

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **22nd April 2014**.

Present:

Cllr. Chilton (Vice-Chairman in the Chair);

Cllrs. Apps, Bennett, Davison, Hodgkinson, Mrs Hutchinson, Link, Marriott, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Sims, Smith.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillors Marriott and Sims attended as Substitute Members for Councillors Burgess and Feacey respectively.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Adby, Bartlett, Burgess, Feacey, Shorter, Yeo.

Also Present:

Cllr. Hicks.

Finance Manager, Head of Community and Housing, Housing Resource Manager, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

403 Declaration of Interest

Councillor Hodgkinson declared an 'Other Interest' as a Council Tenant.

404 Report of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group on the HRA 30 Year Business Plan

A Member felt that the HRA Business Plan had been fully scrutinised and commended the report to the Committee.

She questioned whether a report could be compiled on the number of garages that were being rented, sub-let or vacant throughout the Borough. She was concerned about the number of garages that were potential being sub-let without the Councils knowledge. The Head of Community and Housing advised that whilst it would be difficult to ascertain if a garage was being sub-let, the Council could terminate a contract easier than that for a rental property. There was a waiting list for garages in some areas of the Borough.

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commends the HRA 30 Year Business Plan to the Cabinet.

405 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14

The report highlighted the work that had been undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the municipal year 2013/14.

A Member drew the Committee's attention to the work undertaken on the 'Procurement of Energy Saving Proposal for Civic Centre – LED lighting and sub metering'. He had submitted a number of questions regarding this to the Senior Scrutiny Officer. The Vice-Chairman in the Chair advised that a response had been sent to those questions that afternoon.

Several Members raised concern regarding changes that had been made to the budget by the Cabinet during the budget scrutiny process, in particular to the lack of consultation that had been carried out with the Task Group. It was felt that should changes need to be made in future the Task Group should be kept fully informed. The Task Group had a very important job to carry out and should be treated accordingly. The Finance Manager advised that the change had come about following a decision to freeze Council Tax for two years. The Task Group's concern at the way the decision had been taken without informing them had been fed back to the Cabinet at its meeting in February 2014.

A Member drew attention to the work undertaken on the 'Communication and Consultation Strategy for the Core Strategy Review'. She felt that the consultation undertaken by the Council during the process should be commended, however was concerned about the lack of consultation carried out by Parish Councils and External Bodies. The Vice-Chairman in the Chair advised the Member to raise the issue at the Parish Forum Meeting the following evening. A number of Parish Council representatives would be in attendance as well as the Council's Planning Policy Manager.

Resolved:

That (i) the report be received and noted.

(ii) the report be presented to Full Council later in the year.

406 Future Reviews and Report Tracker

The Committee's attention was drawn to the reports scheduled for the May meeting, in particular fly tipping. A Member felt that this was an important subject and had created serious problems in a number of rural areas in the Borough.

A Member was concerned that an update on the Conningbrook Project was on the tracker to be brought to the Committee in August 2014. He felt that the matter should be given a proper hearing and was anxious that a full discussion took place as soon as was possible.

Another Member felt that the Committee should consider reviewing service areas.

The Vice-Chairman in the Chair advised that Members could request items to be included on the tracker for the Committee to consider. They would need to write to the Chairman to advise of the item that they would like to be considered, and if appropriate, these would be put before the Committee to decide if it should be added to the work programme.

Resolved:

That the future reviews and report tracker be noted.

407 Thanks

The Committee requested that their thanks to the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Officers who supported the Committee this year be recorded.

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Kirsty Liddell:
Telephone: 01233 330499 Email: kirsty.liddell@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.gov.uk/committees