

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2022 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Rev. Stuart Piper (Chair); Councillors Fellows, Austin, Boyd, Currie, Coleman-Cooke, Huxley, Keen, Leys, Pat Moore, Paul Moore, L Piper, Rattigan and Tomlinson

In Attendance: Councillor R Bayford

373. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received at the meeting.

374. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

375. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Fellows proposed, Councillor Tomlinson seconded and the Panel agreed that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 15 March 2022 were a correct record.

376. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATION - CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION MADE TDC

Councillor R Bayford made a presentation at the Panel Meeting, Dr Hannah Scott was present. As part of the presentation Councillor Bayford made the following points:

- The initial action plan consisted of the establishment of a climate change officer group and a cross party councillor working group, the plan also included both low carbon and biodiversity aims;
- Housing, planning, air quality, facilities, the refuse fleet, open spaces and the Thanet Coast Project amongst others were included in the initial climate change action plan;
- Updates regarding housing and planning included solar pv and energy efficient social housing, EV charging points for every 10 units built and Biodiversity Net Gain;
- Low emissions waste carrier vehicles, LED lighting in offices and motion sensors, reduced routes to reduce diesel use and no plastic cups in offices or meeting rooms had also been introduced;
- There had been a decrease in paper use and cost of printing from £190,000 in 2013 - 2017 to £76,000 in 2017 - 2022, due to the reduction in printing and the usage of online google docs;
- The communications team have joined and were supporting the climate change initiatives;
- Fast charging points in Margate and Birchington car parks have been installed;
- The Home Energy Officer was able to give advice to people on home energy efficiency;
- The Climate Change Officer updates advice and guidance, and advises the council on such matters;
- The new Net Zero Action Plan would be available shortly;
- Trees for Cities were working with the Council until next March;

- Litter Education Officer was actively working with community groups and local schools;
- Thanet Coast Project continued throughout the pandemic in 2021, organising 20 public events and 7 community events. (for further reference the power point presentation that was used at the meeting was attached as an annex to this minute item).

Members commented and asked questions as follows:

- What was the message behind the Litter Education Officer in regards to contamination? How much and what was covered by this post?
- Was there a plan to increase the electric vehicle charging points?
- There were two missing trees in Jackey Bakers park, was there funding to replant the trees?

Councillor Bayford, Gavin Waite and Dr Hannah Scott responded as follows:

- The Waste and Recycling Officer post was no longer a role within the Council as this had been replaced with the Litter Education Officer;
- Regarding contamination, it was noted that it would be disappointing if people didn't know what they could and could not put in recycling bins;
- By 2030 there would be significant pressure by the Government on relevant bodies regarding the sale of electric cars;
- Companies wishing to install electric charging points are still available; however there are catches to this;
- An electric refuse truck would soon be on a one week trial with the waste and recycling team;
- One tree was removed in Jackey Bakers Park due to vandalism. The Council would look into replanting efforts.

Members noted the presentation.

377. WINTER GARDENS LEASE - CALL IN OF AN INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER DECISION

The Chair stated that supplementary item number 9 (Winter Gardens Lease - Call In of an Individual Cabinet Member Decision) to be raised to item number 5.

Councillor Huxley previously called the item in, and introduced the report. Cllr Huxley outlined the reasons for the item being called in. Stating that there were further explanations needed in the report, including information on additional costs. Huxley questioned what Your Leisure would use the money for, whether this would be used for redundancies, revenue money or on other parts of Your Leisure.

The Chair offered thanks to Cllr Huxley for outlining the reasons for calling the item in. The Chair called upon Councillor Pugh and Chris Blundell to present the item.

Cllr Pugh and Chris Blundell then made the following points:

- During the third national lockdown, Your Leisure was experiencing financial strain;
- The refinancing of Your Leisure was an ongoing, difficult and drawn out process.
- Investments needed for repairs and improvements were totalling to around £3M - £4M;
- Your Leisure's lease was to end in October 2024; however the lease will be ending earlier;
- Bookings for the Winter Gardens cease in August, in order to carry out studies;

- There was a need for a portfolio decision to be quickly agreed due to Your Leisure ending the lease earlier than expected;
- There was a temporary fix to the boiler issue, costing £63,000.

The Chair noted that the long term future of the Winter Gardens would be affected by who had control over the lease, stating it would be advantageous for the Council to hold the lease. He also emphasised that it was important that the public were kept informed.

Members considered the points raised and asked the following questions:

- Why had these details outlined not been included in the initial paper?
- Members raised concerns regarding the Winter Gardens being lost beyond repair, questioning the temporary boiler in the future winter months.
- What were the rough timescales for the closure of the building?
- Would there be any security covering the site when the building is closed?
- Was the site to be boarded up during its closure?

Councillor Pugh and Chris Blundell responded as follows:

- Due to time constraints, not all the details had been included in the initial paper;
- For future references, details would be provided in paper for the Overview and Scrutiny panel;
- There was a need to seek a commercial partner and a long term operator of the Winter Gardens;
- A specific timescale regarding the closure of the building would be sought by the portfolio holder and reported back to the Panel;
- Security was a priority. Officers will carry out spot checks;
- There were requirements for vacant properties, including security and measures to protect the asset.

The Chair stated that more details in writing would be needed, together with regular updates for the public as well as press releases. The Chair thanked Cllr Pugh and Chris Blundell.

There was no further action required regarding the call in.

378. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021-22 Q3

Chris Blundell introduced the item and made the following points:

- The report was to improve overall awareness regarding the financial position. The report was previously considered by Full Council in March;
- Housing needs had an overspend of £444,000, there were other key overspends included Your Leisure and Domestic Waste Collection;
- In total there was a £2M overspend;
- Crematorium income had seen a reduction this year;
- The £1M emergency funding from the government covered the forecast gap;
- The capital programme appeared to be significantly underspent; however this was actually a timing issue due to the receipt of the Margate and Ramsgate levelling up funding.

A Member asked whether the council could sell off pockets of land it owned around the district, in order to provide more housing for residents in Ramsgate, particularly in Eastcliff ward.

In response, Chris Blundell said that there was a need to check with the Director of Housing if such funds would be ring fenced.

Members noted the report.

379. COASTAL WASTE SCRUTINY REVIEW WORKING PARTY REPORT

Councillor Fellows introduced the item. He explained that it had been a thorough review, with 20 recommendations made.

The Chair stated that the report was well set out and thanks were offered to the panel for their efforts. It was noted that discussions on how Town and Parish Councils can cooperate better were needed.

Members commented and asked the following questions:

- The recommendations could lead to large improvements; members suggested that volunteer groups needed to be liaised with more frequently;
- The Plastic Free Regime, recommendation number 6, was noted as a challenging recommendation. Members questioned how the Council could deliver this recommendation?
- Members questioned the current TDC website. Suggestions were put forth regarding reporting fly tipping and waste issues via the 'Fix My Street' website.

Councillor Fellows and Gavin Waite responded to the comments as followed:

- It was agreed that volunteers felt underappreciated;
- Volunteers were to receive further support, i.e. equipment;
- The Plastic Free Regime recommendation could be implemented in a number of ways; this could be through pubs ceasing the use of plastic cups, or fish and chip shops reusing some of their packaging;
- There previously was an app that members of the public could use to report fly tipping and waste issues, however the app was unsupported and so its use was stopped.

Councillor Fellows proposed, Councillor Tomlinson seconded and the Panel agreed the Coastal Waste Scrutiny Review Working Party report findings and recommendations as detailed in the working party report and that these be forwarded to cabinet for consideration by the Executive. A summary of the recommendations is as detailed below:

1. Thanet District Council should re-evaluate its corporate priorities to better reflect that beaches and coastlines are fundamental to the identity of Thanet as a tourism destination and as a result funding for their preservation and cleanliness should be prioritised;
2. To expand our resource base to enable Recommendation 1, we should explore a broader range of funding options, partnerships and models of delivery;
3. We should consider introducing bylaws and/or licensing conditions to control use of polystyrene containers, cardboard chip boxes & other frequently littered items;
4. TDC should look to promote a plastic free regime in Thanet;
5. TDC should develop flexible staff roles for beaches and the coastline;
6. TDC should consider approaching voluntary litter picking groups first when recruiting extra seasonal staff;
7. An annual litter bin survey should be carried out with the help of parish & Town Councils (and volunteer groups if appropriate);

8. Current work on modernising our bins - phasing out dog waste bins, reducing aperture size when bins are replaced, fitting the size of the bin to the location and making all bins 'smart', for example - should be progressed with all speed;
9. TDC should monitor use and effectiveness of dog waste bag stations;
10. TDC should set and publicise challenging performance indicators for beach & coastal cleanliness and establish a schedule of Council & public reporting on these;
11. TDC should adopt stronger public messaging on litter;
12. We should set up '2 minute beach clean' stations during peak visitor periods to encourage individuals and families to help, supported by paid Rangers;
13. TDC Operational Services should meet at least annually with coastal/seafront businesses to address issues relating to keeping seafront areas clean;
14. We should explore introducing bylaws and/or licensing conditions to require all businesses selling food to provide & service their own bins outside their premises;
15. TDC should conduct regular and spot checks on Commercial Waste contracts and publicise that this happens;
16. TDC should prioritise building mutually supportive relationships with Town & Parish Councils to collaborate on litter & waste e.g. via regular focused meetings;
17. TDC should acknowledge, support & celebrate the work of litter picking volunteers e.g. by providing bags/ equipment, helping with insurance/ health & safety advice, offering funding where possible and hosting an annual 'Thank You' event.
18. TDC should consider establishing a Thanet-wide Litter Forum involving voluntary groups and where appropriate Town/ Parish Councils;
19. DC should establish a hotline/ single point of contact for litter groups to call for action e.g. to arrange pickup of bags, request supplies etc;
20. TDC should invest in the "Fix My Street" app again.

Nick Hughes advised Members that if Cabinet agreed the recommendations, there would be a need to draft an Action Plan for implementing the adopted recommendations. The Panel would then be able to keep a watching brief on the progress regarding the implementation of the Action Plan. The working party chair and any other members could attend the Cabinet meeting when the review findings report would be considered to speak under 20.1 on the report if they so wished.

380. REVIEW OF OSP WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2021/22

Nick Hughes advised Members that a request had been made by Madeline Homer, CEx for the Panel to consider a potential scrutiny topic on 'How to improve and maximise the working relationship between Thanet District Council and Parish and Town Councils. If the Panel agreed to the request, officers would go back and score the topic against the criteria that is used for adding scrutiny topics to the list which is attached as Annex 2 to the report.

One Member requested that as part of investigating the above topic, the Panel should note that although Margate did not have a parish/town council; it should not be left out of such a review.

Members agreed that the topic be added to the scrutiny topics.

The Chair advised Members that the Blue Plaques and Memorials review was still in abeyance, but this would not be for long as the government had made a recent announcement regarding providing national policy guidance on the matter. An update would be provided at the Panel meeting on 26 May 2022.

Members noted the report.

381. FORWARD PLAN & EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 8.45 pm