

Public Document Pack

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 14 November 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor C D Zosseder

Councillors: T A Bond
P M Brivio
D R Friend
D A Hawkes
S C Manion
M Rose
R S Walkden
P Walker
H M Williams

Also Present: Councillor M Bates
Councillor N J Collor
Councillor C A Vinson
Toby Howe, H&T Strategic Resilience Manager Kent County Council
Dover District Commander Chief Inspector Paul Barrell
Inspector Leigh Woolnough, Neighbourhood Inspector.

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)
Head of Governance & HR
Head of Community and Digital Services
Parks and Open Spaces Manager
Community Services Manager
Major Projects and Programme Manager
Strategic Development Lead Officer (Building)
Democratic and Corporate Services Manager

27 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

28 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

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

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

30 MINUTES

The consideration of the Minutes was deferred.

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

There were none.

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

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

33 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

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

In the absence of any dissent, it was agreed to note the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions.

34 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

Councillor M Rose asked when his item on the bringing of services in-house would be considered and was advised by the Democratic and Corporate Services Manager that this was in the process of being scheduled.

In the absence of any dissent, it was agreed to note the Work Programme.

35 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.

36 ENCLOSED DOG PARK PETITION

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager presented the report on the petition for an Enclosed Dog Park.

Members were advised that Dover District Council already provided for safe sites for dogs to exercise in but acknowledged that most of them required a dog to be kept on a lead as these areas were within multi-use public open spaces. There were also a number of privately operated enclosed dog walking areas in the district.

Officers had identified four potential sites identified in the district for an enclosed dog park as followed:

- Site one: North Deal recreation ground, an area of grass to the side of the multi-use games – estimated cost of £7,500 excluding VAT
- Site two: Cow leas meadow, Sandwich, (Sandwich Town Council land) an area within the open space – estimated cost of £17,000 excluding VAT
- Site three: Connaught Park, Dover, the use of the plateau area up from the play area – estimated cost of £19,400 excluding VAT
- Site four: Station Field, Aylesham – estimated cost of £18,400 excluding VAT

The estimated cost excluding VAT of developing the four sites would be, based on costings obtained in August, a total of £62,350.00.

Members were advised that there was no budget provision for this in the current financial year so any project would need to be added to the 2023/24 special projects budget.

It was moved by Councillor C D Zosseder, seconded by Councillor D R Friend, and

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet that funding for an enclosed dog park at four sites (North Deal Recreation Ground, Cow Leas Meadow, Connaught Park and Station Field) be added to the special projects budget for 2023/24.

37 TREASURY MANAGEMENT YEAR-END REPORT 2021/22

The Strategic Director (Corporate Services) presented the Treasury Management Year-End Report 2021/22. Members were informed that the Council remained within its Treasury Management guidelines and complied with the Prudential Code guidelines during the period up to 31 March 2022.

The Council had made a 3.04% forecast annualised return, which while less than originally estimated was considered a reasonable income return given the impact of a global pandemic.

In the absence of any dissent, it was agreed to note the report.

38 RUSSELL GARDENS ORNAMENTAL POND AND BRIDGES

The Strategic Development Lead Officer (Building) presented the Russell Gardens Ornamental Pond and Bridges.

Members were advised that the ornamental pond in Russell Gardens was the centre piece of the Mawson Garden that has been restored by Dover District Council, with financial support from the Heritage Lottery fund. The garden was designated as a Grade II-listed Park and Garden with the pond noted in the list description as one of the principal features contributing to the historic significance of the garden. In addition, the two bridges and boathouse were individually designated as listed buildings at Grade II. In heritage terms it was considered vital that the integrity of the pond was safeguarded as the water feature that was key to the garden.

It was stated that the pond had developed a number of structural defects over time in the concrete base that had led to leaks that had created voids underneath the pond. These voids had resulted in subsidence of the base of the pond and adjacent bank. While a number of temporary fixes had been put in place in previous years, the weather this year had resulted in a situation where the flow of the River Dour into the pond would dry up and this would provide an opportunity for investigatory survey and repair works to be undertaken.

The funding for the work of £110,000 would be drawn from the Special Revenue Reserve. The works would also address through non-invasive design solutions the problems associated with the listed boat house and ornamental bridges.

Members raised the following points in the considering the report:

- To state that the ornamental garden was a jewel in the crown of the Council's assets.
- To question whether the works would address all the problems. Members were advised that a full reconstruction of the pond with modern building methods would be a complex and costly exercise.
- To question whether there would be an opportunity to seek further lottery grant money to fund the full works. Members were advised that such a bid would be unlikely to succeed.

Members welcomed the works and requested that an update be provided to the committee at the next stage of the works.

39 KENT RESILIENCE FORUM

The Chairman welcomed Toby Howe, H&T Strategic Resilience Manager Kent County Council, to the meeting to discuss the traffic problems that had affected the Port of Dover and the area around Dover itself.

Members were advised that Councillors N J Collor and M Bates had also been invited as the former and current Portfolio Holders for transport matters respectively.

The Chairman expressed concerns over the impact of traffic problems during the Christmas and summer that had caused misery for the people of Dover. It was pointed out that that these problems had been predictable and that the measures to deal with them were slow to be put in place and often inadequate. The example was cited of the Port of Dover being unable to handle the volume of traffic arriving which then blocked the motorway and local roads because measures were not applied quickly enough to tackle the problems.

