

## Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	24 May 2023
Report of the	-	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair, Councillor Paul Osborne
Subject	-	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report to Council

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**Recommendation:** It be **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

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### Introduction

1. The Local Government Act 2000 states that where councils operate an executive style administration, there must be at least one committee that has the power to review or scrutinise decisions or actions which affect the authority's area or its residents. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) acts as a critical friend to the Cabinet (Executive) and other local service providers, helping to monitor performance and develop policies. The OSC also has the power to hold the Cabinet to account by "calling in" decisions before or after they have been taken.
2. The OSC cannot make decisions or policies themselves, but they have the power of influence. They make recommendations informed by partner and public opinions, performance information, examples of best practice and professional advice.
3. In accordance with Article 6, paragraph 6.3. (d) of Rother District Council's (RDC) Constitution, the OSC must report annually to Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amend working methods, if appropriate.
4. In compiling this report, consideration has been given to the terms of reference contained within Article 6 of the Constitution and how the OSC has fulfilled its role under these terms.
5. This report covers the period from April 2022 through to the end of March 2023; the report has been prepared before the last scheduled meeting of the OSC for the 2022/23 municipal year has been held.

### Scrutiny Improvement Review

6. As Members may recall, the Council commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to carry out a review and evaluation of the Council's scrutiny function, as one of the recommendations that came out of the review of the Council's Constitution.
7. The CfGS commenced the review in July 2022 which involved evidence gathering in person and online through conversations with Members and officers. They met with elected Members and officers, including the Council

Leader and Cabinet Members, the Scrutiny Chair, Members of the Scrutiny Committee, and the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

8. As part of the feedback stage a facilitated workshop was held with Members and officers in January this year to reflect on the review and to discuss options for improvement. The SLT will be considering the themes identified and ways in which to progress the various suggestions for improvement within the existing resources available for discussion and progression with Members in the new civic year.

### **Scrutiny at Rother**

9. Currently, RDC has 38 elected Members who represent the 21 wards within the boundaries of Rother. With nine Members currently appointed to Cabinet, this enables 29 Members to have the opportunity to be involved in Scrutiny.
10. During the period of this report, 62% of non-Cabinet Members have been involved in Scrutiny either through membership of the Council's Scrutiny Committee or in the Task and Finish Group(s).

### **Structure of Scrutiny Committees**

11. During the period of this report, four Task and Finish Groups have been in operation. In addition to Scrutiny meetings, the Council can have up to four active Task and Finish Groups in place at any one time provided that the same service officers are not being involved in more than one active group at any one time.
12. There are 12 Members appointed on the OSC and they meet formally eight times a year. The OSC is politically balanced in that its make-up reflects that of the Council as a whole and its Chair and Vice-Chair are elected annually from amongst its membership. The Chair must be appointed from one of the opposition group serving on the Committee.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

13. The following Members were appointed by Full Council to the OSC in May 2022:  
  
P.N. Osborne (Chair), Mrs V. Cook (Vice-Chair), J. Barnes, J.J. Carroll, C.A. Clark, S.J. Coleman, P.C. Courtel, Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams, P.J. Gray, K.M. Harmer (ex-officio), C.A. Madeley, C.R. Maynard and M. Mooney.
14. The following substitute Members were appointed to the OSC: L.M. Langlands (Association of Independents), G.F. Stevens (Conservative) and R. Thomas (Liberal Democrat). Due to the board membership requirements of the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Mrs M.L. Barnes subsequently replaced G.F. Stevens. In accordance with the system, a formal substitution has been made on seven occasions during the period covered by this report.
15. The Committee has met nine times in person between April 2022 and the end of March 2023. An additional meeting was held in November 2022 to consider the temporary closure of Rye swimming pool.

16. Attendance at meetings by Members appointed to the Committee has been good, with an average of 89% of the Committee attending the meetings during the period of this report.
17. The average number of reports on the agenda for each meeting was four and the average length of a meeting was 2 hours and 8 minutes. A total of 200 members of the public were in attendance either in the Council Chamber or via the live broadcast at the nine committee meetings held during the period of this report. Dependent on the business to be considered, the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders continued to be invited to attend meetings.

