

Minutes of the meeting of the **SCRUTINY (POLICY AND PERFORMANCE) COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Tuesday, 2 October 2018 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor K Mills

Councillors: T A Bond
M I Cosin
R J Frost
B Gardner (as substitute for Councillor J M Heron)
M J Ovenden
D A Sargent

Officers: Director of Customer Services
Head of Community Services
Community Development Manager
Democratic Services Manager

37 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P I Carter, J M Heron and M Rose.

38 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor B Gardner had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor J M Heron.

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

40 MINUTES

The consideration of the Minutes was deferred.

41 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Democratic Services Manager advised that no members of the public had registered to speak on items on the agenda to which the public speaking protocol applied.

42 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET RELATING TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCRUTINY (POLICY AND PERFORMANCE) COMMITTEE

Members received the decisions of the Cabinet relating to recommendations made by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet decisions relating to recommendations from the Scrutiny (Policy and Performance) Committee be noted.

43 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL, CABINET, SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION) COMMITTEE OR ANOTHER COMMITTEE

There were no items of business to consider.

44 ITEMS CALLED-IN FOR SCRUTINY OR PLACED ON THE AGENDA BY A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, ANY INDIVIDUAL NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OR PUBLIC PETITION

There were no items of business to consider.

45 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions to the Committee for its consideration.

Members requested an updated on homelessness be included within the work programme.

RESOLVED: That the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions be noted.

46 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Scrutiny Work Programme to the Committee for its consideration.

Members were advised that the Chairman had requested that BREXIT be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

47 UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE

The Director of Customer Services (East Kent Housing) provided an update on the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit in the district.

Members were advised that Universal Credit brought together six separate benefits together, including housing benefit, and it was paid direct to households not to the rent account. The process of changing to Universal Credit took 5 – 6 weeks and East Kent Housing (EKH) were notified 4 – 6 weeks after the change by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Head of Community Services advised that he would speak to representatives of the DWP to ask them to advise EKH as soon as possible of any tenants due to switchover to Universal Credit.

EKH then wrote to tenants who had made the switch to reassure them that they wouldn't be evicted as a result of arrears arising from the change to Universal Credit and to date no one had been evicted for this reason. It was expected by 2019/20 that the majority of housing benefit claimants would have switched over to Universal Credit.

EKH was working to understand the full financial impact of the switch to Universal Credit on its resources but the extent of the impact was dependent on how quickly the full roll out of Universal Credit took place in the district. It was estimated that approximately 700 housing benefit claimants had switched over with a further 4000 still to switch over.

The Head of Community Services advised that the Council had been working with the Citizens Advice Bureau over the provision of general financial advice on the issue and the Council was helping people in respect of digital access as Universal Credit was an online service. In addition, EKH provided more specialist assistance on the matter and had 3 officers allocated to dealing with Universal Credit issues across the whole of EKH, which equated to 1 FTE for the district. There were also two income officers working on the more technical side for Universal Credit in Dover. In respect of legal action in relation to Universal Credit arrears it was stated that this was a decision for each Council to take on a case-by-case basis.

Members expressed concern that private landlords would be less tolerant on arrears caused by Universal Credit and the potential impact that this would have on the Council in respect of homelessness presentations.

RESOLVED: (a) That the update be noted.

(b) That a further update on Universal Credit be scheduled as part of the work programme.

48 LAUNCH OF A LOCAL AUTHORITY LOTTERY

The Head of Community Services presented the report on the Launch of a Local Authority Lottery.

The proposed Dover District Lottery would raise new funds for participating local good causes, and would help to fund an increase in the DDC Community Grants programme. The good causes would receive 50p in every £1 which would provide for a regular income stream to support their work in the community at no cost to them.

The players would have the option to specify which participating good causes they wanted to support, as well as making a 10p contribution to a Central Fund which would increase the amount of funding available to community groups and projects via the DDC Community Grants programme. Where players opted not to support specific good causes, 60p in the £1 was apportioned to the Central Fund.

It was emphasised to Members that while this was a lottery it wasn't about gambling but rather providing an additional income stream to support the local voluntary sector and building social capital. The Council would also provide support to help the voluntary sector meet the governance arrangements needed to be eligible for the lottery scheme.

In response to strong concerns expressed by Members that this would promote and normalise gambling, the Head of Community Services advised that there were robust safeguards in place and the nature of the registration process prevented any of the 'instant gratification' associated with gambling.

Members also expressed concern about the lottery being run by an external company and the use of Council funds to 'pump prime' the lottery.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet that it not proceed further with plans to launch a local authority lottery for the Dover District (as per Option 2 of the report) until clarity can be provided to answer the concerns of the Scrutiny (Policy and Performance) Committee as follows:

- (a) What would happen to any monies in the prize fund should the lottery be wound up.
- (b) What limit, if any, is proposed for the number of tickets that an individual can purchase.
- (c) That further information be provided in respect of safeguarding arrangements for individuals signing-up to the lottery. For example, whether registrations will be monitored, what arrangements, if any, are in place for spot checks to be undertaken to ensure people can afford the contribution and what consideration has been given to how operating a lottery affects the Council's health and wellbeing responsibilities.

The meeting ended at 7.53 pm.