
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 29 April 2014**

By: **Councillor Gideon, Overview & Scrutiny Panel Chairman**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **Thanet Wide**

Summary: **This agenda item allows the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to outline the achievements of the Panel covering the period 2013/14 and report to Council on the decision made by the Panel on possible work programme items for 2014/15.**

For Decision

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Thanet District Council's Overview & Scrutiny Panel is entitled to make an annual report to the Annual Meeting of Council. This report summarises the key achievements of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel during 2013/14 and indicates the Panels' suggested priorities for 2014/15.
- 1.2 The Panel unanimously agreed at the beginning of the 2013/14 to disregard political proportionality when setting out the membership of the working parties/task & finish groups. The report will demonstrate the significant contributions made by the scrutiny process to effective decision making by Thanet District Council.

2.0 Some Scrutiny Project Highlights in 2013/14

- 2.1 Cabinet continued with the approach that engaged the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in pre-decision scrutiny.
- 2.2 The Panel requested officers in Democratic Services to research and produce an exploratory report on "Possible Review of Council Procedure Rules, Particularly in Relation to Opportunities for Backbench Members' Participation at Meetings of Full Council." This report was considered by Members on 14 January 2014. A further, more detailed options report was considered by the Panel on 11 March 2014 and Members agreed that the report be referred to the Constitutional Review Working Party for further consideration.
- 2.3 The Constitutional Review Working Party is due to consider the options in the report on 1 May 2014.
- 2.4 Members also carried out scrutiny investigations into issues relating to the Pleasurama site development agreement and Transeuropa debt. More detailed comments are indicated in the sections that cover the task & finish group activities.

3.0 Summaries of Working Party Achievements/Recommendations

3.1 Community Safety Partnership Working Party

3.1.1 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

- a. There was a welcome decline in reported incidents in Thanet but there still were the highest recorded incidents in Kent. This included Criminal Damage incidents which have increased in Thanet against a backdrop of declining incidents in the rest of Kent.
- b. There are 9 actions within the Community Safety Plan under ASB, 6 have been completed 3 will not be achieved by fiscal year end this is explained by changes to ASB legislation. The 3 are:

AS01: Restorative Practice Clinics - new protocols are being prepared;

AS04: Streamline ASB information for each agency - New ASB toolkit in prep;

AS07: Victim Support project based on BRAVE model introduced in Birmingham; meetings have taken place training programme to be established.

3.1.2 Domestic Abuse

- a. There had been an increase in reported incidents in Thanet in line with rest of Kent. This increase was a double edged sword, police informed the Working Party that they were having greater success in reaching the most difficult to reach groups with more, mainly women, coming forward and reporting incidents of abuse. A domestic abuse worker had now been deployed with a police officer on reported incidents this post being part funded by TDC.
- b. There are 6 actions under this priority; 5 completed with 1 still on-going to reach completion by June 2014.

3.1.3 Violent Crime

- a. Violent Crime was viewed as defined by the individual against whom the crime had been committed. There had been a dramatic rise in Thanet of 32% which is also reflected across Kent at 30%.
- b. This has been explained in part by the now more rigorous recording regime in place across Kent. However this is a worrying trend and the concerns of the Working Party were made known to the Police.
- c. There were 6 actions under this priority and all had been completed.

3.1.4 Substance Misuse

- a. There had been a small decrease in reported incidents in Thanet against an increase in the rest of Kent. A "Reduce the Strength" Campaign was to be piloted in Ramsgate and would be launched on 13 March 2014.
- b. There were 8 actions under this priority and all had been completed.

3.1.5 Acquisitive Crime

- a. there had been an increase of 17.5% of reported incidents in Thanet against an increase of only 4% in Kent. The Working Party found this disappointing and somewhat alarming. The Police explained that again this was in part due to a change in their recording methodology but of course this methodology also applies across the rest of Kent where the increase of reported incidents was less than one quarter the increase in Thanet.
- b. There were 7 actions under this priority, 5 had been completed and 2 were on-going but would be completed by end of March 2014. The two on-going activities were as follows:
 - AC04: Smart water marking - till end of year;
 - AC05: Increase awareness of personal safety and bogus callers - till end of year.

3.1.6 Community Safety Plan for 2014/15

- a. Next year's Safety Plan is under construction. It will concentrate on the same five priorities included in this year's Safety Plan which are ASB, Domestic Abuse, Violent Crime, Substance Misuse and Acquisitive Crime but will add two more; which are highlighted in section 8.0 and section 9.0 of the report.

3.1.7 Road Safety

- a. The Kent Fire and Rescue Services will lead on a campaign to create more awareness of road safety in Kent. The issue regarding road safety was raised by the respondents to the Kent Crime and Victimisation Survey and at residents meetings.

3.1.8 Public and Agency Engagement

- a. The Community Safety Partnership felt that they should have a greater role in shaping the publicity about actions and activities they are providing in Thanet for Thanet's residents.

3.1.9 Kent Police – Request for A Members Briefing

- a. The sub-group was advised at the meeting on 3 March 2014 that the Police in Kent (and therefore Thanet) are to undergo a re-organisation that would be implemented around the end of June to early July this year. The Chairman of the Working Party requested the Police to hold an all TDC Members Briefing when details of the pending re-organisation had been finalised. If agreeable such a briefing session would need to be provided to Members before the re-organisation was implemented.
- b. The Police agreed to the request.

3.2 Corporate Performance Review Working Party

3.2.1 Summary of Activities

- a. The working party received presentations from senior Council officers and the Director of the East Kent Services. At one of the sub-group meeting Members

considered a report on the 'Review of Corporate Performance for the financial year up to July 2013' and then proposed the following:

- i. Designing of a sustainable business model for the Ramsgate Harbour and Marina; that would increase tourist attraction rather than just focusing on the harbour and marina related activities;
 - ii. In the forward to the corporate performance report there should some text to explain that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) did not cover all the Council activities;
 - iii. Contextual performance indicators ought to be reported to Members regularly throughout the year;
 - iv. Council ought to have a plan of how the Council was going to engage potential external partners. The KPIs would reflect the Council's effort in trying to implement that engagement plan;
 - v. Performance reports should capture information on significant activities and initiatives (with both formal and informal community groups) that were being undertaken by Council. The value of outcomes of such initiatives (to include in-kind initiatives) to be measured;
 - vi. Use of a comparator for some of the indicators;
 - vii. Provide an introductory text in the report that offers an explanation of what Key Performance Indicators mean and their purpose in the performance report;
 - viii. refine some of the KPIs to aim to impact on influencing the issues that are debated and decided upon;
 - ix. Find a way of measuring Council's influence on its partners in other initiatives like the Margate Task Force;
 - x. Staff restructure should take into consideration succession planning in order for the organisation to retain in its "institutional memory" relating to among other things, the relationships Council has with community groups;
- b. The working party should continue to work through 2014/15 and provide recommendations to improve the performance of the Council.

3.3 Electoral Registration Process Review Task & Finish Group

3.3.1 Summary of Activities

- a. The task & finish group met twice in 2013/14 and Members received update reports from Democratic Services. Despite an additional £25k being earmarked for the new style canvass in 2012, overall the canvass budget for 2012 had been exceeded by just over £6k. The reasons for that were; Canvassers' wages costs and postage costs. But the positive side of the increased expenditure was that it directly resulted from the 8% increase in the overall registration rate.
- b. Some of the highlights of the reports were that out of the 44,693 scanned postal responses 19,000 had no changes to them, meaning that 42% of these paper returns could have been made via the internet or telephone registration confirmation facilities instead, thus reducing some of the expenditure. The sub-group suggested that this could feature in a number of press releases outlining the benefits of completing the

form earlier by using the internet, telephone and SMS registration confirmation facilities (to help keep the costs of the canvass down) but at the same time emphasise the importance of registering to vote.

- c. The proposed 2013 canvass was approved and the budget position in 2013/2014 was noted, but any increases in canvassers' wages would have a detrimental impact on the budget because there was very little spare capacity in the budget.
- d. Members were briefed on the implementation plans for Individual Electoral Registration (IER). They were provided with an update on the estimates of the resources needed to implement IER and discussions on the funding made available from the Cabinet Office.
- e. The Group supported Electoral Services' initial bid for maximising registration during the canvass. Unfortunately, the initial bid was unsuccessful. The impression was certainly given that the national pot of funding available for the bids was substantially lower than Councils had been led to believe, and indeed was less than Cabinet Office had been led to believe. It was suggested that the funding available was perhaps only one-third of the amount originally announced by Cabinet Office. Far more Councils had submitted bids than Cabinet Office had been anticipating. As a result, the funding available was very heavily over-subscribed.
- f. Members agreed to the second round bids for maximising registration. It was felt that these bids were more targeted and therefore stood a better chance of success.
- g. Members agreed a communication strategy and implementation plan for electoral registration and the canvass.
- h. The Group agreed to a work programme (over a period of four meetings). In view of the new voter registration process currently underway, the sub-group would need to maintain a monitor the process as it is being implemented in 2014/15 and provide intermittent comments to improve the process.

3.4 QEQM Hospital A & E Review Task & Finish Group

3.4.1 Summary of Activities

- a. This sub-group was established on 14 January 2014 and has only met once to agree the terms of reference and work programme. The Group was awaiting the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed clinical strategy for East Kent.
- b. The sub-group would need to be reconstituted in 2014/15 in order to complete the work set out for it by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

3.5 TDC Artefacts Management Review Task & Finish Group

3.5.1 Summary of Activities

- a. The task & finish group met three times during this municipal year. Members considered reports on cataloguing, care and conservation of the artefacts collection.
- b. The main challenges identified by the Group were in relation to increasing the connectivity between the museum and Turner Contemporary and other places of interest to increase footfall; maintaining the condition of the artefacts and reducing the

time required to complete the new catalogue. The sub-group agreed to forward to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel the following recommendations:

1. That the Task and Finish Group support the maintenance of the current museum budget and the accessing of external funding, including Heritage Lottery Fund;
 2. That the sub-group supports an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and then within six months' time; receive an officer report back to the task & finish group on whether the application had been successful or not;
 3. In the event that the application was not successful Members would need to agree the way forward in determining the appropriate action to be undertaken in order to secure additional resources for the Margate Museum project.
- c. The sub-group still has got some work to complete especially regarding ensuring that a successful bid is made by the Council to the Heritage Lottery Fund to increase the budget for managing the artefacts collection. This work would need to be undertaken in 2014/15.

3.6 Pleasurama Site Development Review Task & Finish Group

3.6.1 Summary of Activities

- a. Members of the sub-group met four times and took evidence from the Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Operational Services and senior Council Officers. They drafted recommendations which were forwarded to Cabinet by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel as is reflected in the summary of OSP recommendations in Annex 3 of the report.

3.7 Transeuropa Debt Review Task & Finish Group

3.7.1 Summary of Activities

- a. The Sub-Group met five times, gathered evidence for their review from current and previous Leaders, Cabinet Members for Financial Services and senior Council officers. They drafted recommendations which were adopted by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel on 11 March 2014 and Cabinet on 3 April 2014. Details of the recommendations are reflected in Annex 3 of the report. The sub-group was decommissioned on 11 March 2014

4.0 Cabinet Portfolio Presentations

- 4.1 The Panel continued to engage Cabinet by inviting Portfolio Holders to make presentations on subjects generated by the Panel, linking such presentations to the portfolio holder's terms of reference and anticipated executive decisions as reflected in the published Forward Plan and Exempt Cabinet Report List.
- 4.2 These presentations provided an opportunity for the Overview & Scrutiny Panel to feed into the policy development process and support Cabinet Members to develop responsive and appropriate solutions for the economic and social wellbeing of Thanet residents. The Panel was able to engage Cabinet Members and lead officers in discussion on key scrutiny issues and this proved to be a useful platform for the Panel to play a "critical-friend" role to the Executive.

4.3 The Cabinet Members were able to share information and exchange views on a number of strategic issues that included the Housing Strategy, Tenancy Strategy, and Corporate Performance updates and it was anticipated that the peer review report (if available by then) would be considered by the Corporate Performance Working Party on 8 May 2014 and then the main Overview and Scrutiny Panel if necessary.

4.4 Annex 3 has comments on Cabinet and/or Council responses to recommendations that came from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel during 2013/14.

5.0 Call-Ins

5.1 There were two call-ins made by the Panel during this Municipal Year. These included the following:

1. ICT Members' Remote Access;
2. Dreamland Compensation Payments.

5.2 On both issues the Panel agreed not to take any further action following the clarification provided by officers at the meetings, which adequately addressed the issues raised by Members.

6.0 Petitions referred to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel

6.1 The Panel considered a petition referral on 'Possible Failure to comply with the Council's Petition Scheme' and the 'Changes to Emergency Services at QEQM Hospital.'

7.0 Options

7.1 Members may wish to suggest some amendments to this report.

7.2 Members may choose to accept the report as the basis for the Chairman's 2013/14 Annual Report to Annual Council.

8.0 Corporate Implications

8.1 Financial

8.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report at this stage. However, requests for training would need to be considered within the context of the funds available for member learning and development.

8.2 Legal

8.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

8.3 Corporate

8.3.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Panel fulfils the Council's requirements under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, to establish one or more committees to discharge overview and scrutiny functions.

8.4 Equity and Equalities

8.4.1 There are no equity and equalities issues arising from this report.

9.0 Recommendation(s)

9.1 Members agree that this report forms the basis of the Panel Annual Report to be presented to Annual Council by the Chairman.

10.0 Decision Making Process

10.1 At the end of each Municipal Year, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel presents an annual report to Council for Members to note. The report highlights some of the key activities and outcomes of the work of the Panel and its sub-committees, and may indicate scrutiny priorities for the forthcoming municipal year.

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Annex List

Annex 1	Questionnaire for OSP Working Parties for 2013/14
Annex 2	OSP Working Parties Terms of Reference, 2013/14
Annex 3	OSP Summary of Recommendations to Cabinet and Council – 2013/14
Annex 4	OSP Working Parties Membership Table for 2013/14

Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
None	None

Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Finance	Sarah Martin, Financial Services Manager
Legal	Harvey Patterson, Corporate & Regulatory Services Manager