Between April 2022 and the end of March 2023, the OSC received reports on a number of issues including:

- Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2019-2024)
  - Anti-Poverty Strategy
  - East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Policy
  - Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2027/28
  - Progress on the Environment Strategy (2020)
  - Recommendations of the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area TAN Task & Finish Group
  - Recommendations of the Health and Wellbeing Task and Finish Group
  - Recommendations of the Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group
  - Review of the Constitution, Recommendations of the Constitution Review Steering Group
  - Rother District Council Owned/Leased Accommodation Complaints Handling Policy
  - Rother Health and Well-Being: Leisure Facilities Strategy
  - Technical Advice Notes - First Homes and 100% Affordable Housing
  - Temporary Closure of Rye Swimming Pool
  - Town Hall Renaissance Project
18. Standing items reviewed by the Committee included:
    - Annual Work Programme
    - Annual Report of the Rother Community Safety Partnership
    - Call-in and Urgency Procedures
    - Draft Annual Report to Council
    - Draft Revenue Budget
    - Key Performance Targets
    - Quarterly Progress Reports on the Annual Performance Plan
    - Revenue Budget and Capital Monitoring Programme

### **Crime and Disorder Committee**

19. The Scrutiny Committee is designated as the Council's 'Crime and Disorder Committee' under section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006. This is not a separate working or steering group; it simply means that on an annual basis, as part of their regular Scrutiny business, the OSC reviews the work of the Safer Rother Partnership as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee.

20. The opportunities and challenges for 2022/23 included: Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and youth crime; rural crime; drug related harm; White Ribbon campaign; tackling modern slavery; and road safety.

## Scrutiny Reviews

### April 2022

21. **Progress on the Environment Strategy (2020):** Members received the report of the Director – Place and Climate Change, which outlined progress made on the Environment Strategy (2020) since the last report to the Committee in October 2021. Two environmental posts had and would be recruited to: Projects Officer (Environment) and Environment Strategy Officer. Various initiatives were in progress including the Bexhill i-Tree Study, Hedgerow Planting, Biodiversity, a second session of Carbon Literacy training for Councillors and officer, Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Council-owned Car Parks, Hydro-treated Vegetable Oil Waste Collection Fuel Trial, a new process for distributing Community Infrastructure Levy funding, allocated to projects that addressed climate emergency or those with a distinctive environmental benefit.

The Climate Change Steering Group had met four times since the previous update and a list of agreed projects was detailed in Appendix A to the report. Members noted the progress made.

### July 2022

22. **Town Hall Renaissance Project:** Members received the report of the Director – Place and Climate Change, which presented the detailed business case for the redevelopment of the Town Hall site. A budget of £460,000 for the development of a planning application had been agreed at full Council in February 2021, subject to a review of the proposals by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Robinson Low Francis was appointed in 2021 as the project employer's agent, Austin Smith Lord was appointed as the architects and lead designers and a planning application was to be submitted in July 2022.

Members were guided through the high-level summary of the rationale for the development as detailed in the report, which included issues such as Climate Change, Financial, Regeneration/Employment, Staff Welfare and Office Accommodation and Funding.

Members agreed to defer making any recommendations until the results of the public engagement could be reported to a meeting of the Committee in September, prior to a meeting of Cabinet, and that the public engagement be extended to six weeks.

### November 2022

23. **Environment Strategy Review:** Members considered the report of the Director – Place and Climate Change, which outlined progress made on the Environment Strategy (ES) (2020) since the last report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 April 2022. Two new staff members had joined the Council to lead work on carbon reduction and the ES. Delivery of the ES and action plan had significantly improved over the previous six months. There was

a renewed focus within the Climate Change Steering Group and Members were guided through the projects being reviewed by the Steering Group.

The current adopted ES was outdated, and the strategic ambitions lacked clarity of focus. As such, a full review and rewrite of the strategy was required with a view to have a fully adopted revision by December 2023. Members were pleased to note the progress that had been made against the ES.

## January 2023

24. **Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 (Part A):** Members received an update on the progress of the Improvement Delivery Plan of Priority 1 and Priority 3 of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 (Part A), together with an updated Improvement Delivery Plan and a summary of all the actions achieved since the Strategy's inception.

Members were pleased to note the progress made and made several recommendations to Cabinet, as detailed in Appendix 1. Other suggestions and ideas discussed would be brought to the attention of the Council's Housing Company via the Head of Housing and Community.

25. **Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 (Part B):** Members received an update on the progress of the Improvement Delivery Plan of Priority 2 of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 (Part B), together with an updated Improvement Delivery Plan and a summary of all the actions achieved since the Strategy's inception.

Members were pleased to note the progress made and made several recommendations to Cabinet, as detailed in Appendix 1.

26. The OSC also scrutinised the performance of services and the resources they use on a quarterly basis. In conjunction, the OSC considered the wider, strategic implications for the district and the lives of residents that are represented by individual indicators and targets. Just some of the themes addressed over the period were:

- **Housing and Communities:** Members were advised that the Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (gross) (supply), Homelessness Prevented and Homelessness Relieved and Cost of Temporary Accommodation (TA) targets were being met, but the other two targets of Number of all Households in TA and Number of Households on the Housing Register were not. The Council had a limited ability to influence the various factors that increased homelessness and the number of households in TA, so focus was aimed at homelessness prevention measures as an indicator of performance for the Housing Service.
- **Financial Performance:** 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, however there was an increase in additional income generation from £55k to £93,856.
- **Economic Development and Poverty:** Members were pleased to note that all three measures continued to meet their targets (Number of Council

Tax Reduction Claimants, Council Tax Collection Rates and Business Rates Collection Rates).

- **Environment:** 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).
- **Planning:** Members were advised that both measures did not meet their 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.

### **Recommendations to Cabinet**

27. During the period of the report a total of 17 recommendations were made to Cabinet, all of which were supported with some amendments. Details of all recommendations made to Cabinet by the OSC can be seen at Appendix 1.

### **Call-In**

28. The OSC has not found it necessary to call-in any decisions of the Cabinet for further scrutiny during the last year. The annual report on the Call-In and Urgency Procedures can be seen elsewhere on the Agenda for this meeting.

### **Task and Finish Groups**

29. Members have previously requested that this Annual Report to Council incorporates a cumulative examination of the results of working groups, when they have concluded their work, to establish if their recommendations and outcomes have delivered their set objectives.
30. During the period of this report the Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group (OSCPT&FG), reported back for the final time to the OSC in March 2023. The OSCPT&FG recommended various changes to car park signage and a proposed response on behalf of the Council to the East Sussex County Council's response to the Civil Parking Enforcement's first annual review, for onward recommendation to Cabinet. The OSCPT&FG also recommended that it be disbanded as its Terms of Reference had been met. The OSC agreed with the OSCPT&FG's recommendations and Cabinet was happy to support this.
31. The Health and Well-Being Task and Finish Group (HWBT&FG) was established in September 2022, to examine the role that the Council took, through its policies, strategies, and operations support to promote the health and well-being of its residents. The HWBT&FG met five times between November 2022 and February 2023 and reported back to the OSC in March 2023 with various recommendations for onward recommendation to Cabinet, and recommended that it be disbanded, as its Terms of Reference had been met. The OSC agreed with the HWBT&FG's recommendations; Cabinet agreed to amend one of the recommendations for clarification purposes and was happy to support all others. It was noted that the OSC would review progress against the recommendations in years one and three.

32. The Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area Task and Finish Group (BTCCAT&FG) was established in November 2022 and met once in February 2023. The BTCCAT&FG reported back to OSC in March 2023 with various recommendations for onward recommendation to Cabinet, which were essentially not to publish a Technical Advice Note for windows in the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area and that the Conservation Area status be retained. The BTCCAT&FG also recommended that it be disbanded as its Terms of Reference had been met. The OSC agreed with the BTCCAT&FG's recommendations and Cabinet was happy to support most but amended one.
33. The Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group (APT&FG) was reconvened in January 2023 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 reported back to OSC in March 2023 and recommended that the Council adopted the socio-economic duty and that it be reflected in the new Corporate Plan. The OSC agreed with the APT&FG's recommendations and Cabinet was happy to support these, for onward recommendation to Council.

### Overview and Scrutiny Chair's Statement

34. From the contents of this report, it is evident that this has been another busy and productive year for the OSC. As Chair, I am pleased with the progress that has been made in terms of improved scrutiny processes and comprehensive contributions from outside representatives. I would like to thank the Members of the Committee for their attendance and their input to the many debates that have taken place.
35. The Task and Finish Groups that we have established continue to do a lot of good work with regard to the individual tasks that they have been set. I would particularly like to thank the Members of these Task and Finish Groups, as well as outside representatives and officers for their time and input.
36. I would like to thank Councillor Mrs Vikki Cook, my Vice-Chair and Democratic Services, in particular Louise Hollingsworth, for their continued support throughout the year.

### Risk Management

37. Failure to produce this report would be in breach of Article 6, paragraph 6.3. (d) of the Constitution.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	No

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Appendices:	Appendix 1 – References to Cabinet
Relevant previous Minutes:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
Reference Documents:	N/A

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## REFERENCES TO CABINET

From April 2022 until end March 2023, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) referred the following reports to Cabinet:

### 25 APRIL 2022

1. **REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION, RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION REVIEW STEERING GROUP:**

Members received the report of the Chief Executive which detailed the recommendations of the Constitution Review Steering Group. Members were happy to support the recommendations to Cabinet.

Cabinet was supportive of the OSC's recommendations for onward recommendation to Council.

### 18 JULY 2022

2. **ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY:** Members received and considered the report of the Head of Housing and Community which outlined the results of the six-week consultation (approved by Cabinet in March 2022) of the Anti-Poverty Strategy and recommended that the new Anti-Poverty Strategy be adopted. Members were happy to support the recommendations to Cabinet for onward recommendation to Council.

Cabinet was supportive of the OSC's recommendations.

### 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

3. **TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTES – FIRST HOMES AND 100% AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** Members received and considered the report of the Director – Place and Climate Change, which gave details of three Technical Advice Notes (TANs) to support the Adopted Development Plan (Core Strategy 2011-2028; Development and Site Allocations Plan (DaSa); and made Neighbourhood Plans), relating to First Homes, 100% Affordable Housing, and the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area. Members approved amended recommendations to Cabinet.

Cabinet noted the OSC's comments and approved amended recommendations to Council.

### 17 OCTOBER 2022

4. **ROTHER HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY:** Members received the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services and a presentation by the Managing Director of Strategic Leisure Limited, who had completed the independent market research and drafted the Strategy report, which outlined the draft Rother Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities

Strategy for Members' consideration, prior to public consultation. Members made a number of recommendations to Cabinet.

Cabinet was supportive of all but one of the Committee's recommendations, which was amended and subsequently approved.

5. **EAST SUSSEX TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION POLICY:** Members received the report of the Head of Housing and Community which gave details of the East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Policy that had been written by the operational housing managers across all five districts and boroughs. Members recommended that the Policy be approved and adopted. The Policy outlined the standards applied to the size and location of Temporary Accommodation as well as the processes and procedures to follow.

Cabinet was supportive of the OSC's recommendation for onward recommendation to Council.

6. **ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL OWNED/LEASED ACCOMMODATION COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY:** Members received the report of the Head of Housing and Community which gave details of the proposed Rother District Council Owned / Leased Accommodation Complaints Handling Policy. The Policy would apply to all activity undertaken by Council staff or contractors that might be involved in property management and support of tenants and Members recommended it be approved and adopted.

Cabinet was pleased to acknowledge that the Policy was required as a direct consequence of the Council becoming a registered provider of accommodation and was supportive of the OSC's recommendation for onward recommendation to Council.

## 21 NOVEMBER 2022

7. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24 TO 2027/28:** Members considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2027/28, which would be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 12 December 2022. Members were happy to support all but one of the recommendations to Cabinet which was reworded to read 'officers develop proposals, which will enable the Council to maintain or replenish its level of Revenue Reserves to one third of net expenditure or £5m, whichever was the lesser.'

Cabinet was supportive of the OSC's recommendations but removed the wording 'or replenish' from the OSC's reworded recommendation.

8. **TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF RYE SWIMMING POOL:** Members received a presentation by the Chief Executive Officer of Freedom Leisure (FL), outlining the reasons for and the events leading up to the temporary closure of Rye Swimming Pool. FL had been operating the leisure centre service for Rother District Council (RDC) since 2006 and had two managing contracts – Bexhill Leisure Centre and Bexhill Leisure Pool until 31 March 2024 and Rye Leisure Centre until 31 March 2026.

Members were presented with a timeline of the events and discussions that had taken place, ultimately leading to the temporary closure of the swimming pool,

together with details of the financial impact and other measures and mitigations that had been taken by FL to offset the additional utility costs and financial pressures.

Members recommended that Cabinet consider that RDC continue to work with FL and Rye Town Council to explore options and that a report be brought to the OSC in the new year outlining the options available and their financial implications. Cabinet was supportive of the OSC's recommendations and added that officers continue to lobby local MPs and local government organisations.

## 23 JANUARY 2023

9. **DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24 PROPOSALS:** The OSC considered the draft Revenue Budget which outlined the likely financial position and key issues that Members needed to consider as part of the budget setting process. The Committee had been requested to consider the draft budget and make recommendations to Cabinet, to be considered at its meeting on 6 February 2023.

Cabinet noted the OSC's comments and agreed to increase Council Tax at Band D by £5.22 (2.70%) per annum and set at £198.60.

10. **KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2023/24:** The OSC considered the report of the Director - Place and Climate Change which gave details of the current Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and their target levels of performance for the financial year 2022/23. It was intended to change the style of KPIs to 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 and the report invited Members to consider which of the proposed 25 KPIs for 2023/24, broken down into eight service areas, they wished to monitor.

After considerable discussion, Members felt unable to recommend which KPIs should be monitored, as the current performance for the proposed KPIs was not included within the report. Members therefore agreed to recommend all the suggested KPIs, with a couple of amendments, provided that Cabinet received details of the current performance to enable consideration of the proposed target in each case.

Cabinet was supportive of the KPIs and their performance targets recommended by the OSC for 2022/23, but amended two and added two to Planning and Development Management. It was acknowledged that the KPIs selected would adequately reflect a review of the Council's performance.

11. **ROTHER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY:** Members considered the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services which outlined the results of the public consultation on the draft Health and Well-Being: Leisure Facilities Strategy for consideration and amendment, prior to final approval of the strategy by Cabinet and full Council.

The results were strongly supportive overall of the draft strategy and it was not considered necessary to change any of the recommendations, but for some

additional commentary be recommended to be added to paragraph 5.3 of the draft Strategy. Members were disappointed that Cabinet had not previously approved their suggested re-wording for Key Principle 2 of the Strategy that had put greater emphasis on RDC's role as a deliverer and agreed to recommend the rewording for a second time.

Cabinet was not supportive of the OSC's recommendation to amend the wording of Key Principle 2 but did support the recommendation to Council that the Strategy be approved and adopted as originally drafted, with additional commentary at paragraph 5.3.

12. **Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 (Part A):** Members received an update on the progress of the Improvement Delivery Plan of Priority 1 and Priority 3 of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 (Part A), together with an updated Improvement Delivery Plan and a summary of all the actions achieved since the Strategy's inception.

The OSC made recommendations to Cabinet to amend the Improvement Delivery Plan with proposed amended targets, which Cabinet was happy to support.

13. **Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 (Part B):** Members received an update on the progress of the Improvement Delivery Plan of Priority 2 of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 (Part B), together with an updated Improvement Delivery Plan and a summary of all the actions achieved since the Strategy's inception.

The OSC made recommendations to Cabinet to amend the Improvement Delivery Plan with proposed amended targets, which Cabinet was happy to support.

## 13 MARCH 2023

14. **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 and final recommendations of the Group in reviewing the East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) response to the Civil Parking Enforcement's first annual review. The OSCPT&FG recommended various changes to car park signage and a proposed response on behalf of the Council to ESCC's response, for onward recommendation to Cabinet. The OSCPT&FG also recommended that it be disbanded as its Terms of Reference had been met.

The OSC agreed with the OSCPT&FG's recommendations and Cabinet was happy to support this.

15. **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING TASK AND FINISH GROUP TASK AND FINISH GROUP:**

The Health and Well-Being Task and Finish Group (HWBT&FG) was established in September 2022, to examine the role that the Council took, through its policies, strategies, and operations support to promote the health and wellbeing of its residents. The HWBT&FG met five times between November 2022 and February 2023 and reported back to the OSC in March 2023 with various recommendations for onward recommendation to Cabinet, and that it be disbanded as its Terms of Reference had been met.

The OSC agreed with the HWBT&FG's recommendations; Cabinet agreed to amend one of the recommendations for clarification purposes and was happy to support all others. It was noted that the OSC would review progress against the recommendations in years one and three.

16. **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BEXHILL TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP:**

The Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area Task & Finish Group (BTCCAT&FG) was established in November 2022 and met once in February 2023. The BTCCAT&FG reported back to OSC in March 2023 with various recommendations for onward recommendation to Cabinet, essentially not to publish a Technical Advice Note for windows in the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area and that the Conservation Area status be retained. The BTCCAT&FG also recommended that it be disbanded as its Terms of Reference had been met.

The OSC agreed with the BTCCAT&FG's recommendations and Cabinet was happy to support most but amended one.

17. **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ANTI-POVERTY TASK & FINISH GROUP:**

The Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group (APT&FG) was reconvened in January 2023 to consider to voluntarily adopting the socio-economic duty to affirm the Council's commitment to preventing and combatting hardship, with particular consideration to any impact on those with protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The APT&FG reported back to OSC in March 2023 and recommended that the Council adopted the socio-economic duty, that it be reflected in the new Corporate Plan.

The OSC agreed with the APT&FG's recommendations and Cabinet was happy to support these, for onward recommendation to Council.