

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held as a Teams Live Events remote meeting on Monday, 8 June 2020 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor L A Keen

Councillors: S H Beer  
T A Bond  
P D Jull (as substitute for Councillor D G Beaney)  
J Rose  
M Rose  
C A Vinson  
R S Walkden  
P Walker  
C D Zosseder

Officers: Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)  
Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)  
Head of Assets and Building Control  
Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development  
Senior Policy Planner  
Strategic Project Manager (Infrastructure)  
Democratic Services Manager  
Democratic Services Officer

136 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor D G Beaney.

137 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor P D Jull had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor D G Beaney.

138 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

139 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 10 February 2020 and 24 February 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no items for consideration.

141 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.

142 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

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

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

143 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

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

- DDC Response to Covid-19 Crisis

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted, subject to the inclusion of an additional item on the Council's response to the Covid-19 Crisis.

144 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.

145 ADOPTION OF HOUSING STOCK COMPLIANCE POLICIES

The Head of Assets and Building Control presented the report on the Adoption of Housing Stock Compliance Policies.

It was stated that East Kent Housing had found itself in the situation where a significant proportion of its housing stock did not have up to date gas safety certificates. As a consequence, Members were advised formally that they could no longer place reliance on the fact that the Council was discharging its statutory duties with respect to the health and safety compliance of its housing stock. The resultant recovery plan was predicated on creating and adopting robust health and safety compliance policies, together with devising and implementing robust methods for ensuring operations were in accordance with these policies.

The statutory nature of health and safety compliance determined most of the policies. The policies had been drafted by an external organisation with considerable experience and expertise so that the Council could place reliance on the new policies.

In response to a question concerning the state of the digital record keeping for compliance information, the Head of Assets and Building Control advised that the intention was to have a robust digital record to enable tracking and reporting on the level of compliance. It was suggested that a report could be made to the committee in the future on the progress in digital record keeping for compliance once the housing service had returned to the council's direct control.

Members discussed the need for regular reporting on compliance performance during the transitional phase of moving the service back in-house to ensure that performance continued to improve and did not slip again.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Cabinet:

- (a) That the Council adopts the suite of policies, written on behalf of the four local authorities whose assets are currently managed by East Kent Housing, which relates to the various aspects of statutory health & safety compliance associated with managing housing stock.
- (b) That Cabinet delegates to the Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial) the authority to adopt minor amendments.
- (c) That a report be submitted to every Cabinet meeting for the next six months on the Key Performance Indicators relating to safety compliance and that the continuation of this be reviewed after six months.

146 REVIEW OF THE REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the Review of the Revenue and Capital Budgets in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The report sought to establish the strategic financial response to Covid-19 and commission the additional work required. Members attention was drawn to the fact that the financial position of the Council was one of unprecedented uncertainty due to the number of unknown variables involved (set out in paragraph 4 of the report) such as the speed and pattern of economic recovery, the impact on business rates and council tax collection and the level of government support for local authorities.

Members discussed the support the Council was providing to the local business community, the level of business rate collection and the cost of the completion of capital projects such as Maison Dieu.

In respect of the regeneration fund Members discussed the importance of it being made available to all parts of the district equally.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- (a) That the remodelling of the revenue and capital budgets, using the assumptions and changes set out in the report, be approved.
- (b) That Officers be instructed to resubmit the Capital Programme to Cabinet with risk assessments against existing and any new projects with the objective of generating net savings/reductions/cancellations of £4.6 million or more as soon as is practicable.
- (c) That, by July/August 2020, Officers be instructed to:
  - (i) Develop a programme of asset disposal for further consideration to generate at least £1 million of receipts;

- (ii) Review the options and implications of additional borrowing to finance the Dover District Leisure Centre;
  - (iii) Review the current earmarked reserves to determine whether any further sums could be released;
  - (iv) Re-present the revenue budget to Cabinet with an indication of statutory and non-statutory services to assist in resource prioritisation and updated projections of budget pressures for 2021/22;
  - (v) Present project appraisals, including re-commitments of partner-funded projects, for those capital projects with which Cabinet wishes to proceed.
- (d) That the entire district be included in the scope of the regeneration fund when it is brought forward.

147 DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL HOUSING DELIVERY ACTION PLAN 2020

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development presented the report on DDC's Housing Delivery Action Plan 2020.

Members were advised that the Council had registered 92% performance as measured against the Government's housing delivery test and therefore it needed to apply a 5% buffer to its annual 5 years housing land supply calculation. As part of this it needed to produce an action plan that assessed the causes of under delivery, explored ways to reduce the risk of further under-delivery and identified actions to increase delivery. The Council's Housing Delivery Action Plan 2020 had been produced in line with national planning practice guidance and provided a set of initiatives to help increase the supply of new dwellings within the Dover district.

The Action Plan would not impact on the housing allocation supply as green and amber sites would still need to be demonstrated as sustainable.

In response to concerns raised by Members that delays to development caused by issues with infrastructure delivery had not been mentioned, the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development advised that work was on-going attempting to deal with this issue.

Members also discussed the impact of the council declaring a climate emergency on the report and were advised that this would be delivered through building regulations and that a promised change to the building regulations had been delayed by the Covid-19 crisis. The issue of using brownfield sites before greenfield sites for development was discussed and it was stated that viability considerations were key to the development of brownfield sites and they often took longer to develop.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2020, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

148 USE OF FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND REVENUE GRANT

The Strategic Delivery Manager (Infrastructure) presented the report on the Use of Future High Streets Fund Revenue Grant.

Members were advised that on 27 August 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) awarded the Council £150,000 to develop a business case for submission to the Future High Streets Fund. The Council engaged WSP to prepare a draft business case that was submitted to MHCLG on 16 March and feedback on the draft business had been received. The Cabinet had been requested to authorise using the remainder of the revenue funding to appoint WSP to develop the work further so that the Council could develop a detailed business case for submission before the deadline of 31 July 2020.

Members welcomed the proposals set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- (a) That the receipt and expenditure of a grant of £150,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government be approved.
- (b) That the appointment of WSP to investigate a range of project options and develop a grant funding business case that meets the criteria required by the Future High Streets Fund be approved.
- (c) That the Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial) be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to identify a set of projects that could deliver transformational change and submit a business case to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm.