

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 April 2023

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 24 April 2023 at 6:31pm.

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

Other Members present: Councillors K.M. Field (remote) (in part).

Advisory Officers present: Director – Place and Climate Change, Environment Strategy Officer (in part) and Democratic Services Officer.

Also present: 8 members of the public via the live webcast.

OSC22/62. **MINUTES**

The Chair was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 March 2023 as a correct record of the proceedings.

OSC22/63. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams.

It was noted that Councillor Mrs M.L. Barnes was present as substitute for Councillor Mrs Earl-Williams.

OSC22/64. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

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

J. Barnes Agenda Item 5 – Personal Interest as Chair of Etchingam Parish Council and Trustee of Etchingam Trust for Sports and Recreation.

Field Agenda Item 5 – Personal Interest as Elected Member of East Sussex County Council.

Maynard Agenda Item 5 – Personal Interest as Executive Member of East Sussex County Council.

Agenda Item 7 – Personal Interest as a Member of the East Sussex Health and Well-Being board.

OSC22/65. **REPORT OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP**

Members received the report of the Climate Change Steering Group (CCSG) which summarised their work to address the Climate Emergency since their last public meeting in March 2022. The CCSG had met on 10 occasions overseeing the development and implementation of projects outlined in the report.

Projects completed included: Council Emissions Baseline; Tree Planting in Bexhill; Urban Forest 1066; Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy; and Couch to Carbon Zero. Ongoing projects included: Village Halls Energy Project; Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points installation; Biodiversity Audit; Parish and Town Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration support; and replacement of seasonal bedding plants with perennials.

Various presentations had been received by the CCSG, including: Council's Emission Baseline; Green Team report; Sustainable Procurement; Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy; the Director – Place and Climate Change's results of a sustainability challenge; and Development and Progress of the Biodiversity Audit.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environmental Management, who had Chaired the CCSG, thanked the officer team for their support and the Members of the CCSG and other Members who had attended for their contributions.

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

- the EV charging points installation was taking longer than had been hoped. The electricity supply in Rye was due to be upgraded in 2025/26 at which point charging points could then be installed in the town;
- the Director – Place and Climate Change was congratulated on his achievements with his challenge to carry out normal duties without using a car for business mileage over the course of the financial year;
- many Village Halls in rural areas were shared ownership, which could cause issues with the work to achieve carbon neutrality;
- the EV charging points were essentially being installed in urban areas only, but there was also a need in the rural areas, where properties were less likely to have driveways and cars were essential for many residents. It was important to understand the roles that each partner had to play in this respect and was an area for the private sector to also play its part;
- the installation of EV charging points was to be at no capital cost to the Council, therefore their locations were also dictated by where funding was available. As use would be for residents and visitors alike, organisations such as Village Halls were being encouraged to fund installations, which would result in additional income earned for them as a result;
- the Biodiversity Audit was not just required across the Council's estate but across the district as a whole in order to assist with the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain. Work was being carried out by

the East Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre across the whole of Sussex in this regard;

- Council Emissions Baseline figures had been reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2022 and district-wide figures would be available to be reported later in the year;
- further Carbon Literacy training would be delivered in-house for Members, officers and Parish Councillors; and
- the trees planted across Bexhill through the Treeconomics project were still being maintained, with the bigger trees in the streets under the care of Trees for Cities under a three-year contract.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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

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

(Councillor Maynard declared a Personal Interest in this matter as an Executive Member of East Sussex County Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

OSC22/66. **CALL-IN AND URGENCY PROCEDURES**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Executive on the Council's Call-In and Urgency Procedures. In accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Rule 17 (b) of the Constitution, the operation of the provisions relating to call-in, and urgency was monitored annually through a report submitted to full Council via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC).

The Call-In procedure was the mechanism by which the Council's OSC could challenge decisions made by the Executive that were not yet implemented. 12 Executive meetings had been held during the period of the report from 1 March 2022 up until 28 February 2023. No Executive decisions had been called-in during the period to which the report related and no decisions of Cabinet within the approved budget and policy framework had been deemed and resolved as urgent decisions.

