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Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 10 February 2020 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor L A Keen

Councillors: S H Beer  
T A Bond  
P D Jull (as substitute for Councillor J Rose)  
C A Vinson  
R S Walkden  
P Walker  
C D Zosseder

Also Present: Councillor T J Bartlett  
Councillor N J Collor  
Councillor O C de R Richardson  
Interim Director of Property Services (East Kent Housing)

Officers: Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)  
Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)  
Head of Leadership Support  
Head of Finance and Housing  
Head of Commercial Services  
Waste Services Manager  
Strategic Development Lead (Leisure)  
Strategic Project Manager (Infrastructure)  
Democratic Services Manager  
Democratic Services Officer

## 97 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Rose and M Rose.

## 98 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor P D Jull had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor J Rose.

## 99 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T A Bond declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in Minute No. 106 (Tides Leisure Centre) by reason of his wife's employment at Tides and indicated that he would withdraw from the meeting for the consideration of that item of business.

## 100 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2020 and 20 January 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 101 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 to consider.

102 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL, CABINET, OR ANOTHER COMMITTEE

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

103 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

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

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

104 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme to the Committee for its consideration.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

105 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Democratic 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.

106 TIDES LEISURE CENTRE

The Principal Leisure Officer presented the Tides Leisure Centre report.

The report provided an update on the outcome of the options appraisal study which considered a range of options seeking to improve the facilities at Tides Leisure Centre.

The report sought Cabinet agreement to further develop a project to construct a new build leisure centre to serve Deal and the wider district and to proceed with the next steps involved in delivering the project. The new build option offered the opportunity for the Council to provide a high quality, efficient, leisure centre as a longer-term solution with a designed life of 35-40 years serving the community of Deal and the wider district. The project would investigate how the funding gaps could be filled and the mix of facilities.

If the council did not do anything with Tides Leisure Centre, it would result in the progressive closure of the leisure pool and health and fitness as the plant or parts of the building failed.

Members discussed whether there was a role for Deal Town Council in contributing to the Project Advisory Group and the potential ways in which funding gaps could be met in developing the project.

RESOLVED: That a representative from Deal Town Council be added to the membership of the Tides Project Advisory Group.

(Councillor T A Bond declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in Minute No. 106 (Tides Leisure Centre) by reason of his wife's employment at Tides and withdrew from the meeting for the consideration of this item of business.)

107 EXTENSION OF PARKING CHARGE PERIOD AND REVIEW OF ON-STREET PARKING CHARGES

The Head of Commercial Services presented the report on the extension of the parking charge period and the review of on-street parking charges. The report sought agreement from the Cabinet for the parking charges for both on and off-street parking to be extended by 1 hour (from 5pm to 6pm).

Members questioned the reasoning behind the extension of charging from 5pm to 6pm given anecdotal evidence that the car parks, particularly in Dover, were not full during these hours. That the charging hours had been reduced in 2015 to benefit businesses was also raised. The Head of Commercial Services advised that there would be consultation with local businesses, but it was not expected that there would be any impact on the evening economy because of this change.

The £12,000 cost of making Albany Car Park free to park in was also questioned.

The issue of rural car parking charges was raised and there was concern expressed as to whether urban car parks were in effect subsidising the use of rural car parks. Members were advised that there was consultation being undertaken with the rural parish councils and this would be reported back to the Cabinet.

Councillor N J Collor advised that automatic number plate recognition to monitor parking on the zig-zag lines at schools and the introduction of additional electric charging points were projects that the additional parking revenue raised by the extension of the hours would fund.

Councillor P D Jull moved, duly seconded by Councillor R S Walkden, that the Cabinet not proceed with recommendation 1 of the report on the grounds that the report contains no, or inadequate or irrelevant, information why changing the end charging time is necessary or desirable for financial or operational reasons to form the basis for an informed decision. In 2015 professional consultants recommended that the end charging time be moved earlier to 5pm. No reasons are given why this recommendation is no longer valid. No separate figure for the forecast financial impact of this change is provided. No evidence is provided that there is any shortage of spaces after 5pm that an increase in turnover would rectify. The Council's own shopping survey shows that competition for trade is not with neighbouring town centre but with out of town shopping centres such as Westwood Cross and White Cliffs Business Park where parking is free all day.

Councillor P D Jull subsequently agreed to amend his proposal so that it be taken into account by the Cabinet when the results of the consultation were known and that recommendations 2 and 3 of the report be recommended for approval.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Cabinet:

- (a) That it not proceed with extending the charging period by 1 hour from 0900-1700 to 0900-1800 for all On and Off-Street Parking

Places on the grounds that the report contains no, or inadequate or irrelevant, information why changing the end charging time is necessary or desirable for financial or operational reasons to form the basis for an informed decision. In 2015 professional consultants recommended that the end charging time be moved earlier to 5pm. No reasons are given why this recommendation is no longer valid. No separate figure for the forecast financial impact of this change is provided. No evidence is provided that there is any shortage of spaces after 5pm that an increase in turnover would rectify. The Council's own shopping survey shows that competition for trade is not with neighbouring town centre but with out of town shopping centres such as Westwood Cross and White Cliffs Business Park where parking is free all day.

