

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 20 January 2020 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor L A Keen

Councillors: D G Beaney
S H Beer
T A Bond
J Rose
M Rose
C A Vinson
R S Walkden
C D Zossedder

Also Present: Councillor H M Williams

Officers: Head of Commercial Services
Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development
Housing Development Manager
Planning Monitoring Officer
Principal Infrastructure Planner
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer

79 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

80 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Democratic Services Manager advised that no notice had been received for the appointment of substitute members.

81 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

82 MINUTES

The consideration of the minutes of the previous meeting was deferred.

83 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET RELATING TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The decisions of the Cabinet relating to recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 13 January 2020 were noted.

84 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL, CABINET, OR ANOTHER COMMITTEE

The Democratic Services Manager advised that there were no issues referred to the Committee by Council, Cabinet or another Committee.

85 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

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

Members identified the following items for inclusion within the work programme:

- Item 34 (To consider a proposed increase in Hackney Carriage fares)
- Item 35 (Acquisition of site at Grove Road, Preston for affordable housing, and budget for feasibility works)

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

- (b) That the items 34 (Proposed increase in hackney carriage fares) and 35 (Acquisition of site at Grove Road, Preston) identified above be included within the work programme.

86 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

The Democratic Services Manager advised that in addition to the scheduled meeting on 10 February 2020, there would be a budget briefing and key question setting meeting on 3 February 2020 and a meeting to consider the report on East Kent Housing and Local Health Services on 24 February 2020.

Members identified the following items for inclusion in the work programme:

- Youth services (DDC, KCC and Voluntary Sector)

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted, subject to the inclusion of an item on youth services.

87 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Democratic Services Manager advised that one member of the public had registered to speak on the Review of On and Off-Street Parking Charges.

Mr Leigh spoke for 3 minutes and covered the following points:

- His objection to the lack of consultation with permit holders or other residents who would be impacted by the proposals
- That the proposals would not have a marginal impact on residents as suggested by the report, particularly for residents with health issues, young children or returning home at unsociable hours
- That the details of alternative parking options available to residents were not set out in the report

- Proposed alternatives such as using the Union Road Car Park were not reasonable options, particularly for residents with mobility issues
- That under the current arrangements permit holders already struggled to find parking places during peak times (weekends, holidays and the summer) and during off-peak periods there would be empty parking places that residents wouldn't be able to park in using their permits under the proposals
- That, while accepting the pressure on council budgets, any decision should not be made without meaningful consultation with the people the decision would affect and in the absence of such consultation having been undertaken he urged that the proposals not be implemented.

88 SCRUTINY REVIEW - FOOD POVERTY IN THE DOVER DISTRICT

The Democratic Services Manager presented the scoping report for the proposed review on food poverty in the Dover District.

Members welcomed the scoping document and proposed expanding the list of witnesses to include KCC Social Services, Department for Work and Pensions, Age Concern, Health Services, Dover Outreach Centre and KCC Education Services.

RESOLVED: That the scoping document be amended to include the additional witnesses.

89 EKH COMPLIANCE REPORT

The Interim Director of Property Services (East Kent Housing) presented the Compliance Report for East Kent Housing to the Committee.

The Compliance Report covered both communal blocks and domestic properties and reported the following levels of compliance as at the end of December:

Communal

- Gas – 100.00%
- Asbestos – 80.75% (+49.20% since 04/09/19)
- EICRs – 35.29% (+6.14% since 04/09/19)
- Passenger Lifts – 100.00%
- Fire Risk Assessments – 100.00%
- Fire Alarms – 100.00% (+4.42% since 04/09/19)
- Legionella Risk Assessments – 92.00% (-8.00% since 04/09/19)
- Emergency Lighting – 100.00% (+1.69% since 04/09/19)

Members were advised that communal gas heating and hot water systems were reported as 100% compliant.

The outstanding Fire Risk Assessment works (High and Substantial Risks) were expected to be completed by the contractor end of March 2020. A programme for the lower priority risks would be produced by the end of March 2020.

In respect of Legionella Risk Assessments, these had been completed for Sunny Corner and Normal Tailyour House and once the final reports had been received, they would be changed to show compliance at 100.00% again.

Domestic

- Gas (LGSRs) – 100.00%
- Asbestos – 29.94% (+0.77% since 04/09/19)
- EICRs – 11.77%
- Smoke Detectors – 88.75% (-0.02% since 04/09/19)

Members were advised that the decision of the Council to change from a 10 year to 5-year inspection cycle had resulted in changed performance figures for EICRs. The previous figures cited had been based on a 10-year inspection cycle. A revised timescale for full compliance would be developed with the contractor in January 2020.

The contractor had advised that it would need 9 – 12 months to undertake the required asbestos management surveys for domestic properties.

Members questioned whether the gap analysis for smoke detectors could be completed any sooner due to the seriousness of the issue and they were advised that this could be looked into but that there would be a cost associated with doing so as it would require a separate programme of works. It was noted by Members that there was no completion schedule for the works currently listed in the report.

Environmental Improvement Programme

Members were advised that the Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) was for projects that provided a benefit for tenants through improving safety, accessibility, or the general appearance of an area. Projects could be proposed by any tenant or leaseholder, EKH staff, Involved Residents, Council staff, councillors, the local police and other agencies. The Environmental Improvement Programme Budget had been underspent for 2017-18 and 2018-19 and that no budget provision had been made for 2019-20 or 2020-21 due to the focus on ensuring compliance in other areas.

Members expressed concern that some of the project examples cited could be part of the maintenance programme (such as upgrading a communal bin store) and that the budget was not being used for the purposes that it was intended. There was also concerns raised over whether the works provided value for money and were compliant with all safety standards.

In response to questions over the historic underspend, the Interim Director of Property Services advised that as projects were driven by residents, in the absence of proposals there would be no projects undertaken.

RESOLVED: (a) That the Interim Director of Property Services (East Kent Housing) be requested to provide an explanation as to the difference between the Environmental Improvement Programme and the regular maintenance programme.

- (b) That the Interim Director of Property Services (East Kent Housing) be requested to confirm that there was no Environmental Improvement Programme budget for 2020-21.

90 REVIEW OF ON AND OFF-STREET PARKING CHARGES

The Head of Commercial Services presented the report on the Review of On and Off-Street Parking Charges.

Members were advised that consultation would need to be undertaken in respect of recommendations 7 (with parish councils) and 8 (with permit holders) of the report.

Members expressed concern over the lack of information on the alternative proposals for the permit holders that would be affected by the removal of Deal sea front as a parking option from the resident permits scheme. Members questioned where displaced residents would park and what the impact of the displacement would be on residents in other areas. It was suggested that any consultation should also be with those affected by the displacement of parking from the sea front.

The absence of evidence to support the benefit to tourism from removing Deal sea front from the resident permits scheme was also cited as a concern for justifying the decision.

Councillor M Rose highlighted the issue of the unfairness of hotelier parking permit books that allowed visitors to park for a lower cost than residents in the same spaces.

The impact of proposals on local businesses was raised and the need to consult with them on changes that could affect them. In respect of the proposals to make Albany Place in Dover a free car park, the location and accessibility of the car park was raised.

Members discussed whether there were suitable alternatives to introducing charging in rural car parking charges, with options such as limiting duration of stay suggested to encourage turnover.

In response to a question from Councillor J Rose, the Head of Commercial Services advised that he would investigate if the Council owned the car park near Dover Castle.

In response to a request from the Chairman, Councillor L A Keen, the Democratic Services Manager explained the Call-In process. Members were advised that the Chairman and Spokesperson for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could exercise call-in on their own and that any three non-executive members could also call-in a decision.

It was moved by Councillor T A Bond and duly seconded by Councillor S H Beer that

“The Chairman, Councillor L A Keen, be requested to call-in Cabinet Decision CAB112(h) on the grounds that

- (a) There was no evidence to support the need for this change of policy or the impact on tourism and resident parking.

- (b) That no thought has been given to alternative options or the harm caused by the displaced resident parking on Deal residents.
- (c) That there has been insufficient consultation with those affected.”

Councillor M Rose, duly seconded by Councillor R S Walkden, moved the following AMENDMENT

- (d) That the impact of the hotelier’s books be reviewed given the discrepancy in the cost of overnight visitor parking compared to the cost of overnight resident parking.

On being put to the vote, the AMENDMENT was CARRIED.

The Chairman, Councillor L A Keen, indicated in response to the request from the members of the committee that she was prepared to use her powers to call-in Cabinet Decision CAB112(h).

On being put to the vote it was

- RESOLVED:
- (a) That recommendations 1 to 7 in the report be noted.
 - (b) That the Chairman, Councillor L A Keen, be requested to call-in Cabinet Decision CAB112(h) on the grounds that
 - (i) There was no evidence to support the need for this change of policy or the impact on tourism and resident parking.
 - (ii) That no thought has been given to alternative options or the harm caused by the displaced resident parking on Deal residents.
 - (iii) That there has been insufficient consultation with those affected.
 - (iv) That the impact of the hotelier’s books be reviewed given the discrepancy in the cost of overnight visitor parking compared to the cost of overnight resident parking.

91 AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development presented the answers to the key questions set by Members in respect of the Authority Monitoring Report.

Members considered and noted the answers provided to the key questions. Arising from the answers provided the following issues were discussed:

- The need for affordable housing in the district and whether the 30% target that the Council had set was achievable
- The role of the Council as a builder of housing and in meeting housing need in the district

- The impact of scheme viability on the delivery of affordable housing
- The different types of green field land (i.e. prime agricultural land compared to land less suited to agricultural use)
- The impact on the strategic highway network of development
- Whether the provision of gypsy and traveller sites in the district was sufficient and what effect increased provision might have on the incidents of illegal trespass seen in the previous summer
- The need for bus services and cycling networks to support rural housing development

RESOLVED: That officers be thanked for providing detailed answers to the key questions set by Members and the responses be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.33 pm.