

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 17 February 2025 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor T J Bartlett

Councillors: M Bates
S H Beer
D R Friend
J P Loffman
S M S Mamjan
M W Moorhouse
M J Nee
M W Rose
L M Wright

Also Present: Councillor S B Blair, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance, Climate Change and Environment
Councillor P M Brivio, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Skills and Education
Councillor C D Zosseder, Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Property

Officers: Head of Finance and Investment
Senior Accountant (Housing and Projects)
Senior Accountant
Accounting Technician (Housing)
Accounting Technician (Capital and Treasury)
Head of Corporate Services and Democracy

98 ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN

The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy called for nominations for the position of Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/25.

It was proposed by Councillor M W Moorhouse, duly seconded by Councillor M Bates, and

RESOLVED: That Councillor T J Bartlett be elected Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/25.

(Councillor T J Bartlett assumed the role of Chairman)

99 APPOINTMENT OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman called for nominees for the position of Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/25.

It was proposed by Councillor M W Moorhouse, duly seconded by Councillor D R Friend, that Councillor M W Rose be elected Vice-Chairman.

It was proposed by Councillor S H Beer, duly seconded by Councillor J P Loffman, that Councillor L M Wright be elected Vice-Chairman.

On being put to the vote, there was an equality of votes. The Chairman used his casting vote to vote for Councillor M W Rose.

RESOLVED: That Councillor M W Rose be elected as Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the ensuring municipal year 2024/25.

100 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

101 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

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

102 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

103 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 16 December 2024 and 27 January 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

The decision of the Cabinet relating to recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 27 January 2025 were noted.

105 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.

106 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.

107 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

Councillor L M Wright raised concerns over the lack of progress in respect of blood services (phlebotomy) in Deal. It was agreed that Kent and Medway NHS be invited to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to update it on the current situation.

Councillor S H Beer noted that the Dover and Deal MP, Mike Tapp, had asked for the matter to be taken up in Parliament.

The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy reminded Members that Kent County Council was the statutory health scrutiny body. It was agreed that a joint letter from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Leader of the Council should be sent if NHS Kent and Medway did not accept the invitation to attend a meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

108 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.

109 FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26

The Head of Finance and Investment presented the report on Fees and Charges 2025/26.

Members raised the following matters:

- To enquire what changes were likely to be made following the decision of the Cabinet to defer a decision on the proposals for community organised non-profit events as part of the report on the Review of Parking Bay Suspension Charges. Members were advised that following a review of the matter, no recommendations for significant changes were expected to be made to the Cabinet.
- Councillor M Bates identified an error in the report that he had raised before the meeting with the Head of Finance and Investment. It was stated that this would be clarified.
- To enquire if residents in Kingsdown would be able to in instalments for the increase in charges for beach huts. It was stated that this would need to be clarified with the Head of Property Assets.
- To seek assurance that problems in paying for boat plots highlighted by a constituent would be resolved.
- To ask for clarification in respect of charges for beach huts and boat plots in the report for 2024/25 and 2025/26 as it was not clear and to point out that the figures on the Council's website were out of date. The Head of Finance and Investment advised that the figures in the spreadsheet would undergo a final review and that she would check with the Head of Property Assets. If required, an amendment could be made through a decision notice.
- To ask for residents permits to be reviewed for next year. In response it was stated that this would be reviewed.

- To enquire how much revenue the Council would have received from operations at Bastion. It was stated that this would be a matter for the Head of Port Health and Public Protection.
- To ask whether amendments to high hedges in the report would be in 2024/25 or 2025/26. It was stated that the amendments were for 2025/26.

It was moved by Councillor M Bates, duly seconded by Councillor S H Beer, that a report be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide clarification in relation to beach hut plot and boat plot charges and payment arrangements for them.

It was moved by Councillor S H Beer, duly seconded by Councillor J P Loffman, and

RESOLVED: (a) That the report be accepted.

- (b) That a report be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide clarification in relation to beach hut plot and boat plot charges and payment arrangements for them.

110 DRAFT BUDGET 2025/26 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 - 2028/29

The Head of Finance and Investment presented the Draft Budget 2025/26 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025/26 – 2028/29.

The report set out the following summary:

- (a) The General Fund budget for 2025/26 forecast a deficit of c.£432,000, funded from earmarked reserves, reflecting the pressures of homelessness and key income streams – pressures also faced by many councils nationally.
- (b) Proposed DDC Council Tax increase of £6.39 (2.98%) per annum (12p per week) for a Band D property, maintaining the lowest Council Tax in East Kent.
- (c) There were no major reductions in services proposed within the budget.
- (d) Housing rents would increase by 2.7%. The typical weekly rent on a 3-bedroom house would be £117.38 and was much lower than the private sector equivalent.
- (e) The Housing Revenue Account forecast a surplus of £520k.
- (f) The Capital Programme would be fully funded but resources for future projects were limited.

Members welcomed that the forecast deficit was less than £500,000.

The following points were raised in the discussion:

- To enquire if the Council would receive funding from Government in respect of the work required for local government devolution and reorganisation. It was stated that it was not known at this time.
- To raise the issue of the Council's current debt and the impact of any future borrowing to fund the new Deal Leisure Centre. Members were advised that it was expected that the borrowing costs for the new Deal Leisure Centre would be cost neutral due to operator payments. The borrowing costs were based on viability assessments.
- To discuss the Housing Revenue Account and to welcome the decrease in rent arrears.
- The impact of the pressures relating to homelessness costs on the budget.

It was moved by Councillor S H Beer, duly seconded by Councillor M J Nee, and

RESOLVED: That the budget be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.51 pm.