

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held as a Teams Live Events remote meeting on Monday, 8 March 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present:

Chairman: Councillor C D Zosseder

Councillors: S H Beer
M Bates
T A Bond
S C Manion
J Rose
R S Walkden
P Walker
H M Williams

Also Present: Councillor N J Collor (Portfolio Holder for Community, Transport and Licensing)
Councillor M J Holloway (Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment and Tourism)
Chief Inspector Dan Carter (Dover District Police Commander)
Inspector Fred McCormack (Dover Community Safety Unit)

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)
Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)
Head of Assets and Building Control
Head of Community and Digital Services
Head of Housing
Head of Inward Investment and Tourism
Head of Leadership Support
Community Services Manager
Democratic Services Manager

96 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

97 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

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

98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S C Manion declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in Minute No. 107 (Homelessness and Eviction Update) by reason of his being a private landlord and stated his intention to withdraw from the meeting for the consideration of that item of business.

99 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 11 January 2021 and 8 February 2021 were approved as a correct record to be signed by the Chairman.

100 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 1 March 2021 were noted.

101 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.

102 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:

- Approval of a draft Dover Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for consultation (key decision number 22)

There being no dissent indicated, it was agreed that the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions be noted subject to the inclusion of the key decision number 22 (approval of a draft Dover Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for consultation) in the work programme.

103 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:

- Councillor T A Bond requested that an item be included in respect of rubbish on the streets, Public Rights of Way and beaches. He expressed concern that despite the council's best efforts the situation was deteriorating and that this needed to be addressed or it would impact on tourism.
- Councillor C D Zosseder requested that an item be included in respect of rural car parking charges following on from discussions.

Councillor S H Beer requested that items 6 (community engagement and consultation) and 7 (Explanation of Parking Policy and Future Plans) be deleted from the work programme.

There being no dissent indicated, it was agreed that the work programme be noted subject to the inclusion of items on (a) rubbish on the streets; (b) Public Rights of Way and beaches and rural car parking charges and the deletion of items 6 (community engagement and consultation) and 7 (Explanation of Parking Policy and Future Plans).

104 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.

105 VARIATION TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman requested that the order of business be varied so as to take the items on the Exclusion of the Press and Public and the Future of the Co-Innovation Centre (Former Co-Op Store) as the next items of business.

There being no dissent it was agreed to vary the order of business.

106 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor C D Zosseder, duly seconded by Councillor S C Manion 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

107 FUTURE OF CO-INNOVATION CENTRE (FORMER CO-OP STORE), CASTLE STREET, DOVER

The Head of Inward Investment and Tourism presented the report on the Future of the Co-Innovation Centre (Former Co-Op Store), Castle Street, Dover.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment and Tourism, Councillor M J Holloway, was present at the meeting.

Members considered the report.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Cabinet that decision CAB102 be endorsed as followed:

- (a) That the lease arrangements for the Co-Innovation site should not be continued beyond 22 August 2021.
- (b) That the Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial) be authorised to invite tenders and award a contract for the demolition of the building.
- (c) That market opportunities and expressions of interest for the permanent use of the site be considered.
- (d) Arrangements for an interim use of the cleared site pending a permanent use be prepared, should this be necessary.

108 RE-ADMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There being no dissent it was agreed to re-admit the press and public to the meeting.

The Head of Community and Digital Services introduced the update for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He was accompanied by the Community Services Manager, Chief Inspector Dan Carter (Dover District Police Commander) and Inspector Fred McCormack (Dover CSU).

In addition, the Portfolio Holder for Community, Transport and Licensing was present.

The presentation covered the following points:

- Dover Community Safety Partnership 3 Year Plan 2020-2023
- The Year of Challenge – Covid 19 and EU Transition
- Kent Police and DDC Figures
- Project and Operational Reviews
- Successes and Highlights
- The Future – Operation Bloom and Beyond

Kent Police

Members were advised that there had been a 9.1% decrease in all crime in the district which was slightly lower than the Kent average decrease of 13.1%. There had been reductions in Victim Based Crime, Robbery, Residential Burglary, Burglary OTD, and Theft Shoplifting. There had been increases in drug offences (32 extra) and possession of weapons (8 extra).

