

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

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| Council | 07 December 2017 |
| Report Author | Cllr D. Saunders, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
| Portfolio Holder | Cllr Crow-Brown, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance |
| Status | For Information |
| Classification: | Unrestricted |
| Key Decision | No |
| Ward: | Thanet Wide |

Executive Summary:

The purpose of the report is to highlight some of the key activities that have planned for by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel during the course of this municipal year 2017/18 and progress to date regarding implementation of the Panel's work programme.

Recommendation(s):

1. Members are invited to discuss and note the report.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

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| Financial and Value for Money | There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. The report provides a briefing to Full Council about the current work activities of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel. |
| Legal | There are no legal implications directly arising from this report. A presentation of the OSP Chairman's report to Full Council enables the Chairman to fulfil their duty as is required by the Council's Constitution. |
| Corporate | <p>There are no corporate risks associated with this report. The report enables discussion by Members at Full Council on the activities of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>The debate on the OSP Chairman's report contributes to open communication across the council. A strong scrutiny function contributes to an open democratic process for decision making and delivery of value for money services as council decisions are interrogated by Members before they are implemented. In instances where such decisions are interrogated after implementation, there will be lessons to learn for future policy development.</p> |

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| Equalities Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty | Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. | |
| | Protected characteristics: age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership. | |
| | Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report. | |
| | Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, | |
| | Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it | |
| Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. | ✓ | |
| No implications arise directly but the Council needs to retain a strong focus and understanding on issues of diversity amongst the local community and ensure service delivery matches these. | | |
| It is important to be aware of the Council's responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and show evidence that due consideration had been given to the equalities impact that may be brought upon communities by the decisions made by Council. | | |

| CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant)✓ | | CORPORATE VALUES (tick those relevant)✓ | |
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| A clean and welcoming Environment | | Delivering value for money | ✓ |
| Promoting inward investment and job creation | | Supporting the Workforce | |
| Supporting neighbourhoods | ✓ | Promoting open communications | ✓ |

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 At each ordinary Full Council meeting, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel presents a report on the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel since the last Council meeting.
- 1.2 Such a report will be subject to comment or debate by Members. This is in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.1 of Part 4 of the Council Constitution.
- 1.3 The report will therefore provide the basis for debate by Members on on-going scrutiny activities and hopefully lead to sharing of views and ideas to enhance the Council's scrutiny function.

2.0 Community Safety Partnership Working Party

- 2.1 A date for the next meeting of the working party was still to be set up. The sub group will receive an update from Kent Police on the impact of the policing in parts of Ramsgate and Margate to tackle youth crime.

3.0 Corporate Performance Review Working Party

- 3.1 The sub group met on 13 November to consider Quarter 2 performance reports from East Kent Housing, East Kent Services and Thanet District Council.

East Kent Housing

- 3.2 Arrears in payment claims had increased following the roll out of universal credit, most claimants find themselves in arrears as claimants were often paid at least six weeks following the claim and did not have savings to support them during the transition period. In recognition of the delay in payment, EK Housing had changed its system of chasing for arrears.

- 3.3 Members were advised that it was expected that all claimants would be on universal credit by 2020. However payment of pensions and some specialist cases would not be transferred. The Council and Margate Task Force had been working with local Department for Works & Pensions (DWP) officers to identify local challenges to the roll out of universal credit. Some of the issues identified had not been reported elsewhere in the country and would be fed back to the central DWP.

East Kent Services

- 3.4 Performance regarding housing benefit and council tax benefit applications compared well against national bench marks. However it was worth noting that there was a resourcing pressure within customer services, as staff vacancies had remained unfilled.

- 3.5 The pressure was expected to be relived as the vacant posts would be filled, some satellite sites had been closed and the service was looking to offer apprenticeships. EK Services were preparing a business case for the provision of this support which could be recharged to the Department of Work and Pensions.

Thanet District Council

- 3.6 The performance has been about the same as the previous quarter whilst some targets had moved between categories during the quarter. It was reported that the increase in recorded crime was partly due to a change in recording methods by Kent Police.

- 3.7 A Members Briefing would be held to report to members what action the Council would take to address homelessness within the District. It was also reported that since the annual survey last year, there had been a significant increase (up 28%) in public opinion that the Council offered value for money.

4.0 Reviewing the Draft Local Plan – pre decision scrutiny

- 4.1 The OSP Local Plan Working Group received three times on 31 October, 02 November and 07 November for briefing sessions whereby officers provided information and made clarifications on a number of queries members had regarding proposals in the draft Local Plan documents.

4.2 To give structure to the review process, Members reviewed the proposals using the following topics:

- Contextual information to the draft local plan and Housing;
- Employment & Economy;
- Infrastructure provision & Environmental Policy.

4.3 Officers also responded to key questions that were submitted ahead of each workshop session. It is now hoped that from the three sessions the working group will come up with a summary of recommendations to adopt at this Panel meeting.

4.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel discussed the draft Local Plan on 21 November did not make any specific recommendations to Cabinet.

5.0 Call-In of Cabinet Decisions

5.1 There were no valid call-ins made since the last meeting of the Panel.

6.0 Cabinet Presentations at OSP Meetings

6.1 The Panel received a presentation by the Leader of Council on an update on the proposals for the East Kent Merger and the implications arising from the decision by Cabinet not to pursuing that initiative further as a result of similar decision being made by the neighbouring local authorities.

6.2 The Panel engaged the Leader in discussion that followed from this presentation. It was suggested that Members briefing sessions will be held to discuss ways how the council could come up with innovative ways for drawing a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year as well as the medium term financial strategy.

7.0 OSP Recommendations to Cabinet - Implementation Monitoring

7.1 There were no recommendations submitted to Cabinet in the period under review.

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| Contact Officer: | Charles Hungwe, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Ext 57186 |
| Reporting to: | Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager, Ext 57208 |

Annex List

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| None | N/A |
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Background Papers

| Title | Details of where to access copy |
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| None | N/A |

Corporate Consultation

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| Finance | Ramesh Prashar, Head of Financial Services |
| Legal | Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer |