

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 August 2014 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Gideon (Chairman); Councillors Campbell, Driver, Dwyer, Fenner, I Gregory, K Gregory, Hornus, Matterface, Moore, M Tomlinson and S Tomlinson

In Attendance: Councillors D Green, Harrison, Johnston, King and Nicholson

412. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members:
Councillor D. Saunders substituted by Councillor S. Tomlinson;
Councillor Gibson;
Councillor Poole;
Councillor Huxley;
Councillor Worrow.

413. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

414. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Hornus seconded and Members agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2014.

415. THE LEADER OF COUNCIL'S PRESENTATION ON THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF TDC

Councillor Johnston, Leader of Council made a presentation on the strategic direction of Council. She said that Council was guided by vision that was projected to lead up to 2030 and the focus would be the quality of services delivered by Council, improving dialogue with residents, helping attract investment into the district in order to develop the local economy and creating opportunities for young people. The current Corporate Plan 2012-16 was set out to implement the vision. Achievements made to date were set out in the Plan. Twenty-seven projects had been delivered by Council and another thirty-two were still in progress. The new recycling service was the one of the key projects carried out by Council and work was still on-going to improve the service.

The Leader acknowledged the good work being done by the Housing Intervention Team. The Asset Management Strategy was being developed to help manage efficiently assets owned by Council. Councillor Johnston said that the Community Safety Plan was a good example of effective partnership working. She would continue to work across the political groups for the benefit of the District as the current executive focused on the key priorities which were Environmental Services, Economy, Housing and Communication.

Responding to questions from the Panel the Leader said that the four priorities were developed on the basis of the information made available to Cabinet Members by officers and she hoped would lead to smarter working. She said that Council should continue to work towards 'getting it right first time.' Progress toward accomplishing work set out in the Corporate Plan was monitored through quarterly progress reports that were presented to Cabinet meetings.

The Chairman thanked the Leader for presentation.

416. DRAFT HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY 2014-2016, FOR CONSULTATION

Tanya Wenham, Head of Housing Services, introduced the item. She said that Thanet District Council introduced the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adoptions Policy in 2003 allowing Council to administer housing grants in a structured way. There was now a need to update the policy.

The Panel Chairman allowed two members of the public to address the meeting on the subject. The first speaker said that Council had a statutory obligation to provide support to individuals who qualified for the Disabled Facilities Grant and that valid applications ought to be processed to completion within six months. He said that lack of resources could not be considered as a reasonable excuse for not supporting valid applications. He also expressed his concern about the long delays in carrying the required assessments for applicants. The second speaker said that she was worried about the implication of the proposed policy on the welfare of her husband and herself.

Tanya Wenham advised the meeting that The Council had worked to significantly to reduce the waiting times for occupational therapy assessments to 'within two months'. The processing of applications had also been reduced from 40 weeks to 25 weeks.

Some Members were concerned about the short notice for reviewing the Housing Assistance Policy. They felt that this was not adequate a period for consulting on such an important issue and suggested that a wider public consultation ought to be carried out.

Councillor Driver proposed, and it was seconded by Councillor Campbell:

that the Panel requests Cabinet to organise a well-publicised twelve weeks consultation period on the Draft Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy 2014-16. That this consultation is focused on reaching disabled people and their carers and includes all those organisations which represent disabled people.

Madeline Homer, Acting CEx and Director of Community Services said that there would be a need to identify the funding source for the proposed 12 weeks consultation period and on the ability to thereafter deliver the Disabled Facilities Grant in time. Other Members said that the consultation period should not disadvantage the individuals who are meant to benefit from the grant scheme. They said that it was important for Members to get all the information necessary from the outcome of the consultation in order to lobby government on the subject of this Grant Scheme.

After some debate on the proposed consultation period, Councillor Driver, Councillor Campbell and the Panel agreed that the proposed motion be amended to:

That the Panel requests Cabinet to organise a well-publicised six weeks consultation period on the Draft Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy 2014-16. That this consultation is focused on reaching disabled people and their carers and includes all those organisations which represent disabled people.

The Panel agreed the motion.

417. CALL-INS - CABINET DECISIONS OF 31 JULY 2014

This issue was considered in Minute Items 417a-c.

(a) **Call-in - Thanet Markets: Margate Weekly General Market**

Edwina Crowley, Head of Economic Development and Asset Management introduced the report and said that the current location of the market did not have planning permission and was not supported by Kent County Council hence the need to look for another location. The location agreed by Cabinet was at a prominent place with a number of access points and was a pleasant location. Edwina Crowley said that the decision made by Cabinet was an in-principle decision as there was still some work to be done including further consultation on the issue.

Some Members of the Panel said that this newly proposed site was chosen on a previous occasion and was not a success. They suggested that Cabinet could have considered the Dreamland car park which was a success some years back. However other Members indicated that the Dreamland car park was not a viable option as it could deprive business in the high street of consequent passing trade. Another suggestion that was put forward was that the executive could consider using the sea front, leading up to the Harbour Arm from the Tower Clock as a market and link it up with the Turner Contemporary.

Speaking under Council Procedure 24.1 Councillor King suggested that the Panel considered setting up a working party to consider other options for the market place and regeneration issues in general.

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Hornus seconded and Members agreed to take no further action regarding the call-in of the Cabinet decision.

(b) **Call-in - Ramsgate Maritime Plan**

The Panel pointed out that the Maritime Plan needs to include the governance arrangements of the Harbour and Port. Some Members were concerned that the Ramsgate Port and Harbour was faced with stiff competition from the Dover Harbour and that Cabinet would need to consider a strategic approach to running the port and harbour that would maximise the advantages that Ramsgate port has. They said that the development of the harbour and port should be linked to that of the Ramsgate seafront.

Members queried why the advice from external consultants was not highlighted in the proposed Maritime Plan. Councillor Harrison, Cabinet Member for Operational Services said that a lot of research had been carried out by Council officers to inform the proposed Maritime Plan. He said that the proposed Plan offered great potential for the Port.

Councillor K. Gregory proposed, Councillor M. Tomlinson seconded and Members agreed to take no further action regarding the call-in of the Cabinet decision.

(c) **Call-in - Petition to Council - Margate Harbour**

Some Members suggested that after the Cabinet meeting, the public felt like they were not being listened to. They want the issue regarding the bad odour coming from the seaweed on the Margate seafront to be addressed by Council. The business community operating along the seafront have also complained about the odour which they said was affecting the performance of their business. Members suggested that the Council considered dredging the seafront to get rid of the seaweed. Others suggested that the environs of the seafront be deodorised regularly to suppress the bad odour. Officers responded with a range of drawback to these suggestions.

Councillor K. Gregory proposed, Councillor Campbell seconded and Members agreed that no further action be taken regarding this call-in of the Cabinet decision.

418. REVIEW OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15

Glenn Back, Democratic Services & Scrutiny Manager led the discussion on this item. He highlighted to the meeting the proposed amendments to some of terms of reference for various working parties. He also informed the Panel that the new terms of reference for the Members Planning Protocol Review Task & Finish Group required approval at this meeting.

The Chairman requested that the Acting CEx & Director of Community Services crafts a specific oversight role in the terms of reference for the Corporate Performance Review Working Party in relation to the newly established Peer Review Improvement Board. The meeting was advised that the Pleasurama issue was being progressed.

Councillor Hornus proposed, Councillor Campbell seconded and Members agreed the following:

1. To approve the terms of reference of the Working Parties/Task Finish Groups in Annexes 1, 3, 5, 7 & 9;
2. To note the work programmes set out in Annexes 2, 4, 6, 8 & 10;
3. To appoint a member of the Thanet Independent Group to the Corporate Performance Review Working Party.

419. FORWARD PLAN AND EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST - 31 JULY 2014 TO 2 APRIL 2015

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 9.40 pm