The importance of partnership working in tackling crime and disorder was emphasised and it was noted that some of the increases were as a result of proactive enforcement measures. The example of Operation Undulate was cited which had targeted drug supply and resulted in 56 arrests, 49 charged with 105 offences with 123 ½ years imprisonment and 18 years 2 months of suspended sentences/community orders. This had also reduced established drug supply networks by 86%, reduced robberies by 65% and knife crime by 26%.

The committee was updated on the progress of Operation Canyon in respect of migrant protests in 2020, which sought to balance democracy and peaceful protests with the maintenance of public order, and Operation Fielding which dealt with nuisance motorbikes through a range of measures including working with community speedwatch to target areas of concern. The use of proactive measures such as stop checks was combined with intelligence gathering to disrupt crime. Legal alternatives to nuisance activity was promoted as well as the use of Section 59 warnings which could lead to the seizing of vehicles.

Anti-Social Behaviour

In respect of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) the top 3 incidents reported related to noise (domestic); acts other (breaches of covid lockdown, etc.) and environmental other (noise nuisance, bonfires, etc.). The top 3 areas for ASB were Town and Castle; St Radigunds; and Buckland.

There had been 385 ASB calls responded to which equated to a 20% increase on the previous year.

The need for crimes and ASB to be reported was emphasised as it was important in gathering intelligence.

CCTV

The Council had successfully undertaken a full digital upgrade of CCTV with 58 new fixed cameras, 5 ANPR cameras, additional fully integrated rapid deployment cameras and integration with the Port of Dover CCTV cameras despite the covid pandemic. The CCTV centre had 24 hour, 365 days a year monitoring and recording. There was a 24/7 dedicated phone line for ASB reporting, CCTV and unauthorised encampments.

The Council had also built a new multi-purpose Emergency Centre at the Whitfield Offices.

The Community Services Manager made an offer to Members to visit the CCTV centre.

Operation Bloom

Members received an update on Operation Bloom which focused on the key risks and events related to the easing of lockdown and identified a number of hot spot areas and prevention/partnership activity.

Members thanked the attendees for the presentation and welcomed the good works that had been undertaken.

The following matters were also raised by Members:

- To welcome the alignment of PCSOs by wards, which were expected to stay in place for the next 12 months. There was concern expressed that PCSOs had not attended remote parish council meetings but Members were advised that this was due to Zoom not being considered a secure enough system for them to join. It was expected that PCSOs would attend parish council meetings where they were able. It was pointed out to Members that some of the turnover in PCSOs was due to it being a route into becoming a police officer.
- To welcome the news that 5 new inspectors had been allocated to the district as well as a dedicated area commander for the district. This meant that there was access to more resources and more officers in the district.
- In response to a question, the committee was advised that Deal Police Station had been closed and the site would be sold. Officers were now operating out of Deal Town Hall until new premises were ready. There had been a delay in this process due to the covid pandemic.

The Committee thanked Kent Police and Officers for the briefing.

110 HOUSING STOCK COMPLIANCE

The Head of Assets and Building Control presented the Housing Stock Compliance report, the 5th in a series of 6 reports since the housing service reverted to the direct control of Dover District Council from East Kent Housing on 1 October 2020.

The Head of Assets and Building Control advised that in the sixteen information streams the accuracy of the data was now verified. However, lockdown had slowed the progress in resolving outstanding issues in some areas with a number of tenants refusing access to contractors for the purposes of inspection and carrying out compliance remedial works.

Members welcomed the work that had been undertaken and expressed confidence in the verified data that the council held in respect of the housing stock.

