

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 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, Keen, Pat Moore, Paul Moore, Rattigan, Tomlinson and Wing

In Attendance: Councillors J Bayford, L Piper and Pugh

405. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Huxley and Councillor Leys.

406. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were declarations of interest made at the meeting.

407. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Paul Moore proposed, Councillor Fellows seconded and the Members agreed that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 30 August 2022 were a correct record.

408. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATION BY THE DEPUTY LEADER - LEVELLING UP FUNDS AND REGENERATION PROJECTS IN THANET

Councillor Pugh, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development made a presentation and made the following points:

- The council was awarded £51 million for the Levelling Up Funds projects to be implemented in the district;
- Thanet District Council (TDC) was one of a few councils in Kent who received these funds;
- Officers should be commended for the efforts they put into these successful bids;
- An officer to support with the administrative processes for the project implementation was recruited;
- The reporting protocol and governance arrangements were different for each project;
- For example the Margate Town Deal has a Board that monitors the implementation of the town deal projects;
- On the other hand, Levelling up Fund have Scrutiny Panels for Margate and Ramsgate;
- TDC's Cabinet Member sits on the Board and the two Panel;
- An Interim Director was recruited to deliver the town deal projects through the Creative Land Trust;
- The Winter Gardens business case was had also been approved;
- Each of these project had its own performance indicators to report on and measure progress against;
- The Town Deal Board was no longer meeting monthly as before because projects had been approved and now the main task was implementation and monitoring.

Members of the Panel asked questions and made comments as follows:

- In this current business environment, were the business plans still appropriate in term in relation to budgets?
 - It was pleasing to note that there will be additional staff to the Regeneration team. Engagement with the public was an important aspect of project implementation. One of the public representatives has not been attending meetings and this needed looking into;
 - How effective were the People's Panels? Was it doing the job it was set up to do?
 - The public were asking when they would be able to see the evidence of the funding results on the ground;
 - Had the Creative Land Trust identified buildings in Margate to be used under the Town Deal projects?
 - The Trust could consider buildings in Arlington Square;
 - Has Dreamland started operating?
 - Was the council likely to get an investor for the RoRo refurbishment?
 - The Regeneration team had done a commendable job by submitting a number of successful bids. Could the business cases information be shared with Members?
 - If the public could be given information regarding the project implementation timetable that would help;
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- Could the council assist community groups to apply for such funding?
 - With regards to the Band Stage, was the funding given directly to the community group? Who was responsible for overseeing the spending and accounting for the funds? Who was responsible for monitoring project implementation?
 - Was there any scope for the public to see how the funds were accounted for?
 - Was there any progress regarding security ferry services for cargo for the Ramsgate Port and were there any destination ports identified?
 - Were there any alternatives used for the Port together with match funding that had been identified to date?
 - Was the project related to the Port going to leave Smack Boys and Sea Cadets without suitable space to operate and had any suitable alternative space been found for them?
 - Was there a time limit for the third party to claim funding for completed project work?

Councillor Pugh, Louise Askew, Director of Regeneration and Chris Blundell, Deputy CEx & S151 Officer responded to Member comments and questions as follows:

- Each project had a contingency element in the budget to cater for changes in costs of project implementation;
- Officers have been in discussion with government regarding likely changes in costs for project implementation due to the current economic climate;
- All of the current projects would be implemented but maybe to a lesser degree;
- Some of the projects would be value engineered;
- The intention of the government was for these projects to boost the economic environment of local economies throughout the country;
- The Deputy Leader would look into the issue Board members who do not attend meetings;
- It was important for the Board to engage with the whole community;
- A lot of community engagement work had been done and the government were complementary about Thanet's level of that engagement;
- There were current discussions on streamlining the reporting process for the various projects;
- It was appreciated that the public could be frustrated by not seeing what work being carried out on the ground. However the projects had different implementation phases. Once work starts on the ground the public would be able to see what was going on;

- However it was important to keep the public informed of what was going on;
 - It was equally important that the correct prescribed processes were followed as the council was the accounting body for the funds;
 - It should not be long before the actual project work on ground would start;
 - The Creative Land Trust was beginning some work of identifying spaces within Margate;
 - The Trust was now beginning to make some progress;
 - The buildings in Arlington Square was a good idea and would be passed on to the Trust;
 - The £4.9million for the Dreamland was to kick-start the process and get private investors to join in. This was the only project that required match funding;
 - The Deputy Leader was going to confer with the Town Board the request made by the Panel for the Board to share information with Members;
 - The Town Board used a scoring process to adjudicate on projects to receive funding and Dreamland and Band Stage had gone through that same process;
 - With regards to the assurance process; the council's S151 Officer would be responsible for the process sign offs;
 - The third sector players that got funding signed up to the process in the grant agreement;
 - The profile of spend would be submitted by each of these groups;
 - There would progress updates on all projects;
 - Due process had to be followed for awarding contracts;
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- All projects would be required to evidence expenditure including receipts;
 - Payments to the Dreamland and Band Stage would be made in arrears. That means they spend and recover their costs through the grant;
 - There was a detailed process for accessing the grants;
 - Discussions were ongoing with interested parties regarding the future of the Port;
 - The successful completion of these current projects would contribute to a successful port;
 - The Port was an attractive asset and there had been approaches from private investors;
 - A Project Manager would start the zoning of the Port which would lead to a detailing out of ideas for developing Ramsgate Port;
 - The project would ensure the accommodation of a broad range of boats;
 - Discussions were ongoing with the Sea Cadets to identify alternative working space for them;
 - March 2025 was the deadline for delivering the Margate town Deal;
 - The profile of spend was an important milestone for checking progress on delivery;
 - If the third sector started to struggle there a reprofiling would be carried out and project adjustments made and sent to the government seeking alterations to the project.

The Char thanked Councillor Pugh and Louise Askew for the presentation and the Panel noted the presentation.

409. TLS KPI Q1 2022/23 - HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

Michelle Jackson, Resident Involvement Manager introduced the report and made the following points:

- The service had managed a full compliance regarding lifts, fire assessments and gas;

- There were 140 outstanding actions and there were 134 overdue actions down from 200 in Q4;
- The more fire risk assessments that were done by the Service the more actions that the service needed to carry out;
- The Service was not pleased with the performance of the domestic electrical safety and officers were keeping up the pressure on MEARS to improve the performance in this area;
- A contractor would be brought in in Q2 to work on the domestic electrical safety area;
- MEARS would get more sub contractors to drive up performance;
- Council officers would continue to hold regular meetings with MEARS management;
- Some work was also needed to improve the VOIDS performance as there were some backlogs;
- It was pleasing to note that the Incomes Team now had a full complement of officers that would drive up performance for the team;
- The team was now able to reach out to residents much faster;
- Tenant and Leaseholder Services managers were meeting regularly to consider cases where residents were struggling with payments.

Councillor Jill Bayford, Cabinet Member for Housing also added that there were huge successes since the service was brought back in-house. Cllr Bayford also said that there were challenges being faced by the service. And thanked officers for the detailed report.

Members asked questions and made comments as follows:

- The number of void properties in Thanet was not as many as one would find in other districts. This was testimony to the good work being done by the Housing team;
- The figures for Gas Call and lack of customer satisfaction were reported as being 20%. What was causing this dissatisfaction?
- What was the team doing about this level of dissatisfaction? Could officers drill down in order to understand the reasons behind this?
- There were less complaints now which was evidence of the good work being put in by the Service;
- It was also good to note that the team had also reported on the areas that were not performing to expectation;
- Members thanked officers for the hard work.

Ms Jackson said that the team was working on getting more feedback from residents which would create a better understanding of why there were levels of dissatisfaction in the reported areas.

Members noted the report.

410. REVIEW OF OSP WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23

Members were asked to send any suggestions for future presentations to Democratic Services.

Members then noted the report.

411. FORWARD PLAN & EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 8.25 pm