
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 9 June 2016 from 7.00pm - 9.23 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock, Andy Booth (Chairman), Lloyd Bowen (Vice-Chairman), Derek Conway, Mark Ellen, Mick Galvin, Mike Henderson, Ken Ingleton, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Peter Marchington and Ben Stokes.

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Cameron Beart, Adrian Crowther, Roger Clark, Alan Horton (Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities), and Ted Wilcox.

727 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the evacuation procedure.

728 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 March 2016 (Minute Nos. 608 – 616) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

729 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

730 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Chairman welcomed the Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, the Policy and Performance Manager and the Business Improvement Officer to the meeting. The Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced the quarterly portfolio-based balanced scorecard performance reports for the third quarter (October-December 2015). He provided an overview of the Corporate Health scorecard and highlighted the reduction in complaints received over the quarter.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the increase in short-term sickness against the decrease in long-term sickness, the Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance advised that this was a regular trend in the third quarter, and some long-term sickness employees had returned to work but still had days off sick. The Chairman asked what measures were being taken to address this tendency and whether some sickness was stress-related? Members were advised that all sickness was checked by Human Resources (HR), return to work interviews were carried out, phased return to work was implemented, and that HR worked closely with returning employees. The Policy and Performance Manager agreed to circulate the specific information to Members relating to stress-related sickness.

Members made no comment on the Community Safety and Health balanced scorecard report for 2015/16 Quarter Three.

Members considered the Environmental and Rural Affairs balanced scorecard report for 2015/16 Quarter Three. A discussion ensued and Members made the following observations regarding the cleanliness of the Borough:

- Concern in the deterioration of street cleansing;
- Litter on the A249 was a particular problem;
- Suggested educating residents and publicising in different languages;
- Litter discouraged visitors to the area;
- Suggested young offenders could assist on community work projects;
- Attitude and behaviour towards litter dropping of some people in the Borough;
- Difficulty in disposing of larger items;
- Fly-tipping in areas encouraged others to tip in the same area;
- The success of the “Clean for the Queen” project and encouragement of further similar projects, facilitated by Swale Borough Council;
- Encouragement in schools and community organisations in cleaning projects;
- Penalties on businesses such as food outlets if rubbish was not cleared;
- Use of evidence from cameras to prosecute offenders;
- Publicising successful prosecutions more widely;
- Encouragement in the use of waste facilities;
- Use of underspend in budget to clean the Borough.

The Policy and Performance Manager suggested Members could consider a review of litter in the future and Members agreed. A Member suggested inviting a representative from the Highways Agency to a future review meeting. The Chairman reminded Members that invited guests, including invited Members, should be fully engaged with at Scrutiny meetings.

Members made no comment on the Finance and Performance combined balance scorecard report for 2015/16 Quarter Three.

Members considered the Housing balanced scorecard report for 2015/16 Quarter Three.

A Member raised strong concerns on the year-on-year deterioration rate for the number of affordable homes delivered, households living in temporary accommodation and long-term empty homes brought back into use. He considered that Swale Borough Council (SBC) were not doing enough and suggested the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing should be alerted to the Committee’s concerns. The Chairman reminded the Committee that they were currently undertaking a Housing review and points raised would be fed back to the Task and Finish Group.

A discussion followed which centred on the following themes:

- The number of affordable homes delivered, 43, was worrying;

- Disappointment at the number of long-term empty homes brought back into use after the previous work carried out by Members of the Scrutiny Committee and the Policy and Performance Officer;
- Suggestion that SBC's low rate borrowing could assist in a joint venture with Housing Associations in providing housing;
- Clarification on the figures for long-term empty homes.

Members considered the balanced scorecard report for 2015/16 Quarter Three for Localism, Culture, Heritage and Sport.

A Member sought clarification on how the change in Cabinet portfolios would affect the reporting responsibility in the scorecards? The Policy and Performance Manager advised that the structure of the scorecards would be changing to take account of the portfolio changes, but the Local Area Perception survey questions would remain unchanged to compare scores historically and with other Councils who asked the same questions as SBC.

Members considered the balanced scorecard report for 2015/16 Quarter Three for Planning and raised the following issues:

- The performance figures in Local Land Searches required further investigation;
- Pleased that the percentage of delegated planning decisions was so low;
- Did not consider the proportion of planning applications refused or the number of delegated planning decisions should be a target;
- Serious concerns at satisfaction rate;
- More information within the report required on what the risks were.

The Business Improvement Officer confirmed that a new planning satisfaction survey was expected, the results of which would be reported. The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities added that a new framework assessing financial and safety risk was now live and Members would be receiving training on these subjects.

Members considered the balanced scorecard report for 2015/16 Quarter Three for Regeneration.

Members considered it appropriate to invite the Director of Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration to a future meeting to update the Scrutiny Committee on the regeneration of Swale. The Chairman suggested that Members should email the Policy and Performance Officer with their questions on this topic prior to the update.

A Member raised an issue on how Regeneration was measured on the scorecards. The Policy and Performance Manager agreed that the scorecards focussed on quantitative performance and some services were difficult to measure.

Members were concerned that the budget was underspent, understood the need for confidentiality in some aspects and sought clarification on the target on large projects on page 17 of the report.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, the Policy and Performance Manager and the Business Improvement Officer for their attendance.

731 DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report which set out the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual report 2015/16. He explained that the Committee was required by its terms of reference to report annually to Full Council on its work and outlined the Committee's powers and terms of reference. The Policy and Performance Officer highlighted the reviews carried out in 2015/16, drew attention to Appendix 1 on page 34 and welcomed Members' views.

The Chairman thanked the Policy and Performance Officer for his comprehensive report.

A Member suggested the following changes to the report:

Page 19, item 3.2 to read ".....Committee's work which **should** be shared..." and "...on the Council's website **and other social media and press releases.**"

Page 21 – a brief explanation of how Overview and Scrutiny operates differently from other Council Committees to be added.

Page 26, item 2.2 to read ".....since May **2015.**"

Page 29 – additional bullet point "funding of SBC by growth in tourism"

Resolved:

- (1) That the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/16 be agreed subject to the amendments agreed and submitted to Full Council for consideration.**

732 REVIEWS AT FOLLOW-UP STAGE AND LOG OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report and highlighted that a number of recommendations had been made over the years and the current report showed only the outstanding items, all of which related to last year's review of Mid Kent Improvement Partnership Governance and Communications.

Resolved:

- (1) That the report be noted.**

733 OTHER REVIEW PROGRESS REPORTS

The Chairman invited the coordinators of each review to provide an update.

Leisure and Tourism

The Lead Member for the Leisure and Tourism review advised that good progress had been made. Questionnaires had been sent out to organisations but only eight responses had been received. Little response had been received from

accommodation providers and this would be pursued. Eight visits had been made to organisations and visits to similar Authorities had been arranged. The Task and Finish Group were due to meet in two weeks to analyse information and major differences had already been noted in Faversham, Isle of Sheppey, Sittingbourne and the rural areas. Issues of infrastructure in Swale were the most common theme.

Development Management

Councillor Beart had been co-opted onto the Task and Finish Group and the Chairman invited him to update the Committee. Councillor Beart advised that they had met with the Head of Development Services and the Development Manager. Working practices at other Boroughs and delegation rates had been compared; representations from Parish and Town Councils and the content and detail in Planning Committee reports from consultees discussed. Visits to other authority's Planning Committees were planned and the group was waiting to receive further information from the Head of Development Services and the Development Manager.

Housing

The Lead Member for the Housing Task and Finish Group was absent from the meeting and a Member from the group advised that scoping had been carried out and the group were keen to progress. The Policy and Performance Officer offered his assistance with the group and Councillors Koffie-Williams and Clark offered their assistance in the review. The Chairman suggested the Leadership of the Task and Finish group may change in order for the group to progress the review.

734 WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17 - VERBAL REPORT

The Policy and Performance Officer gave a verbal update on the Work Programme 2016/17. He advised that due to the lack of progress made on the three reviews which the Committee agreed last year under item 8 of the Agenda, the Chairman had agreed to postpone the report to a future meeting.

A Member suggested that the three current reviews should be completed by September 2016 and that ideas for new topics should be made by Scrutiny Committee Members but informed by any suggestions made by Strategic Management Team and Cabinet Members.

The following topics were suggested to review in the future:

- Street cleansing;
- Regeneration update;
- Mid Kent Improvement Partnership update;
- Management of troubled families;
- Safeguarding.

Members were encouraged to submit their suggestions of reviews to the Policy and Performance Officer to circulate.

735 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

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 first of each month. Members went through the Forward Plan page by page.

Members sought further clarification on the items 'Payment Services Contract' and 'Improvements to the A2500' Lower Road on page 2 and asked if the CCTV Effectiveness Review item on page 6 could be called-in again as the previous call-in referred to the method of review not the results of the review? The Policy and Performance Officer agreed to investigate and provide a response. The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities advised that changes had been made after the previous call-in of the CCTV Effectiveness Review report and all Members could attend the Cabinet Meeting when the item was discussed again.

It was noted that the date of the Swale Joint Transportation Board meeting had changed to 4 July 2016 on page 7, and further detail was sought on the meaning of Award of Merchant Services Contract on page 8.

A Member requested that the Policy Development and Review Committee should consider the changes to the MKIP collaboration agreement as detailed on page 8 and another Member highlighted the addition of 'Key' in the Key Decision column on the Minutes of the Local Development Framework Panel on pages 11 and 17.

Members noted the Forward Plan.

Chairman

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