

Minutes of the meeting of the **SCRUTINY (POLICY AND PERFORMANCE) COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Tuesday, 12 September 2017 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor K Mills (Minute No. 47 – 61 only)

Councillors: T A Bond
M I Cosin (Vice-Chair in the Chair Minute No. 62 only)
R J Frost
B J Glayzer
J M Heron
M J Holloway
S C Manion
M Rose
D A Sargent

Also Present: Councillor M R Eddy
Councillor B Gardner
Councillor P J Hawkins
Councillor M J Ovenden
Councillor P M Wallace
Ms K Blackstock (Minute No. 54(1))
Mr D Overal (Minute No. 54(1))
Ms S Malho (Minute No. 54(2))

Officers: Director of Environment and Corporate Assets
Director of Finance, Housing and Community
Director of Shared Services
Chief Executive - East Kent Housing
Head of Corporate Services
Head of Parks and Open Spaces
Principal Infrastructure and Delivery Officer
Principal Community and Leisure Officer
Team Leader – Democratic Services

47 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

48 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members appointed.

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T A Bond declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in Minute No. 62 (Dover Leisure Centre) by reason of his wife's employment by Your Leisure.

Councillor K Mills declared an Other Significant Interest (OSI) in Minute No. 62 (Dover Leisure Centre) by reason of his daughter's employment by Your Leisure.

50 MINUTES

The consideration of the Minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

51 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Team Leader – Democratic Support advised that no members of the public had registered to speak on items on the agenda to which the public speaking protocol applied.

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

(b) That an update on the Regent Cinema recommendations be added to the Work Programme.

(c) That the attendance of a Cabinet member be requested to attend the update meeting.

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

There were no items for consideration.

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

(1) Petition for proposed speed restriction provisions to be installed on Beaconsfield Avenue, Dover (and the surrounding area).

The Committee received a petition, signed by 118 people, from the petition organisers Mr D Overal and Ms K Blackstock. The petition called for speed restrictions to be installed on Beaconsfield Avenue, Dover and the surrounding area.

The main points raised by the petition organisers in respect of the petition were as followed:

- That a survey had been undertaken of local residents with only two residents declining to sign it.
- That Beaconsfield Avenue was the most concern in relation to speeding vehicles, as it was used as a 'rat run' for local schools.

- That figures provided by Kent County Council demonstrated an increase in the number of accidents in the area over the last 10 years.
- That the petition organisers had no fixed idea of the speed restrictions to be installed and would defer to the views of the highways authority on the most appropriate restrictions.
- That the speed restrictions installed in Capel-le-Ferne, funded by Kent County Councillor Geoff Lymer, was a good example as to what could be done.
- That they had sought to get these proposals taken up before but had been advised that there was no funding available.

In response to questions from Members, the petition organisers stated that the sort of traffic calming measures that they were thinking of for Beaconsfield Avenue were 2 x 20mph signs, speed cushions and a speed table at River Side Walk.

Members expressed concern that irresponsible parking in the area was also increasing the risks of accidents.

- RESOLVED: (a) That the Kent County Councillors for the Dover Town Division be invited to the 10 October 2017 meeting of the Scrutiny (Policy and Performance) Committee.
- (b) That the Director of Environment and Corporate Assets be requested to report to the 10 October 2017 meeting of the committee on the options for traffic calming measures.
- (c) That the Director of Environment and Corporate Assets be requested to produce a report to a future meeting on holistic approach to implementing traffic calming measures for urban areas as opposed to the current piecemeal approach.

(2) Future of Dover Town Centre

The Committee received a petition, signed by 1388 people, from the petition organiser Ms S Malho and Councillor P M Wallace. The petition called for the Council to inform the people of Dover about its strategic plans in respect of the future of Dover High Street.

The main points raised by the petition organisers in respect of the petition were as followed:

- That there were lots of empty shops in Dover and there were concerns that the DTIZ would cause shops to relocate to it without replacements in the town.
- That an empty high street would detract from the DTIZ.
- The poor state of buildings in the town.
- That business rates and landlord rents were too high in the town.
- That the town centre was not only a source of revenue but also of community.
- The need for investment not just in the DTIZ but also in the town centre.

