

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 10 June 2024 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor T J Bartlett

Councillors: M Bates
S H Beer
D R Friend
S Hill
M J Nee
D J Parks
M W Rose
H M Williams (as substitute for Councillor J P Loffman)
L M Wright

Also Present: David Fitzgerald (Veolia)
Michael Grant (Veolia)

Officers: Strategic Director (Finance and Housing)
Strategic Director (Place and Environment)
Head of Housing
Head of Parks, Open Spaces and Countryside Management
Head of Planning and Development
Head of Waste Services
Planning Policy and Projects Manager
Head of Corporate Services and Democracy

1 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J P Loffman.

2 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor H M Williams had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor J P Loffman.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2024 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 of the Cabinet relating to recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6 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.

7 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.

8 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy advised that as it was the start of the new municipal year, the Committee had to set its Work Programme. There were a number of items that had not been completed in the previous year's work programme for consideration as to whether to include in the programme for the ensuing year.

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

- Scrutiny of Entry/Exit System (EES) at the Port of Dover – This was identified as a priority item for the 15 July 2024 meeting of the Committee. It was requested that Kent Resilience Forum, Port of Dover and the Kent County Council Portfolio Holder be invited to the meeting.
- Council Motion on encouraging participation in local democracy. It was identified that this should come forward to the Committee for its meeting in September 2024.
- To enquire as to when the Parking Strategy Review was expected. It was stated by Councillor C D Zosseder that this was expected to be in Autumn/Winter.

To request that the order in the work programme be reversed. The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy advised that this could be done.

It was agreed that the final work programme would be agreed by the Chairman and Controlling Group Spokesperson.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted, subject to the scheduling of the items on EES Scrutiny (for July 2024) and the Council Motion (for September 2024).

9 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy advised that no members of the public had registered to speak on items on the agenda to which the public speaking protocol applied.

10 WASTE SERVICES UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Waste Services and representatives from Veolia to the meeting to provide the Waste Services Update.

The following points were discussed:

- To enquire as to the initial response to the changes to the Garden Waste Scheme. Members were advised that from the viewpoint of improving the health and safety of operatives it had been a immediately successful. In respect of the number of subscribers this was roughly where it had been expected to be, although tonnage figures had not yet been received from Kent County Council.
- To enquire as to whether the containers offered smaller capacity than the bags. It was stated that the number of litres it could take was about the same as that offered by the bags but the capacity was smaller.
- To enquire why the copy of the contract provided including redactions. The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy advised that this was because it was the version that could be discussed in open session. The redactions covered matters of commercial confidentiality that could not be discussed in public.
- In response to a question on rubbish on the streets on bin collection day, it was stated that Veolia expected bins to be put out at 7am but many properties put them out overnight leading to vermin getting into the bins causing waste to be spread across the street. The crews were required to clean up any mess that they caused while collecting but mess caused by others was not their responsibility. A clean up crew could be sent out if needed.
- Veolia and the DDC enforcement were working together to target the problems with litter in London Road through bins being left out on the street. A 6 week trial was underway in a section of London Road that would see bins not properly presented remaining uncollected.
- That Veolia would not collect any waste that was not properly contained. In respect of communal properties, the Council would work with managing agent to try and educate people on the correct way to dispose of their waste.
- The importance of working with local businesses to minimise the mess that they generated. The Council tried to work with frequent offenders to change behaviour.
- There was expected to be a change in recycling legislation in the future that would see flexible plastics and films included for recycling.
- Members were advised that extended producer responsibility was expected to improve recycling rates once introduced.
- The Council would benefit from the experience of innovation trialled by Veolia in other locations.

Members thanked the Head of Waste Services and the representatives from Veolia for attending the meeting.

11 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

The Planning Policy and Projects Manager presented the Green Infrastructure Strategy report.

