

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 August 2022 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Rev. Stuart Piper (Chair); Councillors Fellows, Austin, Boyd, Currie, Coleman-Cooke, Huxley, Keen, Leys, Pat Moore, Paul Moore, Tomlinson, Wing and Wright

In Attendance: Councillors J Bayford, R Bayford, Ashbee, Bailey, Garner, D Saunders, M Saunders, Savage, Whitehead and Yates

398. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Rattigan, substituted by Councillor Wright.

399. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were declarations interest made at the meeting.

400. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Panel Chair gave an update to members regarding the invitation sent out to Stagecoach, inviting their representatives to attend a Panel meeting to discuss the decision by the company to discontinue some bus routes in Thanet. Councillor Piper said that no responses had been received from either Stagecoach or the KCC Cabinet Member responsible for transport. One member expressed disappointment at the lack of a response by invited guests. The Chair then summed up the discussion by indicating that he would be writing to Stagecoach to ask for an update.

Councillor Tomlinson proposed, Councillor Coleman-Cooke seconded and the Members agreed that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 21 July 2022 were a correct record.

401. NET ZERO STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Councillor Bob Bayford, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Special Projects introduced the item and made the following key points:

- The proposed strategy had been reviewed by the Climate Emergency Cabinet Advisory Group;
- This was a detailed report which had taken some time to put together;
- The strategy had gone through a number of internal council reviews before being brought to the first formal meeting;
- The Panel was being asked to recommend the proposed strategy to Cabinet.

Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- Members congratulated officers for drafting the detailed strategy;
- How could the council put in place tougher conditions on activities and transactions where the council had partial control, like with contractors for the Levelling Up Projects or the Parkway?
- Some new housing development work and new estates were being developed away from the existing transport network. There was a need to think about how

the council could influence how these developments could factor in the reduction of the carbon footprint;

- Was the strategy document a dynamic document that could be updated in response to emerging issues in order to enable the council to respond to those issues (for example issues relating to Manston Airport, Parkway Station and Ramsgate Harbour);
- How would the council influence individual residents to do their part in reducing carbon emission?
- Did the council share knowledge and experiences with other councils?

Councillor Bob Bayford, Dr Scott, Bob Porter and Chris Blundell responded to Member comments and questions as follows:

- Dr Scott will work with the Procurement team to ensure that conditions regarding the requirements of the net zero strategy were included in council contracts;
- The strategy would be continuously reviewed and updated to address any emerging issues along the way;
- Climate consideration would be added to the council's corporate report template to ensure that this issue is factored in the council's decision making process;
- A lot of work had been carried out with consultants regarding decarbonisation in housing development. The council was going to submit a bid for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund for Phase 2;
- The council was working on a housing strategy that would factor in decarbonisation in housing development;
- Council was also using the "No regret approach" to adopting new technology which means that TDC would not rush to use untested technology in housing development;
- Within the Local Plan, the council declared a state of climate emergency. When it comes to reviewing the Plan, further discussions will be had regarding decarbonisation;
- TDC was part of the Climate Change Network Group, where information is shared with KCC and other local councils.

The meeting was adjourned at 19.25hrs

The meeting resumed at 19.28hrs.

On resumption of the meeting Members recommended the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan to Cabinet.

402. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

Councillor Piper, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel advised Members on the framework for discussing the councillor call for action request that had been brought before the Panel by Councillor Whitehead. The Chair indicated that the Panel ought to consider the options in the covering report as they progress the call for action request and further advised the meeting that a wider report on housing delivery in Thanet was going to be considered by Cabinet on 22 September 2022. Councillor Piper said that Members had to be satisfied that all other processes for requesting that action be taken on an issue had been exhausted.

The Chair then invited Members who had requested to speak under Council Procedure Rule 20.1 to speak and the following Members spoke:

Councillor Bailey;
Councillor Garner;
Councillor Smith;

Councillor Yates
Councillor Bob Bayford.

