

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2019 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Peter Campbell (Chairman); Councillors Albon, Boyd, Everitt, Huxley, L Piper, Roper, Rusiecki, M Saunders, Scott, Tomlinson and Yates

In Attendance: Councillors: Ashbee, S Piper and D Saunders

167. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Councillor L. Wright;
Councillor Savage, substituted by Councillor M Saunders;
Councillor Whitehead, substituted by Councillor Yates;
Councillor Constantine, substituted by Councillor Huxley.

168. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

169. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING - FINANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

The minutes were taken as read.

170. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING - EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY PANEL

The minutes were taken as read.

171. ESTABLISH THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019/20

Mr Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager introduced the item and advised the Panel to suggest items to add to the new work programme for 2019/20. Members were reminded to take into consideration the draft terms of reference for the re-established Panel that replaced the previous two Panels that were responsible for the scrutiny function in 2018/19.

The Chairman then asked for Member contributions who in turn gave the following suggestions:

- Request the Leader of Council to make a presentation on the developments at the Ramsgate Port and Harbour. Thereafter the Leader would also respond to questions that would have forwarded to him ahead of the meeting as well as to any supplementary questions arising from the debate;
- Conduct a review that would look at the developments of Berths 4/5 at the Ramsgate Port. Answers should be sought to such questions as 'Was the Council legally obliged to carry out development work on Berths 4/5?' and 'Was an environmental impact assessment conducted as part of the project design?'
- Information on the Port could be provided through a Members Briefing presentation as there was one such session coming up in June.

Councillor S. Piper spoke under Council Procedure 20.1.

Councillor L. Piper proposed, Councillor Rusiecki seconded and the Panel agreed that the Leader of Council be invited to the next meeting of the Panel on 18 July to present on the development work going on and the future of the Ramsgate Port.

Members were requested to forward their key questions to the Chairman within the next two weeks of this May meeting. They were also further advised to request for any documents relevant to the subject that could assist the discussion.

The Panel further agreed the following topics and issues for scrutiny:

1. Service review of Operational Services at the 29 August meeting;
2. Review proposals for the fees and Charges at the 22 October meeting;
3. Service review of the Corporate Governance and Coastal Development service area and the specific topic to be scoped out after the meeting. This was expected to be considered at the 19 November meeting;
4. Conduct a scrutiny review of the issue regarding ‘Travellers in Thanet.’ The question would be further detailed after the meeting. A five member task and finish group was set up to conduct the in-depth study and membership would be as follows:
 - Councillor Albon;
 - Councillor Roper;
 - Councillor L. Piper;
 - Councillor Tomlinson;
 - Councillor Yates.

172. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 2018-19

Hannah Thorpe, Head of Communications and Digital introduced the report and advised the Panel that this was the final quarter of performance against the council’s four year Corporate Plan. Although there were some areas for focus, overall performance had improved with 20 of the 29 indicators either on target or within 5% of the target.

Within the first priority ‘a Clean and Welcoming environment’, positive performance was highlighted with Environmental Health requests, low levels of graffiti and low levels of detritus all exceeding their targets. Waste sent for recycling was now almost at target and at the highest level of the Corporate Plan period and although below target, the levels of missed bins compare favourably with national performance and equate to 99.7% successful collections - with 60 misses out of 18,000 daily collections. Streets with litter below acceptable levels had decreased slightly since last quarter; however the amount of litter being dropped is a concern. Members were updated on new machines including an electric barrow and backpacks which are being trialled, increasing education campaigns with the public, continuing with enforcement action and installing new larger bins in key locations.

Within Supporting Neighbourhoods, there continued to be excellent performance with empty properties, improving living conditions and the number of homelessness cases prevented which is now at 150 against the target of 76 - a performance period high.

Although the rolling 12 month figure for homelessness decisions and days in hotel accommodation are below target, members were asked to note the actual figure marked in grey on the graph which demonstrated an exceptional improvement in performance and the best figures of the four year plan period. Other than customer satisfaction with repairs the measures covered by East Kent Housing were below target, but members were reminded of the robust improvement plan in place along with regular monitoring to address this.

Within Inward Investment members were asked to note the improvement in performance of the major planning applications determined. Despite an increase in the number of major applications from 38 to 50, performance was now at 80% just one percentage point below the target.

The performance figures for the Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and sickness had seen significant improvements since the last quarter. A new FOI processing system had been put in place which was hoped would continue to improve the performance.

The Council is now developing new corporate priorities and new performance measures will be identified as part of this process.

Members appreciated the detailed information in the performance report. They further queried whether the Council had adequate resources assigned to tackle the current challenges regarding litter and waste collection. Members also wanted to know whether stress was a factor of staff sickness figures. The statistics for starters and leavers had grown. Members asked which departments had experienced growth in staffing numbers. They were concerned by the increase in crime figures (particularly crime against the person).

The Panel commended the Empty Homes Team for the performance in preventing homelessness in the last quarter.

Responding to Member queries, Madeline Homer, CEx and Hannah Thorpe said the following:

- The Director of Operational Services was hosting a workshop with members to familiarise themselves with the Operational Services directorate and would be responding to the Member queries;
- Work is currently underway on a more effective approach for picking up litter dropped accidentally during waste and recycling collection;
- The Council through the Margate Task Force was working as part of a multi agency approach to support the work of Kent police to reduce crime in the area.

After the debate, Members noted the report.

173. FORWARD PLAN & EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 8.15 pm