The following matters were raised by Members:

- Electrical Inspection Condition Reports (EICR) – the Head of Assets and Building Control stated that since October 2020, the compliance information for EICR had improved to 100% compliance for communal areas. In respect of domestic EICR the Council was working to improve compliance but there was a backlog of work that had been slowed by lockdown.
- Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) - it was expected that this would be resolved by the end of June 2021 although work had been slowed by lockdown.
- Smoke Detectors – the council had not had sufficiently verified information in quarters 2 and 3 to provide verified information but as of January 2021 was able to report a compliance of 49.29%. The Committee was advised that in instances where the Council did not have verified data the information was shown as outstanding even if it was likely to be compliant.

The Chair thanked the Head of Assets and Building Control for the update and the hard work undertaken in respect of this matter.

111 HOMELESSNESS AND EVICTION UPDATE

The Head of Housing presented the Homelessness and Eviction Update. The report provided a briefing for members on the current rules applying to evictions and the action being undertaken by both the Housing Options Team and Housing Management (Income Recovery) Team to mitigate the numbers of households at risk.

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Members were advised that the Council would not be enforcing evictions until 31 March 2021 at the earliest except in the most serious circumstances, such as anti-social behaviour; Illegal occupation; or arrears of 6 months or more.

The Council would wherever possible work with households to take steps to avoid eviction. The Council's Money and Benefit Advisor attempted to engage with tenants in all pre-court and eviction cases before any applications were made. This included assisting with applications for Discretionary Housing Payments for rent arrears clearance or to mitigate against benefit cap issues. There had been 28 successful applications with lump sums and ongoing weekly/monthly awards of £33719.68 in total. The assistance provided to tenants by the Council had resulted in:

- Avoiding a court referral for 5 cases;
- Withdrawing court applications for 7 cases; and
- Withdrawing 2 eviction warrant applications

The Council had recruited a new role of Landlord Liaison Officer who was responsible for engaging with private landlords and agents. Since the start of 2021 the officer had secured 5 new properties, with the deposits and rent in advance being covered by the Discretionary Housing Payment.

There was no obvious commonality among those at risk of eviction, such as income, other than their reluctance to engage with the Council.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Housing for attending and providing an informative update to the Committee.

(Councillor S C Manion declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) by reason of his being a private landlord and withdrew from the meeting for the consideration of this item of business.)

112 PERFORMANCE REPORT - THIRD QUARTER 2020/21

The Head of Leadership Support presented the Performance Report Quarter 3, 2020/21.

There were 21 Green Status Performance Indicators (70%), 3 Amber (10%) and 6 Red (20%) for Quarter 3, 2020-21. The red status indicators were as followed:

- KPI04 – D (Percentage of Business Rates collected)
- HOU001 (Average time taken to relet council dwellings)
- HOU002 (Former tenant arrears as % of annual debit)
- ACC004 (Percentage of invoices paid on time)
- HOU010a (Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation including B&B)
- MUS002 (The number of visits to the museum in person per 1,000 population)

EK Services & DDC Digital

In response to a question the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) advised that Civica would redeploy resources between authorities to support peak demand such as when the council tax letters went out to residents.

Housing

It was stated that the absence of RAG status for indicators HOU004 – HOU007 was due to sensitivities around the data. It was also recognised that there were inbuilt arrears due to the delays caused by the switchover to Universal Credit and there had been delays to court action due to the covid pandemic.

Corporate Resources

The Head of Leadership Support advised in response to a question that while she did not have the information for the number of people under indicator HOU010a (Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation including B&B) that were in accommodation outside of the district she would seek clarification and respond outside the meeting. However, she believed it was a low number.

Operations and Commercial

In respect of indicators PLA007 (Number of new houses completed) and PLA008 (Growth in Business Rates base (number of registered businesses) that the

numbers were cumulative based on Q3 2019/20 outturn plus quarters 1 to 3 2020/21.

In the absence of any dissent, it was agreed that the report be noted.

113 FOOD POVERTY REVIEW UPDATE

The Democratic Services Manager provided an update on the progress of the Food Poverty Review.

Members noted the progress in respect of preparing the draft review document.

The meeting ended at 9.18 pm.