Those Members speaking under Council Procedure Rule 20.1 made the following comments:

- Members had received a number of calls from residents regarding the pressures families were under regarding the unaffordable rents they were facing;
- They also cited the lack of social housing in the district and the challenges the council was facing in providing affordable housing to residents;
- There was some displacement of families due to sharp rise in rentals;
- The right to buy scheme was also taking away from the social housing market;
- There was a need to come up with a council wide strategy to deal with these issues;
- There were a number of Section 21 Notices that residents were getting, leading to displacement of households due to no fault of their own;
- This had forced some households to be placed in temporary accommodation often outside the district;
- AirBnB had increased dramatically in Thanet, thereby taking away from the stock for low income households;
- Members expressed their support for the councillor call for action.

The Chair invited a member of the public to speak and Ms Sarah Pengelly made the following comments:

- The Citizens Advisory Bureau was concerned about what was happening to some households affected by the sharp rise in rentals in the district;
- Tenants need security from astronomical rises in rental costs;
- The clapping for essential services workers that was done during the pandemic should now be translated into action;
- The Bureau was ready if asked to write up a case study to share with the council.

Councillor Jill Bayford, Cabinet Member for Housing, advised the meeting that she had written to the government (to the Minister of Housing) asking for action on this matter in February 2022 and got a reply in July 2022. The request to the government was for support for the acquisition of land to develop affordable housing. A housing delivery report was going to cabinet on 22 September and this request for action was therefore not appropriate as it doesn't acknowledge the work done by the Housing team to date.

Councillor Whitehead then made her submission and said the following points:

- The request for action was not a reflection on the Housing team but rather about external agencies;
- Funding for housing development by councils was decreasing continuously and this had affected most local councils;
- Calling on all external partners to attend a full hearing would help come up with how this issue could be resolved and there was no fault in asking for help;
- Section 21 evictions were affecting a number of families;
- In June this year, 187 families were put in temporary accommodation, with 94 of them placed outside Thanet;
- It was worrying that the council was now used to not getting a response from government and the council needed to do more;
- The issues being faced by Thanet residents need to be addressed by policy makers and not for the Housing team to cope with the situation.

Bob Porter, Director of Place said that officers worked extremely hard under the circumstances and it was up to the Panel how they would like to progress the Councillor

Call for Action request. It was worth noting that a report on Housing delivery in Thanet was going to be discussed by Cabinet on 22 September 2022.

The Chair outlined to the Panel how the request could be progressed. He said that Cabinet would be considering a report on Housing delivery in the district at the meeting on 22 September 2022 and Members ought to take that into consideration when deciding how to progress with this matter. Councillor Piper thanked Councillor Whitehead for the detailed work she put into coming up with the councillor call for action submission. He also said that in submitting this request there must be a reasonable expectation that the council could come up with a solution.

The Chair acknowledged that Councillor Whitehead had raised this matter with the Housing department, Cabinet and Full Council in an appropriate way and had been responded to correctly. The council could not compel private companies on how they should run their businesses. The Chair further said the Panel existed to improve the decisions and actions taken by the council within the council's remit. The issue raised by Councillor Whitehead was not new and had not recently arisen. He said that it would be difficult to justify hosting a full hearing when it was extremely unlikely that they would be able to find a solution, when such resources could be used for housing needs. Councillor Piper concluded that the call for action request was not appropriate.

Councillor Piper proposed and Councillor Fellows seconded that the Panel did not discuss the call for action request.

Councillor Huxley proposed and Councillor Wing seconded that the Panel adopts option 4.1 in the covering report which is that "the Panel could opt to debate the call for action request and agree to conduct a full hearing at an agreed future Panel meeting."

The Panel agreed to take a recorded vote.

Not to Debate the Motion

Councillor Leys
Councillor Boyd
Councillor Paul Moore
Councillor Wright
Councillor Fellows
Councillor Tomlinson
Councillor Coleman-Cooke
Councillor Piper

To Debate the Motion

Councillor Huxley
Councillor Pat Moore
Councillor Keen
Councillor Currie
Councillor Wing
Councillor Austin

The proposal that the councillor call for action request be not debated was **AGREED**.

403. REVIEW OF OSP WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23

Responding to a question from a member of the Panel Councillor Currie, Chair of the Collaboration Working Party gave a brief update of the work activities of the sub group. He said that the working party had met once and agreed on the work to be undertaken and that a number of meetings to gather information were being arranged.

On a separate note but related to collaborative working a Member thanked the council for inviting Ramsgate Town Council to a Members Briefing held on 23 August.

Members noted the report.

404. FORWARD PLAN & EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 8.48 pm