

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 11 December 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor C A Vinson

Councillors: S B Blair  
D R Friend  
R M Knight  
M J Nee  
D J Parks  
M W Rose  
H M Williams  
C F Woodgate  
L M Wright

Also Present: Councillor E A Biggs (Portfolio Holder for for Planning and Built Environment)  
Councillor P M Brivio (Portfolio Holder for for Housing, Skills and Education)  
Councillor J L Pout (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Environmental Services)

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory)  
Strategic Director (Finance and Housing)  
Strategic Director (Place and Environment)  
Democratic and Corporate Services Manager

65 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

66 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy advised that no notice had been received for the appointment of substitute members.

67 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

68 MINUTES

At the request of the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the Minutes of the previous meeting.

69 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 were noted. The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy advised that the Cabinet had agreed to the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

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

71 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

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

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

72 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme to the Committee for its consideration.

Members were advised that the Port of Dover had confirmed attendance for January 2024. Kent County Council would be contacted to see if they also would attend to discuss the Levelling Up Bid in relation to the Port of Dover. Members were asked to submit their key questions by 22 December 2024.

The Chair reminded Members of their statutory obligation to have at least one annual crime and disorder meeting and that the Constitution set out a requirement to have two per year.

The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy explained to Members how items were added to the work programme with the consent of the committee. If the committee could not agree new items by general consent, then it would need to be the subject of a vote. Councillor C A Vinson reminded Members that the priority order was determined by the Chair and Controlling Group Spokesperson as part of the agenda setting process.

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

- That taxi provision in the district be added to the work programme. The issue of supply and demand in various parts of the district was highlighted as one issue to include in the scrutiny. Members were asked to submit any questions on the matter. (Proposed by Councillor C A Vinson)
- That a scrutiny on Property Assets focussed on Cedars, Western Road and Park Avenue Nursery be added to the work programme. (Proposed by Councillor D R Friend)

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted, subject to the inclusion of an item on taxis and property assets.

73 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.

74 UPDATE ON WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE LICENSES

The Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory) provided a verbal update on Wheelchair Accessible Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences.

Members were advised that Cabinet had received the results of the three-yearly unmet demand survey in June 2023, which had also been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which requested the further update.

The Cabinet had agreed the provision of 5 additional licences for wheelchair accessible vehicles. There had been a ballot held and 5 applications had been drawn from 44 entries. Additionally, 5 reserves had been withdrawn in the event that any of the successful applicants could not plate a vehicle within three months. Four of the five drawn had been able to meet the deadline for plating a vehicle and were now operating. The first reserve was going through the process to be plated and it was expected that all five would be operational by 31 January 2024. This would bring the total number of wheelchair accessible hackney carriage vehicle licences to 11.

Members welcomed the interest in the five additional wheelchair accessible hackney carriages.

In response to a question it was stated that the next unmet demand survey would take place in 2025.

The Chairman expressed a preference for written reports for updates in future.

75 STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD REPORT

The Chairman asked Members to go through the Strategic Performance Dashboard in the order that it was set out in the papers.

Members raised the following points:

- To question the street cleansing savings set out in the papers. Members were advised that the savings requirements had been identified as part of the budget process and that officers were responsible for identifying how to deliver these savings. It was noted that the Veolia contract was one of the Council's biggest areas of expenditure.
- Members discussed the proposals for reducing the frequency of high-speed road cleaning and queried why the Council was responsible for paying for this work. It was stated that this had been raised with National Highways and the Local Government Association by the Council previously. However, there was no appetite from the Government to take on the responsibility.
- To question how the staff vacancy savings were achieved. Members were advised that there was a rigorous authority to recruit process that identified if a vacant post was still required. The saving was a combination of those posts not filled and the time it took to fill a vacancy that had been

authorised for recruitment. Councillor H M Williams asked for a list of permanent and short-term vacancies.

- To enquire if there was any potential for income generation from improved recycling. Members were advised that the inter-authority agreement with Kent County Council did allow the Council to benefit if recycling levels went up.
- To question the slight decrease in green waste subscribers. Members were advised that the three Kent County Council Household Waste sites in the district had a significant impact on the garden waste scheme.
- Councillor H M Williams requested a definition for major and minor planning applications.
- Members discussed the decline in performance of indicator HOM23 (Average days to re-let properties (from tenancy termination to new tenancy start date) requiring major work) and were advised that there had been a high volume of voids that required substantial work before they were suitable for reletting. Officers were working to see if there were ways of improving performance but it was noted that faster turnaround may result in additional cost.
- Councillor M J Nee noted that three of the risks shown were related to the actions of the government and suggested that the Council should write to the Government to highlight this. The Chairman advised that both the Local Government Association and the District Councils Network were highlighting these issues.
- The methodology of PAD008 (Planning Enforcement Cases) and whether it could be shown as to how long it took to resolve cases.
- Officers advised that responses would be provided in respect of:
  - The performance of indicator PH001 (Port Health - Total number of Port Health interventions received) and
  - The methodology for calculating and the average time of extension for PAD001 (Percentage of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks or within an agreed extension of time)

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet that it explore changing the status of the high-speed road network to special road status in order to obtain assistance in funding cleansing.

The meeting ended at 7.31 pm.