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## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO COUNCIL**

To: **Council – 15 October 2015**

By: **Cllr D. Saunders, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **Thanet Wide**

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**Summary:** **The purpose of the report is to highlight some of the key activities that have been planned for by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel during the course of this municipal year 2015/16 and progress to date regarding implementation of the Panel's work programme.**

### **For Information**

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#### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 Members agreed at the Full Council meeting on 2 October 2014 that 'at each of its ordinary meetings, Council will receive a written report introduced by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel since the last Council meeting. Such a report will be subject to comment or debate in the usual way.'
- 1.2 The report will therefore provide the basis for debate by Members on on-going scrutiny activities and hopefully lead to sharing of views and ideas to enhance the scrutiny function at Thanet District Council.

#### **2.0 Current Situation**

- 2.1 The Panel set up three sub-groups for 2015/16. These are the Community Safety Partnership Working Party, Corporate Performance Review Working Party and Electoral Registration Process Review Task & Finish Group. The sub-groups met on 2 July, 6 July and 7 July 2015 respectively and agreed their work programme for the year.

#### **3.0 Community Safety Partnership Working Party**

- 3.1 This sub-group then met on 14 September and received a report from the Kent Police on the 'Performance Report on tackling the drivers of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.' They also received an update on the performance of the rest of the Thanet Community Safety Plan for 2016-16.
- 3.2 These presentations were informative as Members engaged the Partnership representatives (Kent Police) and were able to seek clarifications on a number of community neighbourhood safety issues, such as the initiatives on early intervention to tackle anti-social behaviour and repeat offending.

#### **4.0 Corporate Performance Review Working Party**

- 4.1 The working party met on 30 September to receive performance reports from the shared services arrangements that include EK Services, EK Human Resources and EK Housing. Members noted that the performance of all the shared services arrangements was generally satisfactory and that there were no major concerns. Members were advised that there were a number of key projects being undertaken to achieve further performance improvements in the delivery of shared services.
- 4.2 EK Services was conducting a review of the existing cost and financial model; the aim is to provide better granularity on the cost of managing and delivering the service to the partner local authorities and to allow accurate benchmarking and commercial pricing for potential new business, where applicable. EK Services were exploring other potential revenue sources that would bring in additional income to the shared services arrangements for the benefit of the partner local Councils.
- 4.3 EK Services were also progressing well with the implementation of two new technical projects. A single Revenues and Benefits system is being introduced that would bring all three partner Councils onto a common platform that will provide operational improvement, better customer self-serve options as well as delivering savings. A new single telephony system is being procured to replace the existing and obsolete current system.
- 4.4 EK Human Resources were in process of delivering a new Human Resources system that would make it easier for staff to access their personal information, submit claims and apply for leave. The system would also bring payroll in-house. This will provide major benefits to the users such as self-serve claims, reduce paper based transactions and deliver savings over the current payroll provider.
- 4.5 East Kent Housing were also working on a new single ICT system to serve the four partner local Councils. This would replace the current four separate ICT systems. EKH are concluding work with tenants and the Councils to agree a new set of commitments to be given to tenants for the next four years.

#### **5.0 Electoral Registration Process Review Task & Finish Group**

- 5.1 The sub-group has not met since my report but was scheduled to meet on 8 October 2015.

#### **OTHER KEY ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE PANEL**

#### **6.0 Review of the QEQM Hospital A & E Services**

- 6.1 The sub-group that was set-up by the Panel as a result of a referral of a petition to the Panel by Council on 4 December 2013 did not get the support required from the key external agencies to progress the review.

Due to lack of co-operation from outside agencies, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (OSP) recommended that Full Council gives consent to the Panel to refer the key questions of the petition regarding perceived changes to the QEQM Hospital A&E Services, to Kent County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 6.2 Full Council gave that consent on 23 April 2015. The letter from TDC to KCC was forward to the Chairman of the KCC health Overview & Scrutiny Committee, who has since responded. This issue is reported in more detail elsewhere on the Council Agenda.
- 6.3 At its meeting on 18 August, Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel agreed to maintain a watching brief on this matter.

## **7.0 Review of the TDC Artefacts Management**

- 7.1 This issue was carried forward from the previous municipal year. The Panel received an officer report and agreed to recommend to Cabinet that 'Cabinet that the application for external funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund be pursued as a matter of priority.' The recommendation will be considered by Cabinet on 22 October 2015.

## **8.0 Review of the Winter Gardens Building as a Major Events Venue**

- 8.1 The Panel also received an officer report on this issue in response to a Member request who raised some concern over design issues relating to the Winter Gardens as a venue for major events like hosting the local and parliamentary election counts. They had observed that the disabled access to the venue from the ground floor was not satisfactory. There was poor lighting at the venue and the street level signage for parking facilities was not that clear.
- 8.2 During debate of the issue on 18 August, Members were advised that Cabinet was currently reviewing the current tenancy contracts (for among other Council Commercial properties, the Winter Gardens) with a view to identifying ways to resolve the funding of major capital works required to refurbish the building to bring it up to current standards. This project team reports to a Cabinet Member responsible for Communities and the review work was likely to take about 3 months. The group is led by the Interim Director for Community Services.
- 8.3 The Panel was further advised that a report recommending a resolution to the Winter Gardens will be produced for consideration by Cabinet no later than December 2015. It might be advisable for Members to await that report and ascertain the position to be taken by Cabinet after which the Panel may be in a better position to decide whether there is a need to scrutinise the issue as proposed.
- 8.4 Members then agreed to maintain a watching brief on the issue and await the completion of the current tenancy agreements review being conducted by the Executive. They also agreed to task officers to write to Your Leisure Ltd requesting that they consider updating the street signage relating to the Winter Gardens to make it easy for the public to locate the venue from appropriate geographic locations in Margate.

## **9.0 Call-In of Cabinet Decisions**

- 9.1 Since my last report to Council, there have been no Cabinet decisions that have been called-in.

## **10.0 Cabinet Presentations at OSP Meetings**

10.1 The Panel invited and received a presentation from Councillor Wells, the Leader of Council on 'Proposed Corporate Priorities for 2015-19.' Members engaged the Leader in debate on the presentation and offered suggestions.

## **11.0 Corporate Implications**

### **11.1 Financial and VAT**

11.1.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **11.2 Legal**

11.2.1 There are no significant legal implications arising directly from this report. A presentation of the OSP Chairman's report to Full Council enables the Chairman to fulfil their duty as is required by the Council's Constitution.

### **11.3 Equity and Equalities**

11.3.1 There are no equity and equalities implications arising directly from this report.

## **12.0 Recommendation**

12.1 Members are invited to discuss and note the report.

## **13.0 Decision Making Process**

13.1 The Council Constitution allows the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel to present a report at each scheduled Council meeting for Members' information.

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## **Annex List**

None	N/A
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## **Background Papers**

Title	Details of where to access copy
None	N/A

## **Corporate Consultation Undertaken**

Finance	N/A
Legal	N/A