The Cabinet is requested to take these points into account when considering the results of the consultation.

- (b) That the proposed on-street parking and permit charges, as set out at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.
- (c) That the Transport and Parking Services Manager be authorised to take all necessary legal and procedural processes to give effect to recommendation (b), including the giving of notices, the making or amendment of any orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Licensing, the consideration of any representations received during the consultation process.

## 108 WASTE AND CLEANSING CONTRACT

The Waste Services Manager gave a presentation on the Waste and Cleansing Contract.

Members were advised that the current Veolia contract ran until January 2021 and had an annual cost of approximately £3.8m. This contract covered the weekly servicing of 51,000 properties. The Council's projected recycling rate for 2019/20 was 48% with around 2-3% of the waste tonnage going to landfill. The Council also had 6300 garden waste subscribers and 820 litter bins across the district.

In terms of the new contract, officers could not provide specific details about the tenders and costs as these were confidential under the tendering process. However, it was intended that the new contract would be awarded in June 2020 with a contract transition period from July to December 2020. This would be the subject of a Cabinet report.

In response to a question on the recycling target of 65% Members were advised that the Council could do more in respect of communal waste and waste contamination to improve its performance. The Council would also look at ways to be more proactive in boosting recycling.

The issue of roadside litter was raised by Members and it was stated that street cleansing was being discussed as part of the contract process.

Members raised concerns over the frequency of the emptying of litter bins and were advised that waste services could review specific issues if there were concerns. The new contract would contain provision for additional litter bins.

In respect of a question concerning the roll out of further compactor bins, Members were advised that this would be looked at based on demand but there was a cost (£6,500 per bin) for providing extra compactor bins.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

## 109 EAST KENT HOUSING COMPLIANCE REPORT

The Interim Director of Property Services (East Kent Housing) presented the Compliance Report for East Kent Housing to the Committee.

The Compliance Report covered both communal blocks and domestic properties and reported the following levels of compliance as at 5 February 2020:

### Communal

- Gas – 100.00%
- Asbestos – 84.14% (+52.59% since 04/09/19)
- EICRs – 36.57% (+7.42% since 04/09/19)
- Passenger Lifts – 83.33% (-16.77% since 04/09/19)
- Fire Risk Assessments – 100.00%
- Fire Alarms – 100.00% (+4.42% since 04/09/19)
- Legionella Risk Assessments – 100.00%
- Emergency Lighting – 100.00% (+1.69% since 04/09/19)

Members were advised all asbestos historic data had now been uploaded to the new portal. East Kent Housing were on target to complete all block asbestos inspections by the end of March 2020 with the required works undertaken by the autumn.

The target for EICRs to reach compliance targets was the summer.

### Domestic

- Gas (LGSRs) – 99.97% (-0.03% since 04/09/19)
- Asbestos – 32.93% (+3.76% since 04/09/19)
- EICRs – 13.16%
- Smoke Detectors – 99.38% (+10.61% since 04/09/19)

Members were advised that a new electrical contract commenced on the 2 January 2020 with the contractor NRT. The contractor was initially focusing on communal block testing before moving on to domestic property testing. Present estimates were that these domestic tests would be completed by the summer 2020.

Members expressed concern that for several of the figures provided the total number of properties seemed to vary without any explanation as to why this was the case. Members requested that this be investigated, and that the next compliance report set out the total number of properties with the subset of total properties for each element.

### Environmental Improvement Programme

East Kent Housing had diverted resources into achieving compliance and this had impacted on the delivery of the Environmental Improvement Programme. The Interim Director of Property Service (East Kent Housing) advised that if the compliance work was on target by June 2020, he would consider restoring the Environmental Improvement Programme for the remainder of the year 2020-21. A number of previously identified projects had been highlighted and these would be ready to be delivered when resources were made available.

In addition, if the budget for the Environmental Improvement Programme was restored, East Kent Housing would promote it through its website and the tenant representative group so that new projects could be proposed in addition to the ones already planned.

In response to a question on the historic underspend, the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) advised that this had been returned to the Housing Revenue Account.

Councillor L A Keen asked that a report could be made to a future meeting on the principles and waiting projects for the Environmental Improvement Programme. In addition, it was requested that further details be provided as to how tenants could propose projects to the programme in the event the programme was restored during 2020.

110 DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2020-2024

The Head of Leadership Support and the Leader of the Council, Councillor T J Bartlett, presented the draft Corporate Plan for 2020-2024.

The draft Corporate Plan identified the Council's ongoing commitment to the regeneration of the District, both physical and social, and also emphasised the importance of the tourism agenda in realising the opportunities for the District and its economy. The climate change agenda was a cross-cutting theme within the Plan to facilitate a better environment for everyone. The draft Corporate Plan highlighted the focus on Dover Town as the Gateway to the UK/Europe and as a benefit to the whole District.

To support the new Corporate Plan, the Performance Report would be redesigned to provide better linkages to the Corporate Plan.

Members welcomed the commitment to Manston and the plans to enhance the Dover Museum and the Roman Painted House.

Councillor C A Vinson welcomed the document and expressed the view that it would be a good document to show residents concerning the council's objectives. He highlighted the need for clear targets relating to homelessness and deprivation which were not in the draft Corporate Plan. In response, the Head of Leadership Support stated that these would be picked up as part of the refresh of the State of the District.

**RESOLVED:** That it be recommended to the Cabinet that the Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 be approved, subject to the inclusion of key performance indicators, service area objectives and the inclusion of any objective for homelessness and deprivation, and placed on the Council's website for comments.

111 FEES AND CHARGES 2020/21

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report on the proposed Fees and Charges for 2020-21.

In response to questions from Members, it was stated that the variation in the inflation increases was due to rounding in some cases. In other cases, small inflationary increases were saved up over several years to be implemented in a single year. There were also a number of fees and charges increased over the level of inflation due to the need to cover the cost of delivering the service and some set by Government rather than the Council.

Members discussed the bulk waste charges and whether there would be any impact on fly tipping through reducing the charge. It was noted that this could have an impact on the contractor's costs and that Kent County Council charges had the biggest impact in respect of fly tipping.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Cabinet that the bulk domestic waste – collection (Charge for 5 items) be reduced to £30 with a view to Cabinet promoting the bulk waste collection service to reduce fly-tipping.

112 COUNCIL BUDGET 2020/21 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2020/21–2023/24

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the Council Budget 2020/21 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2020/21–2023/24. It was his view as the Section 151 Officer that the budget had been prepared in an appropriate and prudent manner and that based upon the information available at the time of producing the report the estimates were robust and the resources were adequate for the Council's spending plans in 2020/21.

However, current funding (in particular from Business Rates (BR), the Fair Funding Review and New Homes Bonus) was volatile, difficult to predict and generally outside of the Council's control. In addition, the Revenue Support Grant had seen a 90% reduction in 2019/20 and was forecast to remain at this lower level (circa £57k) for 2020/21 and be nil thereafter.

The main 'headlines' of the budget were as follows:

- General Fund budget surplus of £2k for 2020/21;
- Prudent General Fund balances maintained at over £2.6m;
- DDC Council Tax increase of £4.95 for a Band D property, maintained the lowest Council Tax in East Kent;
- Overall net expenditure levels increased slightly, in line with inflation;
- No significant reductions in funding for services and no major changes in staffing levels.
- Additional income had been generated and used to protect services. The main sources were from:
  - Increased Business Rates (mainly relating to renewable energy including one-off);
  - Increased Council Tax base and charge;
  - Treasury management investments; and
  - Commercial property regeneration initiatives.

The main 'headlines' of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) were as follows:

- 2020/21 budget funded;
- HRA balances maintained for 2020/21;
- Major variances for 2020/21:
  - Increase of rent by CPI +1% (2.7% in total);
  - Increased capital works;
- Rents set by Government, and had been increased by CPI +1% in 2020/21;
- Rents had been reduced by 1% per annum for the previous 4 years as required by Government;
- The Council's ability to service the £73m remaining debt, that the Government had required it to incur, needed to be protected, and that this should continue to be a priority.

The main 'headlines' of the Capital and Special Revenue Projects were as follows:

- The current capital programme of £261m was fully funded (subject to the borrowing arrangements for the Dover District Leisure Centre and the Property Investment Strategy);
- The major projects in the programme were;
  - Property Investment Strategy;
  - Development of a Bus Rapid Transit System (BRT);
  - Refurbishment of Dover Town Hall;
  - Refurbishment of Tides Leisure Centre; and
  - Dover Market Square Public Realm Improvements.
- The resources for funding capital and revenue projects would be largely exhausted by the current programme;
- Future capital receipts were expected to come mainly from one-off asset sales and ongoing housing right to buy sales which amount to circa £500k per annum at current sales levels. This would not replenish capital funds and would not be sufficient to maintain the current planned level of activity in the future;
- Revenue project resources would also be largely depleted, and no significant new resources were expected other than from contributions from the revenue budget.
- Borrowing for capital purposes could be undertaken but this would make business case proposals for projects more challenging.

Members discussed the Council's property investments and were advised that the Council had made no significant new investments since 2017. The purchase of the former co-op building in Dover was not considered a traditional property investment due to its current usage.

The issue of cost centre budgets was raised with Members requesting the addition of trend indicators so the year-to-year changes in the budget could be clearly identified. The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) agreed to investigate the feasibility of making this change.

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm.