

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2014 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Gideon (Chairman); Councillors Campbell, Cohen, Driver, Dwyer, K Gregory, Hornus, Huxley, Matterface, Moore, D Saunders, M Saunders, M Tomlinson and W Scobie

407. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Councillor Gibson;
Councillor I. Gregory, substituted by Councillor M. Saunders.

408. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at this meeting.

409. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Matterface seconded and Members agreed the minutes subject to the following amendments:

Minute 400, paragraph 4, first sentence should read 'The Panel generally supported the idea of a twin track approach to resolving this issue; which included efforts to keep Manston Airport open and proposing that it be included in the Enterprise Zone.'

The following text should be added to the same minute:

'That Cllr Hart stated that the new owners of Manston Airport had in one of their earliest meetings with TDC offered some land on the Northern Grass outside the airport perimeter to the TDC local plan process for housing as it was historically underused and was therefore another factor affecting viability of the airport. These discussions were conducted by planning officers on behalf of the Council.'

410. TO ADOPT THE HOUSING REGENERATION ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Richard Hopkins, Housing Regeneration Team Leader introduced the item. He said that it was a statutory duty upon Council to ensure that private sector housing was maintained in a safe condition. Council needed to have an appropriate enforcement policy to support that duty and the current policy needed to be updated.

The proposed enforcement policy and guidance document sets out the range of legislative tools that enables Council to carry-out its duty in respect of private sector housing enforcement, houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), property licensing (HMO and Selective Licensing) and enforcement relating to empty homes.

Members suggested that the policy should make reference to the Article 4 Direction relating to small HMOs. They also suggested that licensing conditions should also include the provision of Electrical Condition Reports. Richard Hopkins advised Members that although the provision of Electrical Condition Reports was not one of the mandatory conditions covered by legislation, Council does require such certificates for all HMOs and Selective Licensing properties using its discretionary powers.

Other Members said that there were many empty properties in Thanet and a housing register waiting list of thousands. They suggested that Council should use all the legislative tools available to turn the empty properties into occupied homes in order to reduce the numbers on the Council housing waiting list. They also said that residents were grateful for the work undertaken by the enforcement team.

Members noted that the Selective Licensing Scheme, together with the activities being conducted by the Margate Task Force was working well. They suggested that in addressing the issue of equality and diversity in private sector housing, further assessment should be carried out. There was a need to take steps to build a case for government and EU funding to address the issue of empty properties in Thanet. Members suggested that the enforcement policy document may need to consider the effect of proposed conservation areas. They congratulated officers for producing a comprehensive report.

Councillor Hornus proposed, Councillor Campbell seconded and Members agreed to forward to Cabinet the following recommendation:

That Cabinet adopts the proposed Enforcement Policy and Guidance document for Housing Regeneration subject to building in the suggestions made by the Panel.

411. ESTABLISHING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Hornus seconded and Members unanimously agreed to waive political proportionality in re-constituting working parties/task and finish groups for 2014/15.

Councillor M. Tomlinson proposed, Councillor Hornus seconded and Members agreed the following:

1. To re-establish the working parties/task & finish groups as follows;
 - a. Community Safety Partnership Working Party;
 - b. Corporate Performance Review Working Party;
 - c. Electoral Registration Process Review Task & Finish Group;
 - d. QEQM Hospital A & E Review Task & Finish Group;
 - e. TDC Artefacts Management Review Task & Finish Group
2. The draft terms of reference as proposed in Annex 1 of the report;
3. The Membership of the sub-groups to be as follows:

Community Safety Partnership Working Party

Councillor Campbell

Councillor Huxley

Councillor W. Scobie

Councillor K. Gregory

Councillor D. Saunders

Councillor S. Tomlinson

Councillor Cohen

Independent Group to advise on the Member on this sub-group

Corporate Performance Review Working Party

Councillor Campbell

Councillor Matterface

Councillor Gideon

Councillor I. Gregory

Councillor Grove

Thanet Independent Group to advise on the Member to sit on the sub-group.

Electoral Registration Process Review Working Party

Councillor Hornus
Councillor K. Gregory
Councillor Campbell
Councillor W. Scobie
Councillor Cohen

QEQM Hospital A & E Review Task & Finish Group

Councillor Hornus
Councillor P. Moore
Councillor Dwyer
Councillor King
Conservative Group to advise on the 2 other Members to sit on the sub-group
Labour Group to advise on the 1 other Member to sit on the sub-group

TDC Artefacts Management Review Task & Finish Group

Councillor M. Tomlinson
Councillor Hornus
Councillor Matterface
Councillor Dwyer
Councillor King

Members of the various sub-groups were requested by the Panel to look at the draft terms of reference as agreed by the Panel and consider any amendments which would need to be submitted to and agreed by the Panel.

Councillor Gideon, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel, asked Members to consider the proposal put forward by Councillor King that a sub-group be set up to consider the issue of the 'twin hatted' role of some Councillors in planning decision making at parish/town and district levels.

Some Members said that in some parish/town council planning committee meetings, only limited information was provided to Members whilst at the district council level, Members received substantial information before making a planning decision. This appeared to affect the way such Members made their decision at the two decision making levels. They suggested that this issue could be researched further by a sub-group of the Panel, and any recommendations would have to be forwarded to political group leaders to finalise on the matter. Other Members said that there was also a triple hatted factor to be considered as well as some Councillors sat on the planning committee at the county level.

Councillor Hornus proposed, Councillor K. Gregory seconded and Members agreed to set up a task & finish group (to consider the issue in-depth) with the following Membership:

Councillor Dwyer
Councillor Campbell
Councillor K. Gregory
Councillor D. Saunders
Councillor Cohen
Councillor King

The task and finish group would draft their terms of reference taking into consideration the notes in the report that was considered by Members at a previous meeting of the Panel, which sought consideration of whether agreement could be reached regarding any voluntary limitations on the participation of Councillors in consideration of planning

applications at more than one tier of government (e.g. at both district and parish level). They generally agreed that a detailed officer report would be produced and considered by Members of the sub-group; which should help scope their work and inform their recommendations on the matter. Detailed terms of reference would need to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for approval.

Cabinet Member Presentations at future OSP Meetings

Members agreed that the new Leader of Council be invited first, followed by other Cabinet Members to make presentations on the strategic direction the Council would be taking under the new leadership.

Members agreed to make a request to Cabinet Members that in instances where a Cabinet Member was going to make a presentation and where a presentation document was available, that document be forwarded to all Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel some days before the Panel meeting in order to afford Members the opportunity to study the presentation and prepare adequately for the meeting.

Meeting concluded: 8.40 pm