

Minutes of the meeting of the **SCRUTINY (POLICY AND PERFORMANCE) COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Tuesday, 12 February 2019 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor M I Cosin

Councillors: T A Bond
M R Eddy
R J Frost
B Gardner (as substitute for Councillor J M Heron)
P J Hawkins
P D Jull
M J Ovenden
D A Sargent

Also Present: Councillor K E Morris (Leader of the Council)
Councillor M D Conolly (Deputy Leader)

Officers: Chief Executive
Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)
Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)
Chief Executive (East Kent Housing)
Head of Leadership Support
Democratic Services Manager

96 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J M Heron and M Rose.

97 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.

98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

99 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

100 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.

101 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.

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

There were no items of business.

103 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.

104 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

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

Councillor B Gardner raised the issue of where decisions in relation to the Local Plan were made and was advised that all decisions would go to the appropriate committee.

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

105 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

106 COUNCIL BUDGET 2019/20 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2019/20–2022/23

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report on the Budget 2019/20 and the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20-2022/23.

The key points for the budget were:

- That the General Fund budget was funded for 2019/20;
- That the Housing Revenue Account was funded for 2019/20;
- That the Capital and Revenue Projects budget was funded for 2019/20;
- That the Prudent General Fund balances were maintained at over £2.7m;
- Council Tax increase of £4.95 which maintained the lowest Council Tax in East Kent;
- That overall net expenditure levels had increased slightly, in line with inflation; and
- That there were no significant reductions in funding for services and no major changes in staffing levels.

In response to concerns raised by Members over the Council's property investment strategy and the risks that owning retail properties posed, the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) advised that the Council had used only 25% of the revenue generated in the budget with the rest going into reserves. In addition, the Council had invested in very little high street property and had tried to diversify its investments.

Members were informed that in respect of the salary vacancy provision this was generated by the gap between a member of staff leaving and the post being filled. As such it was an estimate based on previous years rather than a target.

The Council also had a number of projects underway, including the redevelopment of Norman Tailyour House.

107 FEES AND CHARGES 2019/20

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) introduced the Fees and Charges 2019/20 report.

In response to a question from Councillor M R Eddy concerning the increase in local land charge fees it was stated that the search fees had been revised following a time monitoring exercise undertaken as a result of an audit recommendation. As a result of this exercise, whilst overall cost of a standard search (LLC1 and CON29) did not change greatly the cost of individual CON29 questions did. However, this was a better reflection of the actual time taken to produce and provide the information.

As part of this it was considered no longer appropriate to charge the administration fee as a separate fee and that each question would be costed to include the relevant element of administration. This was consistent with the current practice for the majority of Kent Authorities and resulted in more competitive fees for the individual questions. In view of this it was possible that the authority would see an increase in business.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

108 MATTHEWS CLOSE, DEAL

The Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial) presented the report on the background to the Cabinet granting an easement at Matthews Close, Deal.

Councillor B Gardner expressed concern that the cost to the developer of the easement had directly resulted in the loss of 3 affordable houses on the site.

Members debated the merits of asking the Cabinet to allocate the funds generated by granting the easement to affordable housing as opposed to being allocated to the General Fund.

It was moved by Councillor B Gardner, duly seconded by Councillor M R Eddy, and

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet that it be proposed that the receipts from the Matthews Close ditch be put into the affordable housing fund.

The Head of Leadership Support presented the Performance Report – Quarter 3 2018/19. Overall, there had been an improvement in the performance indicators (PIs) with a decrease in the number of red and amber indicators since Quarter 2.

There were 23 Green PIs, 5 Amber PIs and 5 Red PIs for Quarter 3. The 5 Red PIs were as followed:

East Kent Housing

- EKHL1 (Average time taken to re-let council dwellings)
- EKHC2 (Rent arrears as a percentage of annual debit)
- EKHC3 (Former tenant arrears as a percentage of annual debit)

The rollout of Universal Credit continued to have an impact on the arrears and it took approximately 18 months to clear these arrears on average. The modelling undertaken by East Kent Housing suggested that arrears would rise to 5 – 6% at the worst point during the transition to Universal Credit for the Dover District. Tenants were signposted to a number of support services, including budgeting advice to help with them through the transition to Universal Credit.

Councillor B Gardner expressed concern at difficulties in contacting East Kent Housing when trying to help constituents. The Chief Executive (East Kent Housing) advised that there was a specific email address for councillors to use and telephone response times were monitored.

Dover District Council

- HOU101a (Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation including bed and breakfast)
- HOU101b (Number of households in bed and breakfast)

Members were advised that the Council had managed to reduce the number of people in bed and breakfast as well as reducing the overall length of stay in bed and breakfast. It was recognised that bed and breakfast accommodation was undesirable and the Council was trying to move more people to interim housing.

Councillor M D Conolly advised that there was a lot of work going on in respect of homelessness reduction and the use of modular housing for interim housing accommodation was being investigated. The Council owned two potential sites for modular housing and the necessary due diligence work was being undertaken with a view to the two sites being part of a single procurement exercise.

In respect of a question concerning staff sickness indicators, the Chief Executive advised that the Council took the welfare of its staff seriously and that for long term sickness it was a question of providing support to the employee. The indicator for short terms sickness had improved against Quarter 2 and this was being monitored.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.51 pm.