

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2024 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Phil Fellows (Chair); Councillors D Green, Austin, Bright, Bright, Britcher, Currie, Davis, Kup, Paul Moore, Packman, Pope and Wing

In Attendance: Garner, Keen, Manners and Nichols

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were given by Councillor Farooki.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Kup proposed, Councillor Currie seconded and Members agreed the minutes to be a correct record of the meeting held on 16 January 2024.

4. CHANGES TO THE STATUTORY INSTRUMENT GOVERNING THE LEVEL OF FINES FOR FLY TIPPING, BREACH OF DUTY OF CARE

Eden Geddes, Enforcement & Multi Agency Task Force Manager, introduced the report making the following key points:

- From 2022-2023, local authorities in England had dealt with approximately 1.8 million fly tipping incidents. Approximately 3,000 of these were in Thanet.
- In July 2023, the government published an antisocial action behaviour plan. This plan was committed to changing the laws and systems to take a zero tolerance approach to a wide range of anti-social behaviours.
- Within the action plan, there was the option to increase fines issues for fixed penalty notices in relation to fly tipping.
- The council recommended increasing the penalty limit for fly tipping offenses from £400 to £1,000. Furthermore increasing the breaches of care notices in relation to waste from £400 to £600.

Councillors commented and asked the following questions:

- There was support for this proposal from Councillors.
- Fly tipping was a blight on Thanet's community.
- Income from fly tipping fines was considered relatively small. The increase in penalties was centred around trying to discourage fly tipping rather than trying to collect monetary funds.
- Would there be more posters in the public sphere regarding the increase in penalties?
- Was there a reason why the council did not choose to increase the fine for littering and graffiti?
- CCTV was considered very important within this realm, the council should make the most of this.
- There was an education programme that needed to follow on from this for the public, and notably for airbnb's.

- Mobile CCTV would be a positive if possible.
- Was there a strategy for the council to gain more successful prosecutions?
- What was the proportion of professional fly tippers?
- When did Maidstone council raise the penalty for fly tipping and did the council see a decrease in fly tipping due to the charges being increased?
- Was there a process whereby individuals can be brought into line, without being given a criminal offense for fly tipping?
- Had the housing associations been engaged with by the council?
- Were the new cameras covert cameras?

Eden Geddes responded with the following points:

- A comprehensive communications plan would be looked into regarding new posters.
- This area of enforcement principally only covered fly tipping offenses, not littering offenses.
- Investigating fly tipping was operated through prescribed legal frameworks. The council had been making better use of CCTV resources. The work streams were continually being developed.
- Larger scale fly tipping scenes were principally done by professionals.
- Maidstone increased their penalties in September 2023. Currently there was no data to confirm whether the increase acted as a deterrent.
- There were statutory waste notices which would be enforced upon by section 46 notices.
- Housing associations were engaged with and the council worked in conjunction with these associations where appropriate.
- The council had moved away from covert cameras. However, there were times whereby the council worked with organizations with covert cameras.

Councillors noted the report.

5. **PURCHASE OF 2 X MECHANICAL SWEEPER VEHICLES**

Matthew Elmer, Head of Cleansing Services, gave a presentation making the following key points:

- The programme included the provision for the purchase of two 7 ½ tonne mechanical road sweepers.
- Previously the council had 18 tonne sweepers and four 2 tonne sweepers, but these had all reached the end of their life, the service had been relying on a single hired 7 ½ tonne vehicle.
- The new vehicles would be used for cleansing roads, and would be beneficial in the winter.
- The proposal was in line with the draft corporate plan 'to keep our district safe and clean.'
- The proposed vehicles were both diesel powered.
- The proposal gives three options, not to purchase the vehicles, to purchase alternatives or to purchase the recommended option.

Councillors commented and asked the following questions:

- What was the lifespan of these vehicles?
- Members considered the report positive news for the council.
- Was there a way of communicating to residents when their street would be cleaned?
- What was the cost of having a road sweeper in comparison to the mechanical sweeper?

- Questioning regarding parking suspension was raised, particularly in streets there parking caused difficulty sweeping.
- Different sized mechanical sweeper vehicles would be realistic to sweep all the different sorts of streets where vehicle traffic was present.
- It was important to work with residents, and maintain dialogue with residents.

Matthew Elmer responded with the following points:

- The vehicles had a useful life of approximately 7 years.
- Schedules were in place, it would be looked into if information regarding schedules could be published.
- There was a review on the maximum amount of impact that the vehicles would have.
- Town priorities were noted as priority to the operations.
- Larger vehicles had a higher capacity.

Councillors noted the report.

6. RAMSGATE REGENERATION PROGRAMME

Louise Askew, Head of Regeneration and Growth, gave a presentation making the following key points:

- A procurement exercise to appoint a team to carry out surveys and prepare a schedule for the Ramsgate regeneration programme had been underway.
- The council was aiming to know whether they had been successful with the bid for a port operator before committing to the infrastructure expenditure.
- The leader of the council had attended a meeting with the Thanet fisherman's association on the 31st January 2024 with the plan to set up a further meeting.

Councillors Nichols spoke under 20.1.

Councillors commented and asked the following questions:

- Questioning was raised regarding the emissions figures of the vessels.
- If berths needed substantial work on it, where had previous budgets been spent?
- Berth 2 had been functional for 8 years, what was the balance for revenue costs?
- Emissions brought to the town were discussed. It was questioned when there would be an environmental impact assessment on Ramsgate town.
- There was a funding gap within the report.

Louise Askew responded with the following points:

- The revenue costs couldn't be specifically approximated for one berth, it was as a whole as the port and harbour.
- The funding gap in the report would be known in June 2024. At the time of the meeting this could not be confirmed.
- There was some discussion with DfT regarding the requirements of Border Force. Standards had come out, and impacted on some of the designs.
- The process with seaborne freight was a different process. The council are not been looking for a ferry operator, they are looking for a port operator.
- The council would need to understand what the requirements are for an environmental impact report and will look into it further.

- There was an external legal team working with the council, there was a robust template which was being used to populate requirements and questions.
- The criteria would be open to public knowledge and would be published.

Councillors noted the report.

7. **REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023/24**

Councillor Fellows, the Chair, introduced the report noting that:

- Fly tipping was on the report.
- Grant funding would be brought forward.
- After the grant funding report, events would be looked at by the panel.
- Councillor Duckworth would attend and discuss how the council conducted leases.

It was agreed that fly tipping would be paused for review.

8. **FORWARD PLAN AND EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST**

Councillors noted the report.

Meeting concluded : 9.23 pm