

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2016 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor David Saunders (Chairman); Councillors G Coleman-Cooke, Campbell, Connor, Curran, Dexter, Dixon, Elenor, Falcon, Grove, Jaye-Jones, Martin, Parsons and M Saunders

In Attendance: Councillor Taylor-Smith

56. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Councillor Dennis;
Councillor Bambridge, substituted by Councillor Mave Saunders.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the meeting.

58. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Jay-Jones seconded and Members agreed the minutes to be a correct record of the meeting held on 26 April 2016.

59. ESTABLISH THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2016/17

Councillor D. Saunders, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel introduced the report and led the discussion. He requested Members consider each of the key recommendations for establishing the Panel's work programme for 2016/17. One Member suggested that the Panel continued with the previous approach that involved all the political group representatives on the scrutiny working party activities.

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Parsons seconded and Members agreed to unanimously disregard political proportionality in setting up the sub committees and further agreed a membership size of eight for each of the sub groups whose composition would be as follows:

3 UKIP;
2 Conservative;
1 Labour;
1 Democratic Independent Group;
1 Independent Group.

Members agreed that the Panel should reconstitute the three sub groups from the previous year's work programme as each of them had important role to play in reviewing the council and joint arrangements' performance. The Community Safety Working Party would continue to review the implementation of the community safety plan.

The Corporate Performance Review Working Party would monitor the council's corporate performance and budget and take a lead in scrutinising the budget proposals for the forthcoming year. The working party would also review the performance of joint arrangements that Thanet District Council is a part of. The Electoral Registration Process

Review Working Party would continue to monitor and suggest ways for improving voter registration in the district. Members further suggested that the Panel could continue to keep a watching brief on the activities of the QEQM Hospital Cabinet Advisory Group and the Margate Museum.

One Member raised some concerns about the pending closure of some surgeries in the district, including the one in Garlinge. They suggested that TDC took up the issue and express these concerns on behalf of the affected residents. In response Madeline Homer, CEx said that the issue had been raised directly with Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group (Thanet CCG) and that this issue will be on the Thanet Health & Wellbeing Board. She suggested that Members could raise these issues with the Leader in the hope that Councillor Wells will write to the Thanet CCG to share the Council's view on the matter.

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor D. Saunders seconded and Members agreed the following:

1. To re-constitute the following sub groups:
 - a) Community Safety Working Party;
 - b) Corporate Performance Review Working Party;
 - c) Electoral Registration Process Review Working Party;
2. The draft terms of reference;
3. That before any consideration of substantive business, the sub groups would review their respective terms of reference at their first meeting and report back any suggested changes to these terms to the next available Overview & Scrutiny Panel for approval;
4. That before any consideration of substantive business, all sub groups would complete the project template at their first meeting and report back the details to the next available Overview & Scrutiny Panel for approval.

The Chairman asked each of the political groups to provide names of their respective representatives to sit on the three sub groups to Democratic Services outside the meeting.

Exploring Effective Scrutiny Approaches

Some Members suggested that a small group of Members be involved in discussions with the Leader to explore new approaches for an effective scrutiny process. One other Member suggested a sub group be set up to engage the Leader and possibly the Deputy Leader in these discussions. They cited the recommendations from the Peer Review Challenge report that indicated the Council's scrutiny function required improvement, particularly with regards to pre-decision scrutiny.

Members said that they wanted the Panel to take a lead in coming up with changes to the scrutiny function and that it was within the Panel's gift to set up the sub group. The Chairman said that it would be prudent for the Panel Chairman to hold preliminary discussions first before fully engaging the sub group in the process.

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

That the Chairman approaches the Leader of Council and Deputy Leader (if necessary) and advise them that the Overview & Scrutiny Panel is minded to set up a sub group to explore proposals for establishing alternative scrutiny arrangements that include pre-decision scrutiny, with a view that Cabinet supports that decision.

It was also pointed out that the Panel ought to consider whether to allow non Panel Members and non-councillors to the membership of some of the sub groups where appropriate, as has been the case in the past. This would ensure that the Panel would continue to benefit from the expertise available outside the Council on scrutiny projects that require certain expertise and experience.

Councillor Dexter proposed, Councillor Campbell seconded and Members agreed to allow the appointment of non-Panel Members and non-councillors to sit on the Panel's sub groups where appropriate.

The Chairman reminded Members that they could require Cabinet Members to appear before the Panel to make presentations on areas that fall within their portfolio areas and that the Forward Plan is one such tool that could be used to engage Cabinet Members.

Meeting concluded: 7.45 pm