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

- the Chair of OSC or any two non-Executive Members could request a call-in, not just Members of the OSC, and at least one of whom must have been present at the Cabinet meeting (it was clarified after the meeting that this was physically present);
- the purpose of the OSC was to scrutinise the Executive and was non-partisan in its approach; and

- it was considered useful if the benefits of the call-in procedure could be covered in the scrutiny training for the next Council.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the current arrangements for calling-in an executive decision remained satisfactory.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

OSC22/67. **DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL**

Members received the draft Annual Report to Council as submitted by the Chair, Councillor Osborne. In accordance with Article 6, Paragraph 6.3 (d) of the Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) was required to report annually to the Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amend working methods, if appropriate.

The report covered the period from April 2022 through to the end of March 2023 and gave examples of the various subjects that the OSC had considered during this period, as well as the in-depth scrutiny reviews that had been conducted. Information was also included about the Scrutiny Improvement Review carried out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny in July 2022.

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

- unfortunately, there had been no opportunity over the year for a report to be received on the work of the East Sussex Health and Well-Being Board and Local Strategic Partnership;
- the OSC had the opportunity to call for presentations from other Members of the authority and external organisations which had proven useful and informative, particularly for an item of local interest;
- the Town Hall Renaissance project had been put on hold by the Executive and would be a consideration for the new Council; and
- the socio-economic duty was not part of the Equalities Act, but there was a national campaign to encourage local authorities to voluntarily adopt the duty.

The Chair thanked Members for their input into the many debates that had taken place over the year and for the support of officers. Members thanked the Chair for his work as the longest serving Chair of the OSC and to those Members of the Committee who would not be re-standing, Councillors Courtel, Mrs Earl-Williams and Mooney.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's draft Annual Report be approved and recommended to Council.

(Councillor Maynard declared a Personal Interest in this matter as a Member of the East Sussex Health and Well-Being board and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

OSC22/68. **WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW**

Members received the report of the Director – Place and Climate Change which provided details of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's (OSC) current Work Programme and suggested priority items for the new Committee's consideration following the election in May 2023.

Each year, the OSC considered a number of items for review, and it had become normal practice to conduct annual reviews of performance and delivery against key strategic areas. However, this had led to large agendas and long meetings which, at times, had stifled the quality of the debate and the depth of scrutiny. It had also left limited time for Members to pursue policy areas that were of interest to them.

Following the Scrutiny Improvement Review carried out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny in July 2022, it was identified that it might be necessary to rethink this approach to enable a greater focus on the development of new policy, review of forgotten or overlooked strategies and corporate performance.

The report gave details of the regular topics discussed over the previous two years, 'one off' issues discussed and whether any follow-up was required, items for consideration that had not been included in the Work Programme to date and offered recommendations for items to be included for the following year. A recommended Work Programme was attached at Appendix A to the report.

Members considered the items suggested and the following points were noted:

- in order to create the opportunity to receive reports from the East Sussex Health and Well-Being Board and the Local Strategic Partnership, these could coincide with the review of progress against the recommendations of the Health and Wellbeing Task and Finish Group. All three items were already listed under the Items for Consideration; and
- it was important to retain the Litter Strategy under Items for Consideration for the new Committee to bring forward.

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

OSC22/69. **VOTE OF THANKS**

The Chair wished to thank all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their attendance and contribution to the debates that had taken place over the past year and echoed the sentiments of Members in wishing Councillors Courtel, Mrs Earl-Williams, Harmer and Mooney, who were not re-standing at the forthcoming election, all the very best for the future. For those Members who were standing, the Chair wished them well and acknowledged the work of the officers, whom he had found to be very supportive. Members of the Committee thanked the Chair for his commitment.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 7:35pm

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2023 – 2024

DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM IN BOLD	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
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 	
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

- Regeneration inc. Leisure Centre, Fountains, Skate Park and Accessibility of Green Spaces across the district
- Review of the Economic Regeneration Strategy
- Draft Corporate Customer Services Strategy Proposals
- Litter Strategy
- Review of the Tourism Strategy and the impact of Airbnbs
- Impact of Airbnb and second homes in Rye/Winchelsea/Camber
- Effectiveness of 'MyAlerts'
- Corporate Plan review – to be referred back by Cabinet
- Review of the Financial Stability Programme
- Update report from the Local Strategic Partnership
- Update report from the Health and Well-Being Board
- Review of progress against the recommendations of the Health and Wellbeing Task and Finish Group (Years 1 and 3)

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