
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber - Swale House on Wednesday, 24 June 2015 from 7.00 - 8.35 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock, Andy Booth (Chairman), Lloyd Bowen (Vice-Chairman), Derek Conway, Mike Dendor, Mick Galvin, James Hunt (substitute for Councillor Prescott), Mike Henderson, Ken Ingleton, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Peter Marchington, Ben Stokes and Roger Truelove.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Bob Pullen and Kellie Mackenzie.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Tina Booth and Alan Horton.

APOLOGY: Councillor Prescott.

83 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 March 2015 (Minute Nos. 568 – 578) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

84 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

85 DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report which set out the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/15. He explained that the Scrutiny Committee were required by their terms of reference to report annually to Full Council on their work and make recommendations for amended working practices if appropriate.

Members considered the draft report and raised the following points: do not consider that 'success was expanding' as stated on the Foreword on page 3 of the draft report, whilst there had been some successes it was very difficult to hold Cabinet and senior officers to account; Scrutiny would only succeed if party politics were put to one side; consider that Scrutiny Committee had proved its worth; and the joint review of Mid-Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP) Governance and Communications had been very successful improving cross-party and cross-authority working.

In response to a query from a Member, the Policy and Performance Officer outlined the differences between the Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC) and Scrutiny Committee. He explained that Overview and Scrutiny was the function of all Local Authorities with an executive form of governance and Swale had a single Scrutiny Committee to discharge this function. Swale had adopted the

Leader and Cabinet style of decision-making and the focus of the Scrutiny Committee was to hold the Leader and Cabinet to account and review their decisions on behalf of local residents. PDRC was not an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and did not have any scrutiny powers. The focus of PDRC was to assist Cabinet with developing new and revised policies, plans and strategies.

Resolved: That the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/15 be agreed and submitted to Full Council for consideration.

86 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE FORTHCOMING MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report, which set out proposals for Members to consider regarding the Committee's work programme for 2015/16.

The Policy and Performance Officer drew attention to Appendix II of the report which set out reviews undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee in 2014/15. The Committee was asked to consider these and whether they wanted to carry any forward for review in 2015/16 and whether there were any fresh reviews they wished to instigate.

Members suggested the following topics for review:

- Housing services. In particular homelessness and the lack of affordable housing. Also the effects of the Spare Room Subsidy.
- Planning. Looking at issues within Development Control and Planning Enforcement, also issues around the linkage between Planning and Legal Services. Witnesses could include members of the Planning Committee, not just the relevant Cabinet Member.
- Leisure and tourism provision within Swale - were we making the most of existing facilities?
- Continue the review of Economic Development. Members suggested that the review could also include: how the Council was assisting businesses in Swale; and the apprenticeship scheme.
- The conduct of the Parliamentary, Borough, Parish and Town Council elections on 7 May 2015.
- Local Engagement Fora. Were these actually engaging with local residents and what were they trying to achieve?
- Asset Transfers. Looking at all SBC assets and leased pieces of land. However, it was noted that an ongoing review of asset transfers had still to be concluded.

The Policy and Performance Officer advised that PDRC were currently reviewing Planning enforcement. There was some discussion about whether planning conditions could be looked at, a Member advised that the Head of Planning had agreed that these could be included as part of PDRC's review of planning enforcement.

There was some discussion about Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) exploring withdrawing from the Mid-Kent Planning Support Service which had been considered at the Planning Support Disaggregation Project Board on 3 June 2015. The Policy and Performance Officer said he understood that TWBC still wished to be involved with the scrutiny review of MKIP Planning Support.

The Chairman stated that with regard to a review of the elections held in May 2015, the Chief Executive was preparing a report and this would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

The Policy and Performance Officer agreed to collate the suggestions, which would need to be prioritised, and present these to the next meeting of the Committee to agree which would be taken forward, including in what priority order, who would coordinate them and be members of the review groups.

87 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Democratic Services Officer drew attention to the updated Forward Plan which was tabled. She explained that the Forward Plan had recently been republished as a new item had been added. The item was 'Potential sites for community purposes in Swale' which was not a key decision.

Post Meeting Note

The 'Potential sites for community purposes in Swale' are: NHS Southlands Unit, Bobbing ; and The Meads Aspire Free School site.

The Democratic Services Officer further advised that the Mid Kent Planning Support Review item had been deferred from the 15 July 2015 meeting and would be considered by Cabinet in October 2015.

The Policy and Performance Officer advised that the Forward Plan was a list of all decisions to be taken by Cabinet and was published by Democratic Services on the 1st of each month. He drew attention to the Council Forward Plan: Frequently Asked Questions which was tabled for Members.

Members went through the Forward Plan page-by-page and asked the following questions: why were the minutes of the Local Development Framework Panel not shown as a key decision as the items considered by the LDF Panel on 18 June 2015 did have a significant impact on more than one ward?; query whether the Mid-Kent Planning Support Review was for information only as the report states that the report would review options and a way forward?; and could we review the accuracy of items previously considered by Cabinet as non-key which later became key decisions, could audit be involved with those discussions?

It was agreed that responses to the above questions would be provided.

A Member reminded all Members that they could attend Cabinet and speak on any item. The Scrutiny Chairman, or five non-Cabinet Members, could call-in a Cabinet decision within five clear working days of the Cabinet Minutes being published.

Members noted the Forward Plan.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel