

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

Council	09 July 2020
Report Author	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	Thanet Wide

Executive Summary:

This report highlights some of the key activities that have been planned for by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel during the course of this municipal year and progress to date regarding implementation of the Panel's work programme.

Recommendations:

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

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

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 Panel 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 Finance Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>The debate on the Panel 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>
Equality 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 Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and

	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,</td> <td style="text-align: center;">✓</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>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.</p> <p>is important to be aware of the Council's responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and show evidence that due consideration has been given to the equalities impact that may be brought upon communities by the decisions made by Council.</p>	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.	
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant) ✓	
Growth	
Environment	
Communities	✓

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 At each ordinary Full Council meeting, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel presents a progress update report on the activities of the Panel since the last Council meeting.
- 1.2 Such a report would 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 This report updates the Council on the work of the Panel since the last Council meeting and allows for discussion of the work undertaken, therefore strengthening the Council's scrutiny function.
- 1.4 This report follows on from the one presented at Full Council on 27 February 2020. The Panel met once since the last Council meeting. This was largely because meetings were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the Government had legislated the provision for councils to conduct virtual meetings and Council was ready to hold such meetings, the Panel had its first virtual meeting on 26 May 2020.

2.0 Current Scrutiny Activities, including Cabinet Member Presentations

Draft Local Plan

- 2.1 Proposals for the draft Local Plan were presented to the Panel on 26 May 2020 and Members discussed the council proposals in conjunction with the Independent Inspector's main modifications that accompanied the committee report.
- 2.2 A number of observations and comments were made by Members and these were recorded in the Panel minutes that can be found in this link <https://democracy.thanet.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=119&MId=5312&Ver=4> (minute item 236). Thereafter the Panel agreed the recommendation as detailed below:

"That subject to noting the comments made by the Panel, Members recommended that the proposals and Inspectors' main modifications in the committee report be forwarded to Cabinet and then Council for approval."

Empty Properties Action Plan

- 2.3 At the Panel meeting on 20 February 2020, Members requested that the Empty Properties Action Plan be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel once it was ready.

Council Housing Stock Management

- 2.4 After a portfolio holder presentation by the Deputy Leader on the progress towards implementation of the cabinet decision on bringing in-house the management of the council's housing stock at the February meeting, the Panel would maintain a watching brief and receive progress updates at appropriate intervals.

Cabinet Presentations at OSP Meetings for 2020/21

- 2.5 The Panel is awaiting cabinet presentations on the following topics:
- i. Coastal Development Review (focus on a review of coastal projects) (TBC) ;
 - ii. The Leader of Council to share the current Cabinet's vision moving forward (TBC).
- 2.6 The rest of the work programme for 2020/21 is detailed in Annex 1 to the Council report. This schedule is subject to amendments during the course of the year as Members may add more items for reviewing.
- 2.7 Members may also wish to reflect and comment on the content in Annex 2 which provides an opportunity to review and keep track of the spread of the scrutiny review work, particularly between pre and post decision scrutiny activities..

3.0 Panel Recommendations to Cabinet - Implementation Monitoring

Proposal for the disposal of the Dreamland freehold

- 3.1 The Panel called-in a Cabinet decision regarding the Dreamland freehold and recommended the following back to Cabinet:
- i. That Cabinet seeks three independent valuations for the Dreamland site before an agreement is reached with a buyer, and;
 - ii. Cabinet requests an 18 year housing development restriction in the agreement instead of the proposed 10 years.

3.2 In response Cabinet agreed the following:

- i. To authorise another market valuation of the Dreamland site in order to ensure that sufficient breadth of comparable evidence is considered for the sale. Both valuations to be used to demonstrate that best value is obtained.
- ii. To retain the proposed 10 year housing development restriction on the Dreamland site as agreed by Cabinet on 01 August 2019. Delegated officers to continue the negotiations to explore the suggested extension fully as part of the sale process.

3.3 The Panel is maintaining a watching brief on this matter as the negotiations progress.

Adoption of a new Housing Assistance Policy

3.4 At the July 2019 meeting, the Panel considered a report on the “Adoption of a new Housing Assistance Policy” and recommended to Cabinet that Council writes to Kent County Council requesting that “KCC ring fenced the £405k (Top sliced/payment to KCC projected for 2019/20) for use by Thanet residents”.

3.5 Cabinet forwarded the request to KCC via a letter sent to KCC by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods on 12 August 2019. The Panel is awaiting a response from KCC.

Travellers Review Recommendation

3.6 After a scrutiny review conducted by a working group, the Panel recommended to Cabinet that “further work be undertaken including extensive public consultation to assess the feasibility and cost implications of establishing temporary tolerated sites in the district.”

3.7 Having considered the Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommendations on 16 December, Cabinet agreed to the following:

“That further work was undertaken to assess the feasibility and cost implications of three temporary tolerated sites in the District, at Potten Street, St Nicholas at Wade, Tivoli Brooks and Ramsgate Port, with a view to using them on a rotational basis.”

3.8 The Panel is also maintaining a watching brief on this issue.

4.0 An Approach for Identifying Future Scrutiny Topics

4.1 At the February Panel meeting, Members agreed to hold a workshop to detail out an approach for identifying topics that Members could examine as part of scrutiny review projects.

4.2 The workshop is scheduled for 24 June 2020 and would also look at scrutiny approaches from neighbouring seaside authorities to see how TDC could conduct better scrutiny. Any new approach agreed by Members that would emerge from this workshop would be used to refresh the work programme for 2020/21.

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Annex List

Annex 1	Overview & Scrutiny Panel Work Programme for 2019/20
Annex 2	Record of OSP Pre and Post Decision Reviews for 2019/20

Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
None	N/A

Corporate Consultation

Finance	Chris Blundell, Head of Financial Services
Legal	Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer