07.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Outturn 2022/23 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 1 2023/24 	
11.09.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: First Quarter 2023/24 	
16.10.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2028/29 	
20.11.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: Second Quarter 2023/24 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 2 2023/24 • Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2019-2024) 	
22.01.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget Proposals 2024/25 • Key Performance Targets 2024/25 	
18.03.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime and Disorder Committee: to receive a report from the Community Safety Partnership • Performance Report: Third Quarter 2023/24 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3 2024/24 	
22.04.24	<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 Well-Being Board • Corporate Plan review – to be referred back by Cabinet – date TBC • Review of the Financial Stability Programme – date TBC • A review of Mental Health across the district – date TBC • Progress on the Environment Strategy (2020) 		

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