Members discussed the activities being undertaken by Dover Town Council and the Dover Town Team and whether landlords were willing to co-operate to improve the

town centre. There was also concern that a degree of land banking was being undertaken. The need for co-ordination amongst the various groups active in trying to generate town centre regeneration was emphasised. The role of Invest in Dover post-DTIZ was also emphasised.

It was also suggested that the Council could be proactive in using S215 notices to improve the appearance of the town centre.

Members were advised that the recent Heritage Lottery Fund bid for Dover Town Hall was intended to bookend the town centre with the DTIZ securing the other end.

- RESOLVED:
- (a) That the Leader of the Council asks the Head of Inward Investment, in consultation with partners, to assess the impact of St James' (DTIZ) on the Dover High Street and consider what might be done to retain a vibrant traditional High Street retail offer in the heart of Dover's historical town.
 - (b) That a meeting of both scrutiny committees be held to consider the matter.
 - (c) That the petition organiser (Mrs S Malho) and Councillor P M Wallace be kept informed of any future meetings.

55 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Team Leader – Democratic Support presented the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions to the Committee for its consideration.

Councillor M I Cosin asked that following a walkabout at Tides in Deal she had some concerns over health and safety and she requested that the item on the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions relating to Tides be added to the Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions be noted, subject to the inclusion of the following items within the work programme:

- (a) Item 19 – To seek approval for wet and dryside improvements to Tides Leisure and Indoor Tennis Centre, Deal
- (b) Item 27 – The Open Golf Championship

56 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Team Leader – Democratic Support presented the Scrutiny Work Programme to the Committee for its consideration.

An update was requested in respect of the Tower Hamlets scaffolding matter previously considered by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

57 UPDATE ON LORRY PARKING IN DOVER

The Director of Environment and Corporate Assets gave an update to the Committee on anti-social and illegal lorry parking in Dover.

The Committee was advised that the Council continued to issue Penalty Charge Notices in respect of illegal lorry parking. The main focus of the Council's enforcement activity was focussed on lorry parking in residential areas and the Council used European bailiffs to pursue PCN's that had not been paid by European registered vehicles.

In respect of the unauthorised lorry park in Coombe Valley planning enforcement had served a notice and the appeal had been determined by the Planning Inspectorate on 8 June 2017. Although the notice had been upheld, the Planning Inspectorate had given the owners 6 months to comply with the notice.

Members were advised that there was a national shortage of lorry parking facilities and that action taken by Highways England to close lay-bys had displaced overnight lorry parking into Dover town as a result. The issue of drivers not taking rest breaks in northern France was also resulting in lorry drivers being at the end of their permitted driving hours when they arrived in Dover requiring them to stop somewhere locally and there was concern expressed by Members that this included dangerous parking on slip roads.

- RESOLVED:
- (a) That a copy of the report presented to the Freight Group meeting be provided to the committee.
 - (b) That Kent Police be invited to a future meeting to discuss enforcement measures.
 - (c) That the Committee be provided with information on the number of fixed penalty notices issues to lorries and the success rate in obtaining payment.
 - (d) That the Chairman of the Dover Joint Transportation Board, representatives from Kent Highways and Councillor N J Collor be invited to a future meeting to discuss the work of the Dover District Council, Kent Highways and the Dover Joint Transportation Board in tackling the issue of anti-social and illegal lorry parking.

58 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 1 2017/18

The Head of Corporate Services presented the Performance Report and Actions for Quarter 1 2017/18.

There were 31 Green Performance Indicators (89% of total indicators), 1 Amber Indicator (3%) and 3 Red Indicators (8%) for Quarter 1 2017/18.

The red performance indicators for Quarter 1 2017/18 were as followed:

- EKS026d (Average call waiting time in minutes)
- HOU010a (Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation including B&B)

- HOU010b (Number of households in bed and breakfast)

Members were advised that the figures for HOU010a and HOU010b were based on the number of households in accommodation on the last day of the quarter.

EKS026d

The Director of Shared Services advised that performance in the customer contact centre was below target due to a number of pressures. In addition to resource pressures from staffing levels, there were also some exceptional issues that had impacted in the Quarter.

