

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 12 June 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor C A Vinson

Councillors: S B Blair
D R Friend
S Hill (as substitute for Councillor M J Nee)
S M S Mamjan (as substitute for Councillor C F Woodgate)
D J Parks
M W Rose
H M Williams
L M Wright

Also Present: Councillor C D Zosseder (Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Property)

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory)
Strategic Director (Finance and Housing)
Head of Finance and Investment
Head of Transformation
Strategic Housing Manager
Licensing Manager
Community Services Manager
Licensing Officer
Housing Development Officer
Democratic and Corporate Services Manager

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M J Nee and C F Woodgate.

2 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillors S Hill and S M S Mamjan had been appointed as substitute members for Councillor M J Nee and C F Woodgate respectively.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 27 February 2023, 13 March 2023 and 17 April 2023 were approved as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

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

There were no decisions to consider.

6 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.

The issue referred from the full Council in the previous municipal year on encouraging a more diverse range of candidates to stand for election would be considered as part of the work programme.

7 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions was noted by the Committee.

8 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.

9 PROVISION OF INTERIM HOUSING AND SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES VIA AFGHAN RELOCATIONS AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The Head of Transformation presented the report on the Provision of Interim Housing and Support for Afghan Refugees via the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Programme (ARAP).

Members were informed that the Government had allocated funding to support local authorities in providing interim housing and support services for refugees arriving in the UK via ARAP. The Cabinet had been asked to accept revenue funding from the Home Office for support services and to enter leases for up to 15 properties over three years from the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

The properties would be allocated in line with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC) programme requirements and would be classed as interim (temporary) accommodation with the families occupying them issued with non-secure tenancies. While the families would be able to stay in the properties for the duration of the lease period there was an expectation from the Government that they would move to privately rented accommodation during that time and there was Government funding available to support this outcome.

Members were advised that the conditions on the use of the properties meant that they were only available for use with this scheme for the 3-year period and could not be put to any other use by the Council. At the end of the lease the properties would revert to the MOD for their use.

A team would be set-up to support the families and it was anticipated that the scheme would add up to 20 new students to Guston Primary School which would support the maintenance of its pupil numbers. Additionally, Guston Primary School had experience of working with Gurkha families from Shorncliffe Barracks and Astor School with migrant families.

Members welcomed the scheme although there was disappointment that the Council would not be able to keep the properties after the end of the lease.

In respect of the Dover Asylum Resettlement Team (DART) of up to 5 people who would support those families settled under ARAP, it was suggested that it would need to have someone who could support the families in matters such as faith, culture, skills and language. The Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory) advised that this point would be noted although it was within the remit of the Head of Paid Service as opposed to the Cabinet.

The Chairman asked that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be provided with an update after 18 months on the progress of the scheme and that the community development plan be submitted to a future meeting.

10 HACKNEY CARRIAGE NUMBERS - UNMET DEMAND SURVEY

The Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory) and the Licensing Manager presented the report on the Hackney Carriage Numbers – Unmet Demand Survey.

Members were advised that in accordance with the provisions of the relevant legislation Dover District Council currently limited the number of Hackney Carriage licences to 69 for the district. The limitation of Hackney Carriage numbers was only permitted where the Licensing Authority was satisfied that there was no significant unmet demand in its area.

The Council's most recent unmet demand survey had identified a significant unmet demand in respect of wheelchair-accessible vehicles and the Cabinet had consequently been asked to agree an additional 5 Hackney Carriage Licences for wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

Members raised the following points during the discussion:

- Whether the restrictions on the age of the vehicle were relaxed for wheelchair accessible vehicles given the cost of purchasing it and if so, whether these details were known to operators.
The Licensing Manager advised that this was the case with wheelchair accessible vehicles which could operate for up to 12 years with a potential option for an additional 2 years.
- That there were difficulties getting taxis during the school run. Members were advised that there was a national shortage of taxi drivers since the end of the pandemic.
- The definition used by the Council as Licensing Authority for accessible vehicles and what consultation had been undertaken with stakeholders. Councillor H M Williams read out a letter from the Chair of the Dover District Disability Association on the matter.
The Licensing Manager advised that the starting point for the Council's definition of an accessible vehicle was one that a wheelchair could enter.
- What controls the Council as the Licensing Authority had over the distribution of taxis in the district. Members were informed that since the ending of zoning this was not an area the Council had any control.
- Whether the decrease in the number of accessible vehicles in the district was indicative of market failure and as a consequence whether the option of delimiting had been considered. Members were advised that the Unmet Demand Survey would be relied on for any delimiting and that did not find sufficient evidence to support such a move. Additionally, the limits on the

number of vehicles allowed the Council as the Licensing Authority to focus on tackling the issue of a lack of accessible vehicles whereas delimiting would remove this option.

- The lack of alternative providers such as Uber in the district. Members were advised that no application had been received from Uber to operate in the district.

The Chairman asked that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an update in 6 months concerning the level of take up of the 5 additional wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage vehicle licenses.

11 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman, with the consent of the meeting, varied the order of the agenda to take this item later in the meeting.

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:

- Proposals for the closure of the Kent County Council (KCC) Household Waste Recycling Centre at Richborough
- KCC Community Services Consultation
- Quarterly Regeneration Updates
- Roman Painted House
- Corporate Plan
- Veolia Waste Industrial Relations (July 2023)
- Update on NHS arrangements for blood tests in Deal
- Progress of the Fasttrack programme
- Port of Dover (Peak traffic management and Western Docks regeneration)
- Crime and Disorder Updates (x2) (Autumn 2023)
- Council Asset Disposal Plans
- Council Motion referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on improving representation in election candidates
- Quarterly Strategic Performance Dashboard
- Budget

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be agreed in principle, subject to the Democratic and Corporate Services Manager in consultation with the Chairman and Controlling Group Spokesperson determining the priority of identified items in the work programme.

12 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor H M Williams, duly seconded by Councillor S B Blair 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.

13 PURCHASE OF NEW SHARED OWNERSHIP HOUSING AT WILLOWBANK, SANDWICH

The Head of Finance and Investment presented the report on the Purchase of New Shared Ownership Housing at Willowbank, Sandwich.

Members considered the report and the timescale for the delivery of the Shared Ownership Housing.

The meeting ended at 7.32 pm.