

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 April 2024

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 22 April 2024 at 6:30pm.

Committee Members present: Councillors P.N. Osborne (Chair), Mrs V. Cook (Vice-Chair), J. Barnes (MBE), Mrs M.L. Barnes, S. Burton, C.A. Clark, B.J. Coupar, C.A. Creaser, M.C. Legg, C.R. Maynard and S.B. McGurk.

Other Members present: Councillors T.M. Killeen (MBE).

Other Members present remotely: Councillors A.E. Biggs, A.E. Ganly (in part), Mrs E.M. Kirby-Green and J. Stanger.

Advisory Officers in attendance: Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer, Director - Place and Climate Change, Planning Policy Manager and Democratic Services Officer.

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

OSC23/60. **MINUTES**

(1)

The Chair was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 March 2024 as a correct record of the proceedings.

OSC23/61. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES**

(2)

There were no apologies for absence.

OSC23/62. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

(4)

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

Barnes J. Agenda Item 7 – Other Registerable Interest as Chair of Etchingam Parish Council.

Kirby-Green Agenda Item 7 – Non Registerable Interest as a Board Member of the High Weald AONB Unit representing East Sussex County Council.

There were no dispensations noted.

OSC23/63. **CALL-IN AND URGENCY PROCEDURES**

(5)

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. Eight Executive meetings had been held during the period of the report from 1 March 2023 up until 28 February 2024. No Executive decisions had been called-in during the period to which the report related and two decisions of Cabinet within the approved budget and policy framework had been deemed and resolved as urgent decisions.

Members agreed that the current arrangements for calling-in an executive decision remained satisfactory and it was not considered necessary to amend the call-in provisions.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

OSC23/64. **DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL**
(6)

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 2023 through to the end of March 2024 and gave examples of the various subjects that the OSC had considered during this period, as well as the informal meeting held in January 2024 to consider in detail the outcome and recommendations of the Scrutiny Improvement Review, carried out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny in July 2022.

The Chair noted that (MBE) would be added after Councillor J. Barnes' name in paragraph 14 when the report was submitted to Council. The Chair thanked Members, particularly those new to the Committee, for their input into the many debates that had taken place over the year and for the support of officers and Democratic Services. The Task and Finish Groups that had been established continued to do a lot of good work with regard to the individual tasks that they had been set. The Chair thanked the Members of these Task and Finish Groups, as well as outside representatives and officers for their time and input.

It was noted that as the OSC acted as a critical friend to the Cabinet (Executive), it was preferable that items be scrutinised by the Committee before being taken to Cabinet. A recent item had been reported to Cabinet first, but this had been due to the tight timescales involved.

Members of the Committee paid tribute to the Chair and thanked him for his good chairmanship.

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

OSC23/65. **HIGH WEALD AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024-2029**
(7)

Members received the report of the Planning Policy Manager which introduced the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2024-2029. The current AONB Management Plan was adopted by Cabinet in February 2019; each management plan covered a five-year period. This Plan would be the first edition of a new 20-year strategy, with a five-year implementation plan.

This new strategy took account of current issues such as the biodiversity crisis, climate change, fairer access to nature, and development pressure. This meant that the range of character components had broadened, and other aspects of the Plan had changed, including the inclusion of cross cutting themes: programmes, principles for action and an investment strategy 2024-2029.

The preparation of the Management Plan had been overseen by the High Weald AONB's Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), which the Council's Planning Committee Chair sat on. The JAC agreed the final Management Plan 2024-2029 and its supporting papers in March 2024 and recommended that individual local authorities formally adopt the Plan by the end of June 2024.

The Management Plan incorporated introductions, facts and figures and a Statement of Significance before explaining the Core Character Components that underpin the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. It set out five cross-cutting themes: Restoring Soil Health and Regenerative Land Management; Nature Recovery and Biodiversity; The Climate Crisis: Achieving Net Zero; People and Access; and Planning and Development in the High Weald AONB. The Plan was supported by a Strategic Environmental Assessment; Habitats Regulations Assessment; Equality Impact Assessment; and a Consultation Statement. Members noted that the plan was not a development plan document, but it would be a material consideration in relation to the determination of planning applications.