Mr Howe acknowledged that the situation at Dover was fragile and advised that the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) was undertaking work in preparation for the introduction of further border checks. However, the route of the problem was a national issue and it would take a national solution to deal with it. The plans that the KRF had in place were responsive and did not have the resources to roll out these measures immediately when there was a problem. The KRF received information from the Port of Dover that it used to monitor traffic flows. It was accepted that there was a need for significant infrastructure improvements and that without these the third Thames crossing could make matters significantly worse.

Members were advised that the KRF lacked some of the enforcement powers it needed to deal with problems and punish foreign HGV drivers who tried to evade the plans to manage the traffic. It was suggested that expanded powers for the Port of Dover Police would also be useful in dealing with problems.

The following points were raised by Members:

- That there seemed to be no quick response plans in place to deal with short notice issues such as strike action in France.
- That introducing new immigration rules for the start of the Easter Holidays was an obvious mistake.

- That without clear roads the local economy would struggle to keep operating.
- That HGVs started diverting off the motorway before KRF could implement its plans or ignored the rules in place and tried to cut through Dover to access the Port rather than queue on the motorway. It was pointed out that it took hours to clear HGVs from places that they were not supposed to be in.
- To express concern that these problems would continue to occur at predictable times of year when traffic volumes surged.
- To warn of the problems that could occur when the new European Entry/Exit system was put in place in May 2023. There would be a requirement for biometric checks that could adversely impact on the time it took to process traffic through the Port.
- To urge the KRF to explore solutions such as remote controlled barriers to control traffic flows and introducing HGV barriers in the town to prevent them trying to enter the Port through the town.
- To highlight the suffering of the people of Aycliffe when HGV's were queued on the road approaching the Port.
- To advocate for a more agile KRF that could be proactive not reactive to find solutions to the problems facing Dover.
- The need to take into account the impact on local resident's health as a result of the congestion.
- That TAP can fill up in as little time as 30 minutes.
- To emphasise the importance of the KRF and other agencies working with Dover District Council and local elected members when there were problems.

The Chairman thanked Mr Howes for attending the meeting and answering the Committee's questions.

40 CRIME AND DISORDER UPDATE

The Head of Community and Digital Services presented the Crime and Disorder updated in conjunction with the Community Services Manager, Dover District Commander Chief Inspector Paul Barrell and Inspector Leigh Woolnough, Neighbourhood Inspector.

The presentation covered the following points:

- **Headline crime figures**
 - Victim Based Crimes down 5.6% (563 fewer crimes). It was noted that 30% of all Victim Based Crimes in the district were domestic abuse related.
 - Violent crime up 7% (461 additional crimes)
 - Robbery down 49% (61 fewer crimes)
 - Solved Crime Rate was 9.5% which made it one of the highest performing districts in Kent and above the National (7.8%) and Kent (8.2%) levels.
 - The Dover District had lower rates of victim based crime than Ashford, Canterbury and Thanet in East Kent and comparable levels in Folkestone and Hythe.
- Areas of focus in the district were:

- Domestic Abuse
 - Violence Against Women and Girls
 - Youth Violence
 - Anti-Social Behaviour
- The challenges to achieving this were:
 - Finances – A reducing government grant meant that year-on-year savings would need to be found next financial year and likely for the following three years after that.
 - Staff Retention – Due to economic uncertainty within Kent Police and the growth in Border Force staffing, the Dover CSU had 50% fewer PSE staff
 - Strategic Restructuring – the Review of Neighbourhood Policing was on-going with the intention of delivering a new model that delivers within a reduced budget
 - Business Continuity – the challenge of delivering the service in the medium-term given the issues above.
- The Community Safety Partnership had in the previous six months targeted:
 - Violence reduction
 - Youth Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Waste and Environmental Crime
 - Traveller incursions and unlawful encampments
 - Modern slavery
 - Animal cruelty
 - Keeping Dover moving during the peak season
- An award would be given the following day to a local licenced premises that had demonstrated a positive impact on the community
- The success of the Council's CCTV team which had detected 2061 incidents across the Dover District with 118 cameras. The main incident type was:
 - Disturbance
 - Nuisance Youths
 - Alcohol Related Disorder
 - Assault
 - Missing Persons
- Anti-Social Behaviour
 - It was acknowledged that low level incidents could have a big impact on the lives of people.
 - There was work being undertaken to divert young people away from crime.
 - Community Services and Kent Police undertook work with local schools.
 - Youth based knife crime was relatively low but targeting it to keep it under control was a priority.
 - Members had access to the anti-social behaviour map.

Members welcomed the presentation and congratulated Kent Police and Officers for their achievements over the last year.

The following issues were raised:

- The issues of the reorganisation of PCSOs. There were efforts underway to increase recruitment of warranted officers to meet targets but Kent Police was in competition with the Metropolitan Police for recruits. This meant that East Kent was not benefitting from the uplift in numbers as quickly as hoped.
- How community groups tackling the issue of domestic abuse were supported. In response it was acknowledged that Kent Police were only part of the solution and that groups that helped break the cycle of abuse were vital in supporting people regaining their independence from their abuser. Efforts were being made to encourage reporting. Statistics demonstrated that by the time an incident of domestic abuse was reported there had been on average 15 previous incidents.
- Improved police visibility in Deal. In response it was stated that officers in Deal were based at Deal Fire Station and the intention was for them to spend as much time as possible in the community.

It was suggested that the Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to a future meeting of the committee.

41 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor C D Zosseder, duly seconded by Councillor D R Friend 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.

42 AYLESHAM DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Major Projects and Programme Manager presented the Aylesham Development Update.

Members welcomed the update and the positive news.

The meeting ended at 8.52 pm.