Staffing was impacted by the ongoing need to hold vacancies and reduce staffing due to budget constraints. The introduction of a new phone system had impacted on performance due to temporary technical issues during the implementation phase. Also a failure in the automated call handling system had meant that calls had had to be manually handled for a period that had increased pressure in the service. There had also been an increase in calls during the quarter due to the elections and the introduction of the new Council Tax Support scheme, all of which had added increased volumes.

The Director stated that due the combination of factors creating a reduction in the average call wait time, it was hoped that EKS would be able to 'claw back' the performance to target in the next Quarter.

In response to a question it was stated by the Director of Shared Services that the decision to withdraw face-to-face services at the Deal Area Office would not have a significant impact on performance. Members were advised that it was part of the plan to help recover performance as the staff from the Area Offices would be redeployed to the contact centre to occupy gaps in posts that remained funded but which had been held open in order to contribute to vacancy management targets.

In addition, customer services handled in excess of 28,000 calls per month for Dover District Council and the number of visits to the Deal Area Office was a small fraction of this figure (800-900 enquiries per month). The Director explained that the extra two staff that would be redeployed to the contact centre would be expected to handle 150 - 200 customer queries per day between them.

HOU010a and HOU010b

The Head of Finance, Housing and Community advised that the Council was looking at a number of measures to avoid using bed and breakfast accommodation and a new team leader had been employed on the housing allocation team. The Council was also investigating using modular housing to deliver additional accommodation.

East Kent Housing

Members were advised that the performance of EKMH5 (Percentage of properties with a valid gas safety certification), which was an Amber indicator, was due to problems with corrupted data but this had been resolved and servicing was now at 100%.

In respect of the performance indicators for arrears, Members were advised that these were cumulative. There was no target for the level of arrears in the

performance report but the general pattern for arrears was that over the course of the year the arrears would be recovered by Quarter 4.

It was agreed that a report would be made to the next meeting on the impact of benefit changes on rent arrears.

Parks and Open Spaces

Members were advised that the quarterly focus was Parks and Open Spaces. The Head of Parks and Open Spaces advised that four teams had been brought together to form the new Parks and Open Spaces team and that six months into operation the overall performance was positive.

The Head of Corporate Services advised that he would investigate why performance indicator PLA007 had no target shown.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Cabinet that the Council's Performance Report and Actions for Quarter 1, 2017/18 be noted.

59 EK SERVICES FACE-TO-FACE SERVICE PROVISION AT DEAL AREA OFFICE

The Director of Shared Services presented the report on EK Services Face-to-Face Service Provision at Deal Area Office. The report contained additional information relating to questions raised by members at the meeting of the Committee held on 11 July 2017.

Members were advised that the Council provided a face-to-face customer service at Deal library on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (9.00am – 5.00pm). The office was staffed by 2 people.

The main transactions at the Deal Area Office were:

- Benefits (33% of customer contacts);
- Parking (21%); and
- Council Tax (16%)

The area office also dealt with housing and waste enquiries as well as general enquiries that included matters unrelated to EKS or Council services.

The services provided could all be accessed via either post, telephone, online and appointments would remain available at Dover for those that wished to book or drop in for a face-to-face enquiry. The Director of Shared Services advised that the increasing level of internet access meant that many of the reasons for visiting the area office could now be dealt with on-line and those not able to access services on-line could do so via telephone through the contact centre or via post.

The closure of area offices across the three districts would contribute to the in-year savings requirements that EKS need to achieve to deliver the services within the budget provision allocated. The closure of all outlying offices would save EKS a total of £200,000, with £45,000 coming from the closure of face-to-face services at the three area offices in the Dover District. It was intended that there would be no redundancies arising from the closure of face-to-face services at the Deal Area

Office as the staff would be redeployed to the Call Centre to fill vacancies that already existed arising from staff turnover and vacancies that were being held open.

The posts at the area offices would be deleted out of base budget and the saving would be a 'cashable' saving. The Director of Shared Service explained that the EKS budget had already been reduced in year by £832,000 and therefore the funding for these posts had effectively already been taken. However, due to the turnover rate in Customer Services, the gaps created in the contact centre were delivering vacant post savings and the intention was to redeploy the staff from the area offices into these vacant posts to release the base budget savings from the Area Offices. This would also assist the call centre performance, as these two extra staff will provide much needed resource in the contact centre which should help improve the call handling and wait times.

