

## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2018 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber - Council Offices.**

**Present:** Councillor D Saunders (Chairman); Councillors G Coleman-Cooke, Ashbee, Campbell, K Coleman-Cooke, Connor, Dexter, Martin and Parsons

**In Attendance:** Councillors: M Saunders and Townend

**147. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Councillor Dennis;  
Councillor Dixon;  
Councillor Falcon;  
Councillor Curran, substituted by Councillor Keith Coleman-Cooke.

**148. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**149. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Connor seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting that was held on 21 November 2017.

**150. EAST KENT HOUSING - PROPOSED NEW FORMAL RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRUCTURE**

Mr Matt Gough, Director of Customer Services (East Kent Housing) introduced the item and made the following points:

- The proposals for improving the engagement of residents were developed through the participation of tenants' representatives in workshops that were facilitated by an independent tenant advisor;
- The Internal EK Housing Improvement Board considered and agreed the proposals;
- Residents wanted a cohesive approach for engaging them;
- The proposed Residents Panel will have a strategic overview of processing views from residents and communicating these to management;
- This would be a new method of escalation of issues through the organisational structure;
- Once agreed there will be a need to make minor amendments to the current agreement with TDC.

In response to the presentation Members made comments and raised questions as follows:

- The process used by East Kent Housing was transparent;
- How was EK Housing going to monitor the new system;
- How was the organisation going to manage the influence of dominant individuals who sit on the Panel;

- Could the quorum of eight members of the Panel include at least one representative from each of the areas?

Responding to Member comments and questions Mr Gough said that:

- The selection criteria for individuals to sit on the Panel would include among other attributes; the ability to represent the views of residents at Panel meetings;
- EK Housing will provide skills training to the new Panel membership;
- Each area will select its own representative to sit on the main Panel;
- EK Housing would consider the suggestion from the Overview & Scrutiny Panel that 'the quorum of eight members of the Panel should include at least one representative from each of the areas.'

The Panel agreed the following:

1. To endorse the recommendation to invite an appropriate Councillor(s) to attend local group meetings to participate and observe, in relation to local council services;
2. To note the proposed implementation timescales.

#### **151. 2018-19 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2018-22**

Councillor Townend gave the opening remarks to the agenda item and made the following comments:

- The proposals in the draft budget report for 2018/19 were initially agreed for recommending to Council at Cabinet on 16 January;
- Members briefing sessions on the draft budget proposals were held;
- Cabinet had identified £300,000 savings in the proposals;
- It was worth noting that council tax for a Band D property was increased by £6.57 per year to £226.44;
- The budget proposals were being considered in a macro economic environment marked by significant uncertainties that included the still to be decided local government funding settlement and the fair funding review;

Tim Willis, Director of Corporate Resources then advised the meeting of a correction to Table 5 in para 4.13 as follows:

Total for 2019/20 should be £586,000 and not £712,000;  
 Total for 2020/21 should be £101,000 and not £338,000.

Members of the Panel then made comments and asked questions about the proposals in the budget report as follows:

- What percentage of the council resources in the budget was to be spent on street cleansing in Cliftonville?
- Was this allocation not having a detrimental effect on street cleaning work in other areas of the district?
- Business rates retention scheme – Would the council be better or worse off if it did not take part in the pilot scheme?
- Will there be a proportionate formula to the allocation of benefits to be derived from the pilot: - do the less affluent areas get more?
- Will TDC be able to scrutinise the scheme?
- Would Members be able to look at the scheme to ascertain whether Thanet would be as better off as the other Councils participating in the scheme?

- Is the extra revenue to be generated from the pilot going to be ring fenced or allocated to the general fund? If it is to be ring fenced, what would be the percentage allocated to economic growth?
- Business incentives – What Business incentives are offered to investors to attract inward investment into the district?
- Why was it the case that the extra income to be derived from council tax was only due to be allocated amongst the major preceptors and not to all other preceptors? Council tax discount from government used to be passed on to Parish Councils, but this had now been stopped. The Parish/Town Councils were now worse off. Therefore in future TDC should consider including minor preceptors;
- Could officers provide more information on business incentives;
- If Town/Parish councils could show evidence that as a result of some of the actions they had taken to attract investment (including additional street cleansing work), could they be allocated some of the revenue from the pilot scheme?

Tim Willis and Tim Howes (Director of Corporate Governance) gave the following responses to Member comments and questions:

- The issue regarding street cleansing was not directly related to the draft budget report before the Panel;
- Business rates retention pilot scheme – There was a ‘no detriment’ clause in the pilot agreement;
- Council will not be worse off by being in the scheme. They can only be better off. However the details of the scheme have not been agreed and are not yet ready for sharing;
- The pilot scheme has multiple benefits that include:
  - Reward based upon incentivising economic growth;
  - Some allocation to each district based on the population size and business rates base;
- Redistribution based on need and deprivation has not yet been agreed. However it should be noted that there is diversity between Kent districts regarding business rates base, growth, population and deprivation. Discussions are still on-going;
- The pilot scheme is for one year with a possible extension for another year. The memorandum of agreement is being finalised with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Modelling of the distribution of the funds cannot be complete until the principles are agreed across Kent;
- A proportion of the revenue will go towards economic growth, as this was part of the assumptions of the bid to participate in the pilot scheme. However no specific figures have been agreed as yet;
- Business incentives – The questions could not be answered in detail without input from the Head of Growth & Development and a written response will be provided to Members;
- Parish Councils could not directly access the revenue from the pilot scheme. However they could participate in some of the projects that TDC decided to implement in their respective jurisdictions;
- The role of scrutiny by Councils has not been discussed. This could be explored at an appropriate time of the pilot scheme and advice will be sought regarding that issue.

Members noted the report.

## **152. REVIEW OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2017/18**

A Member noted the lower than usual attendance at recent Panel meetings. Another Member requested that the electoral registration working group be re-constituted to

consider the voter registration progress as part of the preparation for the 2019 Local Government Elections. This would enable the Panel to determine the effectiveness of the voter registration exercise. The Chairman agreed to discuss that request and feedback to the Panel.

The Panel agreed the following:

- a) To reduce the size of sub groups from seven to six members, the UKIP group losing a seat. The proportionality of sub groups then being:  
3 UKIP;  
2 Conservatives;  
1 Labour.
- b) To note the report.

**153. FORWARD PLAN AND EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST FOR 10 JANUARY 2018 - 30 JUNE 2018**

A request was made by Members and officers agreed that in future the Panel received progress updates reports regarding the asset disposal programme.

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 7.55 pm