Members were informed that ensuring the provision of effective green infrastructure through planning policies and decisions was a principle embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council's emerging Local Plan set out policies and requirements in relation to green infrastructure, the protection and enhancement of

ecological assets, and high-quality design. To support these policies and assist the Council in meeting the requirements being brought forward through the Environment Act 2021, there was a need to produce a Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Members raised the following points:

- To question when a review of the strategy would take place and it was suggested that a full review should be conducted in the first two years. In response it was stated that this would be too soon to review the strategy given the number of actions to do and the resources required to conduct it.
- To acknowledge that this was an aspirational document with an action plan that would be updated to reflect work undertaken.
- To recognise that Green Infrastructure was more than a planning issue as it affected the Council's wider climate change agenda.
- To question whether the Climate Change Forum should have a role in monitoring the progress of the strategy.

The report was noted.

12 REFURBISHMENT OF PLAY AREAS IN SANDWICH, WALMER AND DEAL

The Head of Parks, Open Spaces and Countryside Management presented the report on behalf of the Head of Property Assets. Members were advised that the Cabinet had approved the partial refurbishment of three play areas across the district and had granted the Strategic Director (Place and Environment) delegated powers to award the main works contract(s) following a competitive tender process and to release funds on completion of works.

Members raised the following points:

- To welcome the proposals for refurbishing the play areas in Sandwich, Walmer and Deal.
- To welcome that this project was being undertaken in collaboration with the town councils. In response Members were advised that Sandwich Town Council and Walmer Town Council had agreed to provide financial support for the project and Section 106 funding was being used to fund the Marke Wood works.
- In response to a question as to when the works would take place it was stated that the contractor would start works in the spring next year when ground conditions were favourable.
- In respect of maintenance of the Marke Wood site, it was stated that this was a strategic play area site and its maintenance was covered by Dover District Council. The other two sites were not considered to be strategic sites.
- To question whether the play area at Sandwich was restricted to 4 – 7 year-olds. In response it was stated that while the play equipment was focused on this age range no one outside of that age range would be barred from the play area.
- It was suggested that funds from the Frederick Franklin Charity could be used to cover some of the costs rather than the council's funds. In response to this it was stated that this would not be practical due to the urgency of the works and that for large scale use of the charity's funds would need more work undertaken to justify it to the Charity Commission.

It was moved by Councillor L M Wright, duly seconded and

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

13 ENVIRONMENT ACT 2021

The report set out the Council's duties arising from the Environment Act 2021 and made recommendations on how it should be taken forward in relation to the Biodiversity Duty, including Local Natural Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain.

The report was noted.

14 STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD - FOURTH QUARTER 2023/24

The Chairman advised Members that the Strategic Performance Dashboard for Quarter 4, 2023/24 would be taken by section rather than page-by-page.

Members raised the following points:

- Councillor M Bates confirmed that the definition of an "intervention" for Port Health referred to all activities of the Port Health service.
- To welcome indicators PAD001 (Percentage of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks or within an agreed extension of time) and PAD002 (Percentage of non-major planning applications determined in 8 weeks or within an agreed extension of time) as very informative.
- In respect of indicators ASS003 (Percentage of Blocks that have current Fire Risk Assessment) an answer would be provided outside of the meeting to Councillor M J Nee on how many blocks remained unassessed.
- In respect of the recent changes in guidance from the Water Inspectorate on Regulation 8 supplies, it was stated that an answer would be provided outside of the meeting to Councillor S H Beer on the increase in workload this would cause.
- In response to a question on why sheltered housing was difficult to let, it was stated that this applied to 2 bedroom sheltered housing properties as most demand was for 1 bedroom properties and the Council tried to avoid under occupation wherever possible. For tenants there were also implications with the 'bedroom tax' for under occupation.
- In response to a question on the progress on addressing empty shops, it was stated that an officer was working with landlords on this, and progress had been made in achieving improvements without the need for a s215 notice.
- To congratulate everyone involved with the work at Maison Dieu.
- To welcome the progress being achieved in the housing pipeline for future housing property.
- In response to a question about properties that met the M4 standard, it was stated that the Council had fully wheelchair accessible properties.
- In response to a question concerning the recent cyberattack it was stated that there had been no data loss and virtually all services were back.

15 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor M J Nee, duly seconded by Councillor H M Williams 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.

16 PURCHASE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT A SITE AT SANDWICH ROAD, SHOLDEN

The Head of Housing presented the report on the Purchase of Affordable Housing at a Site at Sandwich Road, Sholden.

The report was noted.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm.