

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2009 at 7.00 pm at Council Chamber, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Robert W Bayford (Chairman); Councillors Harrison, Bruce, Crotty, Day, Hayton, Jarvis, Mrs Johnston, Lawson, Campbell, Mrs Roberts, Mrs Rogers and Watkins

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies from Councillor Nottingham whose substitute was Councillor Campbell.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes were approved by the Panel and signed by the Chairman.

4. MINUTES FROM EKJSC OR ITS SUB-COMMITTEES

Councillor Harrison said that the Waste Management Sub Committee looked at a number of issues that were subject to joint services proposals which included the collection of kitchen and garden waste. He said that the Sub Committee was going to look at the financial implications of the proposed joint services. John Bunnett said that the joint proposals were going to save money for the Council.

The draft minutes of the East Kent Waste Management Sub Committee meeting held on 15 January 2009 were noted.

5. PRESENTATION FROM JOHN BUNNETT

John Bunnett made a presentation on what Thanet District Council should be doing to provide services to residents under the current unfavourable economic environment. He said that Council revenue had decreased; including from planning applications land charges, port and marine had decreased with port and marine revenue having decreased by twenty five percent. That would negatively affect the quality of service Council was able to offer the residents as the Council would be forced to prioritise and cut back on some expenditure.

A survey conducted in 2008 indicated that Thanet residents' priorities were crime, environment (recycling, the coast), social housing and health. He said that some of these services were provided by other agencies and TDC's role was to advocate for expenditure by the relevant agencies. The current economic environment called for prudent spending and increased partnership in service delivery.

TDC played a lead role in the delivery of such services as street cleaning, waste collection, crime prevention (CCTV, Sport 4NRG, Hang Ten) and social housing management. Partnership working with lead agencies will create efficiencies that will benefit the Council and residents. TDC will aim to facilitate job creation, and investment in the district as the council had previously done with such projects as the Manston Business Park, Eurokent and Kent International Airport. But there had been major

challenges in getting the right balance between economic development and environmental protection.

The Council needs to prioritise its work and concentrate on its core business. The organisation had to embrace best practices in order to operate efficiently. Thanet District Council's performance has improved from 230th out of 238 District Councils to 110th in 2007/8 and in the top 50 in 2008/09.

Members said that council should undertake value for money tests on council activities to determine whether service delivery was of the expected quality. Members also said that charities that provided diversionary activities for teenagers were being charged high rental fees and called for a freeze on rental fees.

Members said that it was important for the Council to continue to communicate with the public and keep them informed of its activities. John Bunnett observed that the Panel had done some excellent cross party work through the Airport Working Party and said that consensus was the key to successful service delivery. Members suggested that the Council should learn more from better performing. They also said that council had to research on how deprivation was impacting on communities in the district and present the findings to government to seek additional funding.

6. TO APPROVE CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN FOR THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Sue McGonigal introduced the agenda item and said that there was planned work for the next twelve to twenty four months. The coastal position of Thanet District made it more prone to the effects of global warming. Sue McGonigal said that the Council was looking at ways to cutting fuel and energy expenditure in order to reduce the Council's impact on the environment. The issue had attracted a cross-portfolio interest and input.

Members supported the policy document but advised that the policy should be sustainable and that data being used to develop the policy should be accurate in order for the Council to derive savings from the new going green policy.

Members nominated Councillor Bruce to be the Overview and Scrutiny Panel Member on the Going Green Project Group who will be making reports back to the Panel.

7. RESPONSE TO AIRPORT MASTER PLAN - KENT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (KIA).

The Chairman of the Airport Working Party reported that the group accepted the recommendations made in response to the Kent International Airport Draft Masterplan.

Doug Brown said that the draft masterplan document is of a broad aspirational nature. But it should contain measurable objectives. The Council would like more information on how the airport is going to grow and how that growth is going to impact on the local communities. A revised masterplan should go back to the statutory consultees for re-consulting. The masterplan should receive Government and European Commission scrutiny and for that to happen it had to balance economic development and environmental protection. There was need to look closely at how infrastructure will cope with airport growth and that there was need to show that the current section 106 agreement was being adhered to.

Members of the Airport Working Party then asked to be informed of the results of the first consultation. They also asked the Panel to commend the recommendations to Cabinet. Panel Members said that that the local communities had particular concerns regarding night flying, flying over homes and environmental issues they wanted addressed.

Members agreed to commend the recommendations to Cabinet.

8. TO AGREE THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION DRAFT OF THE EAST KENT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY (APRIL 2009); TO ADOPT THE STRATEGY (JULY 2009)

The Sustainable Community Strategy Working Party Members reported that they had met to discuss the draft strategy. They said that they found the document to be generic and not specific to Thanet District.

Members noted the report.

9. REPORT OF THE EQUALITIES WORKING PARTY

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services said that TDC had planned to apply for level 3 by October 2009. She said that council would have to reschedule that application to December because the officer responsible for Equalities Projects had left council employment and had not been replaced. Sue McGonigal said that there was need to look at all the criteria that needed to be fulfilled in order for council to qualify for level 3. She said that all council departments were looking at the services they were offering to residents and assessing the impact of such services on ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups. Members of the Equalities Working Party requested to be informed of the new officer responsible for equalities projects in order for them establish contact and progress the work assigned to them by the Panel.

10. BROADCASTING COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Director of Customer Services and Business Transformation, Donna Reed said that the Council was considering a number of options regarding broadcasting council meetings. Option 1 was to broadcast live which was expensive because the Council's current equipment could not be used. Maidstone Council had opted for live broadcasting and the take up of that service was limited. Option 2 was for the Council to use something like YouTube which offered limited broadcasting time at £17,000 for 10 Hours per month excluding camera crew costs.

Members said that this was an expensive project under the current economic environment. Although the public had been asking for Council meetings to be broadcast, the planned relocation of the Council Chamber meant that expensive solutions were not viable in the current Chamber.

Members agreed that the only viable option regarding fulfilling the public's request was for the Council to broadcast meetings "on demand" rather than live, subject to further feasibility investigations being undertaken.

11. REVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 08/09

The Corporate Improvement and Budget Working Party reported that they had looked at the Council vision document. They said that they had agreed a programme for carrying out best value scrutiny. The Asset Management Working Party reported that they are continuing with a review of the 2008-09 asset disposal programmes. They said that they are looking at new ways of listing assets for disposal. The Museums Working Party said that there might be no more funding for museums as from 1 April 2009 and that winding down of the East Kent Maritime Trust was still on-going.

Members suggested that the Museums Working Party looks at how other councils are supporting museums. The Members of the Recycling Working Party had to keep an eye on recycling of glass as it might prove to be too costly for the residents as the costs would have to be passed on to them through council tax.

Councillor Mrs Johnston was appointed to the Allotment Working Party. Members agreed that the Ramsgate Sports Centre Swimming Pool Working Party should discontinue as the project had been put on hold due to lack of funding. The Sustainable Community Strategy Working Party was also discontinued as the consultation period had ended. The Recycling Working Party was asked to identify a way forward regarding its work or wind up at the next Panel meeting.

Members of the Thanet Works Working Party said that they had their first meeting. They said that there was a need to look at the legal issue relating to the project where Thanet Works funding had to be recovered if case a project failed to take off. Members expressed their concerns regarding the administrative costs of Thanet Works. Members of the Landlord Services Working Party said that the landlord services proposal was a work in progress.

Panel Members noted the report.

12. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan and the notes on the significant changes were noted.

13. Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Customer Services and Business Transformation, Donna Reed said that an aide memoire had been produced to be used as a reference for assessing the Council's turn-around performance and that it was a good news story. Members said that the aide memoire would be more useful considered together with future portfolio holders' presentations. Members also said that conducting scrutiny sessions in the community might be an idea worth pursuing.

14. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting will be on 12 May 2009.

Meeting concluded : 9.17 pm