

Overview & Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Report to Council

Council	15 October 2020
Report Author	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Status	For Information
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Reasons for Key	N/A
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.

Recommendation(s):

Members are to 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

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.

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.

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 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, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

1. To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
3. To 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 has been given to the equalities impact that may be brought upon communities by the decisions made by Council.

Corporate Priorities

This report relates to 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 9 September 2020. The Panel has not met since the last Council meeting, as they are due to meet on 27

October. There is therefore no new information on Panel activities to report to this Full Council meeting.

- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 Annex 3 is a summary of the prioritised scrutiny review topics for 20/21. This work is not necessarily confined to this municipal year, but could well be taken into subsequent years if the priority order remains generally the same for the Panel.

2.0 Panel Recommendations to Cabinet - Implementation Monitoring

The Panel keeps a watching brief on all the issues in this section, until the executive decisions are fully implemented.

Proposal for the disposal of the Dreamland freehold

- 2.1 The Panel called-in a Cabinet decision regarding the Dreamland freehold and recommended the following back to Cabinet:
 1. That Cabinet seeks three independent valuations for the Dreamland site before an agreement is reached with a buyer, and;
 2. Cabinet requests an 18 year housing development restriction in the agreement instead of the proposed 10 years.
 - 2.2 In response Cabinet agreed the following:
 1. 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.
 2. 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.
 - 2.3 The Panel is maintaining a watching brief on this matter as the negotiations progress.
- ### **Adoption of a new Housing Assistance Policy**
- 2.4 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".

- 2.5 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

- 2.6 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.”
- 2.7 Having considered the Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommendations on 16 December 2019, 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”. Members are maintaining a watching brief on the issue.

Council Budget Setting 2020/21

- 2.8 Members reviewed the 2020/21 Council budget proposals forwarded to the Panel by Cabinet and engaged the Cabinet Member for Financial Services in discussion at the January meeting.
- 2.9 After some debate, Members made the following recommendation to Cabinet to consider before submitting the budget proposals to Full Council for final decision:
- “that Cabinet considers identifying a resource to support coastal projects.”
- 2.10 Thereafter Cabinet recommended to Council and on 6 February 2020, Members agreed the following:
- a. That subject to funding availability, a resource be identified to support coastal projects.
- 2.11 The Panel will continue to monitor this issue to check if any progress has been made to secure the funding for coastal projects.

3.0 Options

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the report.

Contact Officer: Charles Hungwe, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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Annex List

Annex 1: Overview & Scrutiny Panel Work Programme for 2020/21
Annex 2: Record of OSP Pre and Post Decision Reviews for 2020/21
Annex 3: Scrutiny Review Scoring table

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell, Director of Finance

Legal: Tim Howes, Corporate Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer