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Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 9 September 2024 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor T J Bartlett

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

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory)
Strategic Director (Finance and Housing)
Head of Housing
Head of Place and Growth
Head of Property Assets
Regeneration Delivery Manager
Housing Policy Officer
Head of Corporate Services and Democracy

33 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillors D J Parks and M W Rose.

34 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor J S Back had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor M W Rose.

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

36 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

37 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 note.

38 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.

39 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.

40 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

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

- That a Fasttrack update be provided to a future meeting, including the issue of whether the buses will be electric.
- That Kent County Council be invited to provide an update on Community and Children's Hubs.
- That Members provide key questions to the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy in respect of Southern Water.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted, subject to the inclusion of an item on Fasttrack and Community and Children's Hubs.

41 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.

42 PROPOSED CHANGES TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING DATES

The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy presented the report in respect of proposed changes to Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting dates. Members attention was drawn to three dates in particular as follows:

- 17 February 2025 as this fell during half term under the KCC determined school term dates. The alternative would be to hold it on 24 February 2025. However, the 24 February 2025 had been identified as the date that Cabinet would meet if the Committee were to make any recommendations in respect of the Budget. Members therefore had to decide whether to keep the meeting date on 10 February 2025 as originally scheduled, move it to 17 February 2024 despite it being in the school holidays or ask the Cabinet to consider moving its meeting on 24 February 2025.
- 14 April 2025 fell during Easter Holiday for schools under KCC determined school term dates. However, the following week (21st) was Easter Monday so it was recommended that if the date is to be changed it be held on 14 April 2025 as the proposed new date despite it being a school holiday.
- Due to the dates of Bank Holidays in May 2025 it was suggested that Members leave this date unchanged as 19 May 2025.

Members considered the proposed dates and agreed that the proposed dates set out in the papers should be recommended to Council.

RESOLVED: That the proposed dates in the papers be recommended to Council for adoption.

43

SCOPING REPORT FOR MOTION FROM THE FULL COUNCIL

The Head of Corporate Services and Democracy presented the scoping paper in respect of the council motion agreed on 1st of March 2023:

“This council notes that there is more work to be done to encourage a more diverse range of candidates for elections in future, in order that councils better reflect the diverse communities they serve. This council therefore resolves to ask the overview and scrutiny committee to include in the committee work programme consideration of how more residents from across the those communities can be encouraged to participate in local democracy and potentially stand as candidates in future council elections.”

Members were advised that the Council currently undertook through the Electoral Services and Democratic Services teams a number of events aimed at people considering standing for election. The biggest risk identified as part of the scoping report was that of a failure to effect change. As 31 out of the 32 members elected in 2019 and 2023 stood for election on the party platform it would not be possible to achieve a greater diversity in councillors if the political parties did not take a lead in doing this.

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

That it be recommended to Cabinet that a six-week campaign be run to encourage people to get involved in local democracy at all levels with the aim of achieving a more diverse range of candidates for election to parish and district councils. This campaign should be low cost and include the following:

- (a) PR/Social media promotion and posters in support of the campaign
- (b) Engagement at local community events
- (c) Promotional material at council organised events and on the Community Roots bus

An AMENDMENT was moved by Councillor D R Friend, duly seconded by Councillor M Bates that the proposal be expanded to include events such as the Council’s jobs and skills fairs.

Following a debate on the merits of the AMENDMENT, Councillor S H Beer, with the consent of her seconder, agreed to accept the amendment.

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

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet that a six-week campaign be run to encourage people to get involved in local democracy at all

levels with the aim of achieving a more diverse range of candidates for election to parish and district councils. This campaign should be low cost and include the following:

- (a) PR/Social media promotion and posters in support of the campaign
- (b) Engagement at local community events and the Council's jobs and skills fairs
- (c) Promotional material at council organised events and on the Community Roots bus

44 DOMESTIC ABUSE (HOUSING) POLICY

The Head of Housing presented the Domestic Abuse (Housing) Policy report.

Members were advised that the Council did not have a Domestic Abuse Policy for housing, and in order to meet the legislative and regulatory requirements, the Housing Service, in collaboration with internal departments and through consultation with external services, had produced a Policy setting out how it would recognise and respond to cases of domestic abuse. This was detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

Members considered the following matters:

- Whether the report extended to tenants of private landlords
- The definition of immediate harm. In response it was stated that this would depend on individual cases.
- To seek reassurance that Dover District Council and Kent County Council had sufficient communication arrangements in place to be able to respond where there were safeguarding concerns. In response it was stated that while communication could always be improved, the Council now had a policy, with officers understanding their responsibilities, as well as better communication mechanisms. Where things did go wrong the council would learn from these through case reviews and take steps to prevent it happening again.

Members welcomed the introduction of a Domestic Abuse Policy.

45 KEARSNEY PARKS - REPAIRS TO BUILT ASSETS

The Head of Property Assets presented the report on Kearsney Parks - Repairs to Built Assets.

Members were advised that Property Assets and Parks and Open Spaces are working together to ensure that the most popular open space in the District, Kearsney Parks, continued to offer facilities that were of a high standard. Following the completion of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) support project at Kearsney Parks in 2021, agreement had been sought from Cabinet to draw down funds allocated within the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to enable procurement to commence on additional works to support the Parks legacy. It was anticipated that all works would be completed by summer 2026.

Members raised the following points:

- To question the on-going financial impact of Kearsney Parks.
- To enquire as what was being done to balance preserving the Parks heritage against making it as accessible as possible. In response it was stated that there were additional works needed to increase accessibility in the Parks.
- To confirm that there were no grant clauses from the NHLF that would cause concerns. It was confirmed that there were not.
- To discuss the issues around the car park. Members were advised the original contractor had ceased operating.
- To enquire how the location was performing as a wedding venue. It was stated that it seemed to be developing well.

46 PROPERTY ASSETS - PROPOSED PROJECTS

The Head of Property Assets presented the report on the proposed projects.

There were five projects in total for which approval was being sought from Cabinet.

- The beach hut and garage projects were revenue generators with short pay-back periods (both within 5 years).
- The Dover Museum cinema reconfiguration project sought to bring a community asset back into greater use by separating its operation from the Dover Museum.
- The Dover Museum roof and grounds maintenance improvement projects were for effective asset maintenance, operation and asset protection, as well as for staff health, safety and wellbeing.

Members were advised that the Cabinet had asked for further work to be undertaken in respect of the management of beach huts and the coastline.

Members raised the following points:

- The potential for increased revenue from beach huts. It was highlighted that the Council provided both the plots and the beach huts everywhere except Kingsdown where only the plots were provided. There would be some form of community consultation undertaken as part of any planning application.
- The potential for short term rentals for beach huts. It was stated that this could be done but may have staffing implications.
- The potential for increased revenue from bringing garages back into commercial use.

47 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor D R Friend, duly seconded by Councillor M J Nee 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.

48 RESTORATION OF MAISON DIEU, DOVER

The Head of Property Assets presented the report on the Restoration of Maison Dieu, Dover.

Members considered the report, discussing the remaining works and the expected completion date for the project.

It was agreed to note the report.

49 DOVER TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION - DOVER BEACON/BENCH STREET PROJECT

The Head of Place and Growth and the Regeneration Delivery Manager presented the report on the Dover Beacon/Bench Street Project.

Members were informed that the project was progressing well and was expected to meet its completion date.

It was agreed to note the report.

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm.