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## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 12 January 2017 from 7.00pm - 8.41 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors Cameron Beart (substitute for Councillor Lloyd Bowen), Andy Booth (Chairman), Derek Conway, Mick Galvin, Mike Henderson, Ken Ingleton, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Peter Marchington and Ben Stokes.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** David Clifford, Jo Millard and Bob Pullen.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Nicholas Hampshire and Ted Wilcox (Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance).

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Mike Baldock, Lloyd Bowen and Mark Ellen.

### **1100 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman outlined the Fire Evacuation Procedure.

### **1101 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 November 2016 (Minute Nos. 1006-1015) and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 29 November 2016 (Minute Nos. 1031-1035) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **1102 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

### **1103 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - 2016-17**

The Chairman welcomed the Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance and the Policy and Performance Manager to the meeting.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced the quarterly portfolio-based balanced scorecard performance report for the first quarter of 2016/17 (April-June), not January-March, as stated in the report. He pointed out that that scorecards had been updated to reflect the changes in the new Cabinet structure, referred to the improvement in performance indicators and changes to Risk Management, and advised that the Local Area Perception Survey for 2016 was now available.

Members considered the Corporate Overview balanced scorecard report for 2016/17 Quarter 1. A Member sought clarification on why the actual budget capital expenditure was only half of the target, and the Policy and Performance Manager agreed to find out this information and report back.

Members made no comment on the Environmental and Rural Affairs balanced scorecard report for 2016/17 Quarter 1.

Members considered the Finance and Performance balanced scorecard report for 2016/17 Quarter 1. A Member sought clarification on why there was a deterioration in collection rate year on year for Council Tax, but the indicator remained green? The Deputy Cabinet Member advised that whilst the collection rate had decreased slightly, the rate remained within target.

Members considered the Housing and Wellbeing balanced scorecard report for 2016/17 Quarter 1. A Member commented that the information in the report reflected the data in the Housing Services Task and Finish Group draft report to be discussed later in the meeting.

Members considered the Planning Services balanced scorecard report for 2016/17 Quarter 1. In response to a question from a Member, the Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance advised that the overspend was due to the costs in employing additional staff and unforeseen appeal costs, but this was now closer to target.

A Member suggested that there were still cases of targets not being met in the Timeliness of Processing Applications, asked whether there had been any improvement and could the issue be included in the Development Management scrutiny review? Another Member sought further clarification and detail on capital expenditure. A discussion on the accountability of Cabinet Member portfolios followed, and the Policy and Performance Officer referred to the Finance Monitoring Report which would be considered at the Scrutiny Budget meeting on 26 January 2017.

Members considered the Regeneration balanced scorecard report for 2016/17 Quarter 1. In response to a question from a Member relating to the lack of performance targets in Tourism, the Policy and Performance Manager agreed to report this back. Another Member highlighted the lack of detail on Regeneration and the Policy and Performance Manager drew Members' attention to the updated Regeneration site map outside the Committee Room, Swale House, and advised that some performance indicators were requested by Cabinet Members and others by Council. The Deputy Cabinet Member added that the report was an overview so lacked detail. The Chairman suggested more detail to be included.

Members considered the Safer Families and Communities balanced scorecard report for 2016/17 Quarter 1. In response to a question from a Member, the Policy and Performance Manager confirmed that there was no corporate measure for Licensing.

#### **1104 REVIEWS AT FOLLOW-UP STAGE AND LOG OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report and reminded Members that the Cabinet's response to the Scrutiny Committee's Leisure and Tourism recommendations would be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 1 February 2017.

Members expressed disappointment in the delays in items progressing. A Member suggested that delays may have been caused by some staff having new, extra responsibilities, in their role.

## 1105 OTHER REVIEW PROGRESS REPORTS

### Housing Services

A Member of the Housing Services Task and Finish Group referred to the tabled working draft report circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Committee, reminded Members it was a working draft and welcomed comments. He thanked the Policy and Performance Officer for his assistance and praised the cooperation of other Swale Borough Council (SBC) Officers, Housing Associations and other Local Authorities. The Chairman thanked the Policy and Performance Officer and gave particular praise to SBC's Housing Options team.

A discussion ensued which raised the following points:

- Had the group looked at other non-conforming methods to provide more temporary accommodation such as container parks?;
- moving on from temporary accommodation was one of the biggest issues;
- comparison of housing issues that SBC had with other Kent authorities;
- suggestions that empty properties could be used to assist;
- the impact that changes in planning law to allow temporary accommodation may have;
- issues of moving families to different areas of the Borough;
- reducing availability of private rented accommodation for benefit claimants;
- condition of rental properties;
- the impact that changes to the Universal Credit system has had;
- the impact that the increase in Stamp Duty on buy-to-let properties has had;
- lack of bungalows available;
- the benefits of the 'People for Places' organisation;
- suggestion of asking Cabinet Members to work more closely with letting agents and landlords to find ways of reaching agreements with benefit claimants;

- suggestion of encouraging Cabinet Members to advise the Local Government Association and Central Government of issues caused by changes in policy and decisions;
- the comparison in criteria of acceptance on Housing waiting lists in different Local Authorities; and
- the impact on Local Authorities when residents were means-tested by Housing Associations.

Members of the Task and Finish Group spoke of various schemes other authorities used such as a Council-funded temporary shelter scheme for rough sleepers operated by the Church, and premises developed into accommodation for the homeless.

A Member asked Members of the Scrutiny Committee to assist with evidence of cases of rental properties in a poor condition.

### **Development Management**

The Policy and Performance Officer advised that, as highlighted in the email circulated earlier in the day, arrangements had been made to visit other authorities to observe their Planning Committee on 8 March, 12 April and 19 April 2017. The Chairman encouraged Members to attend.

In response to a question on the lack of progress, the Policy and Performance Officer agreed that there had been a delay but the review was now being progressed.

### **Leisure and Tourism**

The Policy and Performance Officer advised that the Cabinet's response on the Scrutiny's recommendations on Leisure and Tourism was due to be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 1 February 2017.

## **1106 CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

There was no discussion on the Forward Plan.

## **1107 URGENT BUSINESS REQUESTS**

The Chairman advised that there had been no updates on Regeneration from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration or Officers, as requested at a previous Scrutiny Committee Meeting. He suggested that a written and a verbal update should be given at alternate Scrutiny Meetings.

In the debate that followed, Members suggested the following:

- Scrutiny Committee to ask for an evidence timetable of action on Regeneration;

- invitation to attend future meetings to be extended to other partners of Regeneration projects;
- suggestion of monthly update on Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration and quarterly update on other Regeneration projects in the Borough; and
- specific questions to be asked in advance of meetings to gain specific answers.

Members agreed to provide the Scrutiny Chairman with a list of questions, within the next week, to be asked at a future Scrutiny Meeting, which he would collate and provide to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Officers in advance of the meeting.

A Member commented that communication about Regeneration projects had remained poor, whilst a visiting Member highlighted that further reputational damage may be caused if the public were not kept informed.

#### **1108 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report. There was no discussion.

Chairman

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