
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 2 October 2019 from 7.00pm - 8.48 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen (Chairman), Mike Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Simon Fowle (substitute for Councillor Pete Neal), Tim Gibson, Alastair Gould, James Hall, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes, Denise Knights, Lee McCall and Ken Pugh.

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Cameron Beart, Roger Clark, Alan Horton, James Hunt and Ken Rowles.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Richard Darby and Pete Neal and Roger Truelove (Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance).

262 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

263 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 September 2019 (Minute Nos.190 - 195) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

264 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Steve Davey declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 Other Review Progress Reports – Regeneration Schemes (other than Sittingbourne Town Centre) as he managed the George Public House, High Street, Sittingbourne.

During the discussion, Councillor Simon Fowle declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5 Performance Monitoring Report as he owned a beach hut at The Leas, Minster.

265 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Chairman welcomed the Policy and Performance Support Officer to the meeting, and advised that the Leader had given his late apologies.

The Policy and Performance Support Officer introduced the report which covered the first quarter of 2019/20 (April – June 2019), and explained that the new format which the new administration had implemented was more timely and transparent. The Chairman suggested that Members should have been informed of the new format in advance and a consultation of Members carried out.

The Policy and Performance Support Officer explained that there were 32 managed performance indicators measured monthly and quarterly and 20 corporate indicators, measured monthly.

The Chairman went through the report page by page.

In the discussion that followed, the following comments were made:

- Was it common for the first quarter to have a high number of red indicators?;
- clarification on how targets were measured;
- drew attention to the missed target for bin collection;
- more information and understanding on how targets worked and what was being done to address missed targets; and
- requested data be presented with more commentary.

In response, the Policy and Performance Support Officer explained that challenging but achievable targets were set annually and it took time to hit a new target, so it was common for targets to be Red in the first quarter. He agreed to find out more information on how targets were measured and to feedback the comments on the new format.

A Member drew attention to the information on the number of missed refuse and recycling bins on page 10 of the report, and said there was a lack of communication with residents. The Chairman said that the Scrutiny Committee could invite the Waste Team to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting to explain what action was being taken to address the issues.

A Member highlighted the missed targets in the Customer Service Centre on page 10 of the report, and said that there should be fewer phone calls due to the Transformation Project's encouragement of customers to use the Council's website. The Policy and Performance Support Officer explained that the increase in calls was partly caused by issues with waste collection. In the discussion that followed, a visiting Member said that the facility to report a missed bin collection did not always work properly. Another visiting Member explained that the process of reporting a missed bin collection was not the same as complaining about the service. A Member questioned whether a customer taking the advice of a recorded message was included in the abandoned call figures. The Policy and Performance Support Officer agreed to find out.

Table 2 (page 11)

The Policy and Performance Support Officer explained that there was no commentary in an Amber indicator as this was up to and within 5% of the target. The Chairman said that the Council Tax collection target would need to be monitored.

Table 3 (page 12)

A Member suggested that short-term sickness information should be added to compare to long-term sickness. The Chairman said that short-term sickness was more manageable. Members raised several issues including:

- were sickness levels linked to the turnover of staff and was this monitored?;
- what was the definition of long-term sickness?;
- were the reasons for sickness broken down and identified?; and
- expected the number of homeless to drop in future as homelessness was a focus of the new administration.

The Policy and Performance Support Officer explained that more detailed information was compiled by HR and was monitored by the Senior Management Team (SMT).

A Member said that Members had a responsibility for the welfare of staff and more detailed information should be shared, especially if there was a trend in a particular service. The Chairman said that information was available but did not need to be looked at by the Scrutiny Committee. A Member added that Heads of Services and SMT would monitor their staff's sickness levels.

Table 4 (page 12)

The Policy and Performance Support Officer explained that if the Planning targets were not achieved, a Council would lose its ability to make planning decisions and they would be made instead by the Secretary of State. He added that the Government last set the threshold in 2017 but were struggling to analyse the data and were behind with publishing a new threshold so Councils were managing themselves. There was a discussion on the number of major planning applications submitted and its influence on the target. A Member clarified that planning applications for 10 dwellings or above were considered to be a major planning application.

Table 5 (page 13)

The Policy and Performance Support Officer highlighted the 11 projects that the current administration had a keen focus on. Members raised issues including:

- More information on the criteria for red, amber and green targets was required;
- how was the frequency of reporting individual projects decided as the Local Plan Review should be monthly rather than quarterly?;
- clarification on CCTV Review – Part III; and
- lack of detailed information on projects.

The Policy and Performance Support Officer explained that the frequency of reporting on the Local Plan review was historical. Members agreed that it should be reported monthly.

A visiting Member explained that Part III of the CCTV review was the final part of the review as the current contract expired in March 2020. He added that the target was Green because the review was still ongoing and budget and staff costs were still being costed.

The Policy and Performance Support Officer explained that separate reports for each project were considered by SMT. Members agreed that a summary for each project should be included in future.

Table 8 (page 14)

The Policy and Performance Support Officer explained the process for reporting on Audit reviews carried out or ongoing.

Table 9 (page 15)

In response to a Member's question, the Policy and Performance Support Officer explained that the items were on a rolling programme.

Appendix 1

A Member draw attention to the short term and long term working days lost due to sickness absence.

The Chairman thanked the Policy and Performance Support Officer for his attendance.

Recommended:

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a summary of each project in the Project Status be included for future reports to Scrutiny Committee.

266 INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION IN SWALE

The Chairman asked Members for suggestions of which infrastructure providers to invite to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting. In the discussion that followed, Members made suggestions including:

- Gas providers to provide an update on gas works from Key Street, Sittingbourne to Medway and how the traffic management process would work;
- mobile networks – information on planned local projects and rural broadband;
- Southern Water/South East Water;
- UK Power networks – the increase in power cuts locally was noted;
- KCC – coordination of roadworks and Traffic Regulation Orders; and
- Highways England.

The Policy and Performance Officer reminded the Scrutiny Committee meeting that the focus should be on the future, to ensure residents' needs were met.

A Member said that work was ongoing for many utilities in the area and suggested that utilities be written to first to ask about future plans in the area, and, dependent

on responses, could attend a future Scrutiny Committee. Several Members highlighted the importance of coordination of works between Utility companies.

Recommended:

(1) That all Utilities be written to, to establish their future growth and maintenance plans in Swale.

(2) That Southern Water/South East Water and UK Power networks be invited to attend a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.

267 OTHER REVIEW PROGRESS REPORTS

Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration

The Chairman reminded Members that any questions should be circulated to Democratic Services in advance of the Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled for 10 December 2019, when the Cabinet Member and Officers would be invited to attend.

In response to a Member's comment that some responses were outstanding, a visiting Member said that an email with this information had been circulated to Members on 11 September 2019.

A visiting Member questioned the progress in the multi-storey car park as referred to on page 21 of the report as he said there were no changes, and asked what was installed and where?

There was a discussion on the timing of the update report as some information was out of date by the time of the Scrutiny Committee meeting. It was suggested that in future a tabled update with more up-to-date information be produced a day before the meeting.

Regeneration Schemes (other than Sittingbourne Town Centre)

The lead Member of the task group advised that a meeting was scheduled to take place and a progress update would be provided at the next Scrutiny Committee meeting. Councillor Carole Jackson agreed to join the group to balance out representation from the Faversham area.

268 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

A Member requested an up to date list of Cabinet Member's portfolios.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer drew Members' attention to the updated Forward Plan which was published the day before the Scrutiny Committee Meeting and advised Members of the changes from the plan in the Agenda pack.

269 URGENT BUSINESS REQUESTS

The Chairman raised some issues around the Special Project Fund. He questioned where information was available, what the criteria was and how the fund was being

operated, and he drew attention that some funding had already been allocated. Another Member added that each project should have a business plan for an audit trail. A visiting Member said there should be predicted outcomes. Members agreed that the relevant Cabinet Member and Officer for each project be invited to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Chairman raised the issue of non-collection of bins and what action was being taken to address it. In the discussion that followed, a visiting Member questioned whether other partners in Mid-Kent Services were experiencing the same issues. A Member said that the main issue was around the lack of communication. The Chairman said that the Cabinet Member and officers should be invited to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendation:

- (1) That the relevant Cabinet Member and Officer for funding allocated from the Special Project Fund be invited to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.***
- (2) That the Waste team be invited to attend a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.***

270 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Policy and Performance Officer drew Members' attention to the tabled revised Committee Work Programme.

Chairman

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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