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Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held as a Teams Live Events remote meeting on Monday, 12 October 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present:

Chairman: Councillor C D Zosseder

Councillors: D G Beaney (as substitute for Councillor M Bates)  
S H Beer  
T A Bond  
S C Manion  
R S Walkden  
P Walker  
H M Williams

Also present: Councillor D P Murphy, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health  
Councillor O C de R Richardson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Corporate Property  
Councillor C A Vinson, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Digital

Officers: Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)  
Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)  
Head of Inward Investment and Tourism  
Head of Regulatory Services  
Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development  
Head of Finance and Investment  
Asset Manager  
Democratic Services Manager  
Democratic Services Officer

## 14 APOLOGIES

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

Councillor M Rose who had originally advised he would be late subsequently sent his apologies to the meeting.

In addition, Councillors M J Holloway and N S Kenton sent their apologies in respect of the invitation to the meeting extended by the Chairman.

## 15 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor D G Beaney had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor M Bates.

## 16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

## 17 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18 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 at its meeting held on 5 October 2020 were noted.

19 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.

20 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.

21 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

Members were advised that work was underway to schedule the agreed items and that an updated work programme would be circulated to the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

22 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.

23 VARIATION TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman proposed that, with the consent of meeting, the order of business be varied to take Agenda Items 13 (Sandwich Guildhall Forecourt Improvement Works) next in proceedings.

There being no dissent indicated the order of business was varied.

24 SANDWICH GUILDHALL FORECOURT IMPROVEMENT WORKS

The Head of Inward Investment and Tourism introduced the report on the Sandwich Guildhall Forecourt Improvement Works.

Members were informed that the Guildhall Forecourt Improvement Works were part of the wider "A New Vision for Sandwich" programme of improvements to Sandwich Town and were seen as the driver for future works as part of the Council's commitment to place making.

The postponement of the 149<sup>th</sup> Open Golf Championship and the impact of Covid-19 had delayed the start of the project, with it effectively being pushed back a year

to September 2021. However, due to Covid-19 the importance of outside space and the environment had been highlighted as well as the growth in 'staycations'.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Corporate Property, Councillor O C de R Richardson, advised that the overall budget was £1.05 million, with Dover District Council committing £400,000 to it. The remainder of the funding came from Sandwich Town Council, Kent County Council, The Royal and Ancient Golf Club, Discovery Park and Princes Golf Club.

The Head of Inward Investment and Tourism confirmed that the improvement works had planning consent. The proposed York stone paving and its pricing was discussed and Members were advised that the quality of the material was informed by the nature of the site.

Members asked for assurances that other areas in the district in greater need of investment would not be ignored, particularly given the limited resources available. In response Councillor O C de R Richardson advised that the Cabinet kept the whole district in mind and that he recognised the need for investment in Dover. He cited the examples of the Market Square and the restoration of Maison Dieu in Dover and that the Tides project in Deal was postponed not cancelled.

It was proposed by Councillor S H Beer, duly seconded by Councillor T A Bond, and

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

## 25 FOOD POVERTY REVIEW

The Democratic Services Manager presented the briefing paper for the Food Poverty Review.

The following additional witnesses were identified for inclusion in the review:

- Food Pantry (Charlton Centre, Dover)
- Cinque Ports Community Kitchen (Deal)
- Talk it Out (Deal)
- United Families UK

Councillor P M Brivio, who was also in attendance at the meeting, suggested to Members that they might wish to consider developing a Food Poverty Action Plan emerging from the Food Poverty Review. The Democratic Services Manager advised that any Food Poverty Action Plan would ultimately have to be recommended to the Cabinet for approval.

Councillor P Walker underlined the need for involvement from Community Services in the development of a Food Poverty Action Plan.

It was moved by Councillor H M Williams, duly seconded by Councillor S H Beer, that a working party be set up to develop a Food Poverty Action Plan to be reported back to the committee by May 2021.

It was moved as an AMENDMENT by Councillor T A Bond, duly seconded by Councillor P Walker, that a Food Poverty Action Plan be developed in the quarter following the conclusion of the Food Poverty Review.

On being put to the meeting the amendment was CARRIED.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee develop a Food Poverty Action Plan in the quarter following the conclusion of the Food Poverty Review.

## 26 EU TRANSITION - DOVER PORT HEALTH AUTHORITY

The Head of Regulatory Services presented the report on EU Transition – Dover Port Health Authority.

Members were advised that as a result of the phased increase in Port Health Authority (PHA) responsibilities associated with the end of the EU transition period there was a need to recruit an additional three staff members to start in November/December 2020 to deal with organics and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fish checks. It was proposed that the three staff members would be comprised of 1 permanent member of staff and 2 on 24-month contracts to be funded from the predicted income generated from fees. The number of staff proposed was based on discussions with other local authorities and agencies. It was noted that a Border Control Post dealing with the full range of checks could require up to 140 officers.

It was unclear at this stage the nature of further staffing requirements and the lack of clarity, along with the scale of the changes, could significantly impact the PHA's ability to deliver on its duties by the end of the transitional period in July 2021. However, checks relating to the Channel Tunnel would be conducted by Ashford Borough Council at the Inland Border Facility in its district.

The report also asked the Cabinet to support a joint letter with Ashford Borough Council to the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Cabinet Office seeking urgent clarity and a commitment to funding. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health, Councillor D P Murphy, stated that the letter would be assertive in its requests and acknowledged that the Council was having to make its estimates based on the best information it had available.

It was moved by Councillor T A Bond, duly seconded by Councillor R S Walkden, and

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- (a) That Cabinet Decision CAB29(a) be amended as follows:

That the additional resource required to support the recruitment of three additional Port Health staff from the 2020/21 budget, to support the first phase of the EU end of transition, be approved subject to the 2 temporary members of staff being employed on 12 month contracts that are to be reviewed once a clearer idea of the income generated from the provision of the service is obtained.

- (b) That Cabinet Decision CAB29(b) be agreed as follows:

That the submission of a letter to the Right Honourable Michael Gove MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister

for the Cabinet Office, seeking urgent clarity and commitment to funding, be approved.

27 APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL PLAN PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development advised that the changes adopted by the Cabinet to the membership of the Local Plan Project Advisory Group (PAG) were made specifically to increase the number of elected representatives on the PAG. There were also concerns that some of the external representatives previously appointed had not attended meetings regularly and did not properly reflect the local community.

Members were advised that the PAG could still invite external representatives to meetings if it was felt that there was a benefit for a matter under consideration.

There was support expressed by Members for the past contribution made by some of the external representatives on the PAG to its work and it was noted that external representatives could still be invited to future meetings by the PAG.

28 HOUSING STOCK COMPLIANCE

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health, Councillor D P Murphy, advised that there was little confidence in the data provided by the former East Kent Housing for compliance and the Council was currently sorting through an immense amount of data received in order to develop meaningful figures of its own in relation to the housing stock.

Councillor D P Murphy stated that he was happy to provide as much meaningful data to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on compliance as he could, when they had it. He emphasised that the safety of the Dover District's residents was the Council's primary concern and that having meaningful data would enable them to do this. An example was cited in respect of gas safety certificates where compliance figures were greater than the Council's total housing stock by 200 dwellings.

It was moved by Councillor T A Bond, duly seconded by Councillor S H Beer, and

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Cabinet that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be presented with a report on Housing Stock Compliance for 6 months starting from November 2020.

29 APPROVAL OF REVISED 2020/21 GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET AND PROJECT PROGRAMMES

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report on the Approval of Revised 2020/21 General Fund Revenue Budget and Project Programmes.

Members were advised that a strategic approach had been taken to the 2020/21 budget position utilising reserves, balances and a revised project programme to balance the revenue budget and additional projects requested. A full review of the 2021/22 budget would be undertaken and the changes required to deliver a balanced proposal would be incorporated into the budget process to be brought to Cabinet and Council in February and March 2021.

There were a number of uncertainties around the on-going impact of Covid-19 and BREXIT on the budget. The Council needed to meet its duties as well as its

aspirations and still deliver a balanced budget. The forecast impact on the General Fund budget was a £4.73 million additional in year pressure.

The Council's exposure to risks relating to the impact of covid-19 business rates on the retail sector was lower than in other authorities by the significant portion of its business rates that came from the Port of Dover and the Channel Tunnel. The potential for losses on business rates was also capped under arrangements and the benefits of being a shadow member of the Kent pool.

In respect of the capital projects set out in the budget, Members were advised that these would still be subject to viability reports and the council was not committed to implementing them. The projects had been assessed against a number of criteria including:

- if the project was already underway
- whether the project was supported by external funding
- whether it would contribute towards post-covid recovery (tourism and regeneration)
- whether it involved external partners

Councillor S H Beer expressed concerns that without evidence of the criteria for selecting the projects, some of the projects chosen appeared to be 'vanity' projects rather than projects delivering real benefits for local residents. The example of Sandwich Quayside improvements compared to Tides Leisure Centre works was cited.

The Democratic Services Manager advised that the item had been approved by the Chairman for late inclusion by reason of special circumstances (it should have been included on the agenda at time of publication) under section 100B of the Local Government Act 1972.

It was moved by Councillor T A Bond, duly seconded by Councillor S H Beer, and

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.28 pm.