

## **FINANCE, BUDGET & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2019 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber,  
Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.**

**Present:** Councillor Campbell (Chairman); Councillors Connor, Martin, Messenger and S Piper

**In Attendance:** Councillor Shonk

### **36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Councillor Falcon;  
Councillor Lynda Piper;  
Councillor Parson, substituted by Councillor Messenger.

### **37. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

### **38. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

A member of the public spoke on the Ramsgate Port as a matter arising from the minutes under the Council procedure that permits public speaking.

The Panel agreed to remove the following comments from the minutes:

“One Member suggested that the £2 million being proposed as Council’s contribution to the Parkway Station project (to complement the £25 million being contributed by KCC) should be allocated to other uses. Another Member urged the Panel not to be critical of the much needed infrastructure investment that was coming into the district.”

Subject to the above amendments, Councillor Stuart Piper proposed, Councillor Connor seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting that was held on 24 January 2019.

### **39. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3 2018-19**

Hannah Thorpe, Head of Communications & Digital introduced the report and gave some highlights of the corporate performance for the various services. The key comments made are detailed below:

#### **A Clean and Welcoming Environment**

Members were advised that performance in this area was encouraging, with some performance highs in this quarter. This included the percentage of Environmental Service requests responded to on time, the percentage of household waste sent for recycling and the levels of graffiti being maintained at a low level. The council was now issuing more notices for graffiti and also offering services to private properties thereby attracting an income.

Although missed bins had dropped below the council’s target, members were asked to note that performance was very close to the ambitious target of 0.15% at 0.16%. This figure equated to 50 missed bins out of 18,000 daily collections which compares

positively at a national level. It was pointed out that this target will be reviewed for the next set of Corporate Priorities as the figure currently includes bins which had not been put out by residents and contaminated waste.

Although the level of detritus was above target, littering was below target and was a result of increased litter being dropped. Officers provided assurance that four new machines would be purchased in 2019-20 to help address this problem, along with increased messaging to the public about the shared responsibility.

### **Supporting Neighbourhoods**

Members were informed that the measure monitored on empty properties was another performance high this quarter, with 143 properties being brought back into use over the past 12 months. Likewise, the rolling 12 month figure for homeless cases prevented by the Council was also a record high due to access to discretionary housing payments and piloting a dedicated landlord liaison officer.

Although the average figures for the time taken to make homelessness decisions and average days in hotel accommodation remained below target, members were asked to note the actual figures (the grey line in the graph) which showed a significant improvement which was expected to reflect positively in the annual figure soon.

Other than customer satisfaction with repairs, the East Kent Housing measures were below target. However Members were reminded that Cabinet had adopted an improvement plan to monitor and assist with this performance.

### **Promoting Inward Investment and Job Creation**

Major planning application figure had gone down in the period under review and was now red. This was in part due to a significant rise in the number of major applications. Members were reminded that the Council's performance of 73% was still above the national target of 70%, and was a reflection of the ambitious targets set by the Council.

### **Statistical Information**

Generally speaking it was an improving picture with six measures now at or exceeding target and one less red target. Positives also included the measure around complaints improving and moving from red to amber, with the figure of 89% this quarter now very close to the target of 90%.

Although sickness and Freedom of Information requests were still below target, performance was moving in the right direction and will continue to be monitored closely. Council Tax collected had dropped to amber, but reassurance was provided that day to day collection is on track and that performance matched the monthly profile expected.

Ms Thorpe said that as the corporate performance plan was coming to the end of the 2015-19 plan period, officers were working on ideas to continue to improve performance information. This would include the use of clearer language within any reports but also aiming to move more live performance information online.

One Member suggested and the Panel agreed that officers for different services would be invited to future meetings of the Panel to respond in detail to questions regarding performance for their respective service areas. This was particularly so for the presentation of the final quarter performance report.

Responding to the presentation, members made further comments and asked questions as detailed below:

- Missed bins could be contributing to the detritus and litter in the streets. Why were the statistics for litter and detritus different?

- What was the Council doing to improve the staff welfare and help reduce number of sickness days?
- The performance figure for the dumped rubbish (fly tipping) was problematic. Why was Council not considering installing CCTV on lamp posts in problem sites for dumped rubbish to catch offending individuals? The cost of purchasing and monitoring the CCTV would be outweighed by that of regularly collecting dumped rubbish;
- 143 Empty Homes brought back into use is an impressive result. In relation to the 'Deceased Property' figure – The figure was high and had doubled. What was the average waiting time frame whilst the property was in probate? What could Council do to assist with the situation?
- Although businesses coming to invest in Thanet had increased, the employment figures had gone down. This might be because it was mostly small businesses that were investing in the district. What was the average size of the new businesses in terms of the people employed by these companies? What was the Council doing to attract larger businesses into the area?
- The Council tenants rent arrear totals were further away from the target than before. This was due in part to the problems linked to Universal Credit and rent increases. Was the Council going to manage the deficit created by these arrears from own resources or was the Council going to approach the government for assistance in the short term?
- The FOI performance was still low. The Panel had been assured at previous meetings that measures had been put in place to improve performance in this area. Council had a statutory duty to meet performance in this service area. The Panel did acknowledge the increased volume of FOI requests and the fact that the Service was under resourced;
- Members expressed their appreciation of the significant amount of work that went into preparing the detailed performance report;
- With regards to street cleansing, was there a schedule of when the mechanical sweepers would be cleaning the different areas in the district, particularly the main tourist attraction areas?
- Officers were complemented for the easy to use online council tax form.

Hannah Thorpe and Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager responded to queries as follows:

- The mechanical sweepers performed well at cleaning up litter and detritus. However there were times when some sections of the streets were inaccessible due to parked cars. In problem street routes, supervisors followed up on street cleansing teams to monitor the work;
- Sickness was monitored at both Service and Corporate levels. The Council had acquired the services of a new occupational health provider to offer support to council staff;
- The suggestion of installing CCTV cameras at sites that that problem areas for dumped rubbish would be forwarded to the Head of Operational Services for consideration. This suggestion could also be brought up at the 05 March Coffee Evening which would be hosted by Operational Services. It was also worth noting that the Council had recently upgraded CCTV facilities which had greatly improved the quality of images captured. If the technology could be used for lamp posts that could be a successful deterrent;
- With regards to the schedule of mechanical sweepers, officers were looking at better ways of communicating the message to the public about the work of these sweepers.

The Panel agreed that managers for different Services be invited to the April Panel meeting to provide detailed responses arising from the end of year quarter 4 report, provided that the report was ready for that meeting.

Officers agreed to forward any questions that had not been fully answered to the appropriate department for responses.

Thereafter Members noted the report.

**40. REVIEW OF THE FINANCE SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/19**

One Member requested detailed information regarding the conditions set out in the Ramsgate Port lease between the Council and Bretts. The Member sought to get a clearer understanding of the tenant and landlord legal obligations in maintaining and or developing the Port.

Another Member offered to take up the query with the Leader of Council at a planned one to one session in the coming days and share the response with Panel members.

Councillor Martin proposed, Councillor Messenger seconded and Members agreed the following that:

The Leader of Council be invited to the next meeting of the Panel to present the independent legal information on the contract terms between the Council and Bretts.

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Piper seconded and the Panel agreed that:

Councillor Ashbee, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance & Coastal Development be invited to the next meeting of the Panel to make a presentation on 'Regeneration, economic development and the management of foreshores.'

**41. FORWARD PLAN & EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST FOR PERIOD 09 JANUARY 2019 - 30 JUNE 2019**

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 7.55 pm