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

- settlement nucleation, as detailed on page 25 of the Plan, had not actually taken place in Rother either prior or since the 13th century;
- the Council, as the Local Planning Authority, set policies through its Development Plan, whereas the AONB Management Plan was a material consideration to help make planning decisions. The Management Plan was taken into account when preparing local and neighbourhood plans, to derive policies to protect the AONB;
- more detail of the industrial history of Rother would be welcomed in the Plan;

- officers from all the local authorities involved had made comments throughout the process of preparing the Management Plan;
- the Plan gave context and highlighted themes and principles, relating to accessibility, active travel, protecting rights of way and transport for residents of villages;
- the Plan should align with the Council's Climate Strategy and be used to highlight what it means to live in the AONB;
- both the East Sussex County Council Councillor and the Council's Planning Committee Chair, who had sat on the JAC, had approved the Plan;
- Members of the Committee would have liked to have seen the Plan earlier in the process for scrutiny;
- national issues such as speed limits on country lanes being limited to 40 miles per hour should be taken forward;
- parish councils should be encouraged to develop wildflower verges; and
- the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning, who was present at the meeting, was supportive of the Plan.

The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 had completed all of the statutory stages of a review and had been subject to public engagement and scrutiny. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were happy to recommend to Cabinet and full Council that the Plan be approved and formally adopted, in line with the JAC's recommendation.

RESOLVED: That the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2024-2029, reproduced at Appendix A to the report, be recommended to Cabinet and full Council for approval and formal adoption.

(When it first became apparent, Councillor J Barnes declared an Other Registerable Interest in this matter as Chair of Etchingham Parish Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

(When it first became apparent, Councillor Mrs Kirby-Green declared a Non Registerable Interest in this matter as a Board Member of the High Weald AONB Unit representing East Sussex County Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

OSC23/66. **WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme. Members were reminded that any Councillor could make a request for an item to be placed onto the Council's Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

The following addition and amendments were made:

- Health and Well-Being Board Update Report and the Review of Progress Against the Recommendations of the Health and Well-

Being Task and Finish Group be reported to the meeting scheduled to be held on 8 July 2024;

- Impact of Airbnb and Second Homes in Camber, Rye and Winchelsea be moved to Items for Consideration for further discussion at the annual informal Work Programme planning meeting to be held on 15 May; and
- Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 1 2024/25 be moved to the meeting scheduled to be held on 9 September 2024.

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

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 7:06pm

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WORK PROGRAMME 2024 – 2025		
DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM IN BOLD	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
03.06.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: Fourth Quarter 2023/24 • State of the District • Report of the Digital and Customer Services Strategy Task and Finish Group • Annual Work Programme 	
08.07.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Outturn 2023/24 • Review of Progress Against the Recommendations of the Health and Well-Being Task and Finish Group • Health and Well-Being Board – Update Report • Active Rother Partnership Strategy 	
09.09.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: First Quarter 2024/25 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 1 2024/25 • Annual Report of the De La Warr Pavilion 	
14.10.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2029/30 	
18.11.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: Second Quarter 2024/25 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 2 2024/25 	
20.01.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget Proposals 2025/26 • Key Performance Targets 2025/26 	
17.03.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime and Disorder Committee: to receive a report from the Community Safety Partnership • Performance Report: Third Quarter 2024/25 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3 2024/25 	
28.04.25	<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"> • Development of New Corporate Plan • Development of New Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy • Impact of Airbnb and Second Homes in Camber, Rye and Winchelsea • Litter Strategy • Local Strategic Partnership – Update Report • Regeneration inc. Leisure Centre, Fountains, Skate Park and Accessibility of Green Spaces Across the District • Review of Progress Against the Recommendations of the Health and Well-Being Task and Finish Group (Year 3) • Review of the Economic Regeneration Strategy • Review of the Tourism Strategy

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