

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 23 January 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor C D Zosseder

Councillors: D G Beaney (as substitute for Councillor R S Walkden)
T A Bond
P M Brivio
D R Friend
D A Hawkes
S C Manion
M Rose
P Walker
H M Williams

Also Present: Councillor T J Bartlett (Leader of the Council)

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory)
Strategic Director (Place and Environment)
Environmental Protection and Crime Manager
Democratic and Corporate Services Manager

63 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R S Walkden.

64 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

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

65 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

66 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 14 November 2023 and 21 November 2023 were approved as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

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

There were no decisions to consider.

68 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY PUBLIC PETITION, COUNCIL, CABINET, OR ANOTHER COMMITTEE

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

69 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

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

In the absence of any dissent, it was agreed to note the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions.

70 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic and Corporate 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:

- Kent County Council Community Services

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted, subject to the inclusion of Kent County Council Community Services.

71 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Democratic and Corporate 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.

72 ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT SERVICE DELIVERY

The Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory) with the Environmental Protection and Crime Manager presented the report on Environmental Enforcement Service Delivery.

The report sought a decision from Cabinet in respect of the future direction of service delivery for litter enforcement across the district. The Cabinet had agreed to bring this service in-house at its meeting held in June 2022 but subsequently the Council had not been able to fill the positions through direct recruitment. The recommended option (option 2) therefore was to utilise external contractors to provide an environmental enforcement service in relation to litter and dog fouling offences.

There would be a number of educational measures undertaken by the Council in an attempt to discourage the offences occurring in the first place in addition to enforcement actions.

Members considered the report and raised the following points:

- To welcome the decision as it was felt that external contractors would be able to bring additional resources that the Council had not been able to do, and previous external contractors had been effective.
- To emphasise the importance of the service covering rural areas and not just urban centres.
- To question whether after three attempts to utilise external contractors in the past that it was expected it would work this time.
- To emphasise that enforcement should be proportionate and fair.

- That in light of past experiences the Council needed to ensure it had a robust Service Level Agreement in place.

In the absence of any dissent, Members endorsed option 2.

73 IN-HOUSING OF SERVICES

Councillor M Rose advised that he felt that the services the Council had recently brought in-house, such as Housing, had performed better than when externally provided and that there was a opportunity for the Council to look at what other services could be provided in-house that were currently outsourced to other providers.

He also emphasised the importance of using local contractors for projects to boost the local skills base.

The Strategic Director (Places and Environment) advised that the provision of services in-house was always considered as part of the procurement process and pointed to a number of services where the decision to bring them in-house had been made. It was also pointed out that some services, such as the waste service, offered greater savings due to the size of the operator and the resources it could utilise.

The need to ensure that contract/employment rules were followed in the procurement process was highlighted in any decision over where to in-house or externally procure a service. Councillor T J Bartlett advised that he supported the use of local businesses where it was possible to do so but acknowledged that sometimes specialist services that were not available locally would be needed.

Members considered the issue and raised the following points:

- That the in-housing of services was not just a financial decision but offered the opportunity for greater responsiveness and flexibility.
- The importance of regularly reviewing the Service Level Agreements for externally provided services to ensure that they were delivering what the Council needed.
- The importance of ensuring that where services are tendered, local companies have the opportunity to bid for them.
- To support the Council in continuing to work with those companies that were unsuccessful in tendering so that they understood why they had not been successful.
- That the Council needed to be prepared to take more risks with bringing services in-house.

Councillor C D Zosseder summed up the discussion and urged Members and Officers to explore these matters further.

The meeting ended at 6.48 pm.