For the most vulnerable people there was the option for EKS to send visiting officers to their homes to assist them with accessing services. These visiting officers already existed but currently provided work to support business rates activity. This would be an additional demand on these officers rather than creating new posts. However, the focus for this new enhanced service provision was to support the very vulnerable and it was expected that customers would only be assisted where there was an exceptional need and not as a routine service.

A communication plan would be developed with input from the relevant town councils and key stakeholder groups to ensure that information on how to access services in the future was widely disseminated.

Members raised the following concerns relating to the decision:

- That changes to the Stagecoach timetables meant that it was increasingly difficult for people to travel on public transport to the Council Offices in Whitfield. There were also concerns that vulnerable people would struggle with the journey.
- That the current appointment only system in the afternoons at Whitfield meant that people travelling on public transport from outside Dover would not be able to make the appointments and get home again. Members pressed for appointments to be introduced in the mornings to accommodate with public transport timetables.
- That vulnerable people would not be comfortable in asking for assistance and as a result would be denied access to Council services.
- That from a public relations viewpoint the Council was expected to have a 'face' and that the closure of the area offices removed this.
- That the savings of £45,000 was not sufficient to justify the closures.
- The impact on Deal businesses through the reduction in footfall resulting from the closure of the area office.
- There were concerns that the evidence provided as justification for the closure of face-to-face service provision was unsound and did not justify the conclusions reached.
- That the increased calls resulting from the closure of face-to-face services would have an adverse impact on the performance of customer services.

There was also concern expressed that the matter had not been granted pre-decision scrutiny as originally requested and that there was no member of the Cabinet present to answer Members' questions.

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny (Policy and Performance) Committee expresses its concern over the soundness of the decision in respect of the Deal Area Office as the evidence provided is not sufficiently strong enough to justify closure.

60 CAR PARK RESURFACING WORKS

The Director of Environment and Corporate Assets presented the report on Car Parking Resurfacing Works. The report sought to drawdown £240,000 allocated within the approved Medium Term Financial Plan to enable the following works to be undertaken:

- Union Road Care Park, Deal;
- Middle Deal Car Park, Deal; and
- Resurfacing works in the area around the RNLI Life Boat House, Walmer

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- (a) That the proposed works to various car parks set out in the report be noted.
- (b) That the allocation of £240,000 included within the approved Medium-Term Financial Plan, to enable the proposed works to car parks to proceed, be approved.

61 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor S C Manion, duly seconded and

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the business on the grounds that the items to be considered involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

62 DOVER LEISURE CENTRE

The Director of Environment and Corporate Assets presented the report on the Dover Leisure Centre.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- (a) That the appointment of BAM as the building contractor, following completion of the Second Stage of the tender process, be approved.
- (b) That the appointment of Places for People as the leisure management operator, following the completion of the tender process, be approved.

- (c) That the award of funding from Sport England, and permission to enter into the Lottery Funding Agreement, be approved.
- (d) That the Solicitor to the Council be authorised to:
 - (i) serve a notice under Section 25 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 on Your Leisure Kent Limited opposing renewal of the lease of Dover Leisure Centre on the ground that the Council intends to demolish the premises.
 - (ii) take any other action necessary to secure recovery of possession of the premises.
- (e) That the Director of Environment and Corporate Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Property Management & Public Protection and Corporate Resources & Performance, to finalise the terms of the contracts.
- (f) That the new facility be named Dover District Leisure Centre.
- (g) That officers and consultants be thanked for their hard work, and the members of the Dover Leisure Centre Project Advisory Group be thanked for their helpful and constructive input.

(Councillor T A Bond declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) by reason of his wife's employment by Your Leisure and withdrew from the meeting for the consideration of this item of business).

(Councillor K Mills declared an Other Significant Interest (OSI) by reason of his daughter's employment by Your Leisure and withdrew from the meeting for the consideration of this item of business).

The meeting ended at 9.47 pm.