

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 **20th May 2014**.

Present:

Cllr. Chilton (Chairman);

Cllr. Davison (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Buchanan, Davidson, Feacey, Hodgkinson, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Sims.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillor Davidson attended as a Substitute Member for Councillor Adby.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Adby, Apps, Bartlett, Mrs Blanford, Burgess, Mrs Hutchinson, Miss Martin, Yeo.

Also Present:

Cllr. Galpin

Interim Waste and Street Scene Manager, Street Scene Officer, Policy and Performance Officer, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

14 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Feacey	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he was on the Management Committee of UK LPG.	17
Hodgkinson	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a member of the Steering Committee of Ashford Community Woodland.	16

15 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 22nd April 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

16 Fly Tipping – Powers and Obligations for the Council

The report provided Members with an overview of the legislation on powers relating to fly tipping. Current issues and considerations for Ashford were also included. The Interim Waste and Street Scene Manager and the Street Scene Officer were present at the meeting.

The Interim Waste and Street Scene Manager conveyed the apologies from Councillor Mrs Blanford as Portfolio Holder for not being able to attend the Committee. He explained that Councillor Mrs Blanford had wished the Committee to be advised that fly tipping was an issue which Environmental Services took very seriously and that fortunately the figures showed that fly tipping had not increased significantly since the introduction of the new Waste Management Service. He explained that Councillor Mrs Blanford had said that the service was looking at ways of controlling dumping in the countryside which might explore the use of more covert surveillance and it was intended that action would be taken when it was possible to identify people fly tipping.

The Interim Waste and Street Scene Manager then took the Committee through the report in detail and drew attention to a guide which had been produced by the Environment Agency (www.gov.uk/manage-waste-on-land-guidance-for-land-managers) and said he was happy to leave copies of that document for Members. He also had a supply of informational leaflets which dealt with community cleaning events. The Committee then asked a number of questions and a summary of the responses given is shown below:-

- Information regarding the number of prosecutions for fly tipping over the previous 12 months period could be provided.
- There were no differences in terms of the legislation for either private or social tenants, however, some social landlords made their own arrangements for dealing with litter and fly tipping.
- The leaflets available at the meeting emphasised the need for residents to manage their own waste and if they employed a disposal contractor, it was their responsibility to check the status of that contractor as they would be responsible if it could be proven that the disposal of such waste had been subject to fly tipping. If any Member had any evidence to identify the fly tipper, this should be reported to the Street Scene Team.
- If the Kent County Council received any notifications of fly tipping they would check whether it was located on adopted public highway and if it was they would report this to Ashford Borough Council as the responsible Authority who would arrange for contractors to clear the area.
- Litter from fast food outlets did not constitute fly tipping, however, Officers were keen to encourage the reporting of litter to the Cleaning Team who would arrange for the litter to be dealt with. In some cases evidence might

show that it was a particular hotspot and therefore additional cleaning resources could be applied.

- In terms of street cleansing, the contractor was required to clean all areas to the appropriate standard and if this had not been done it was important to report it to the Cleaning Team.
- There were very good voluntary groups in the area who helped keep areas of their community clean from litter. The contractor Biffa was also available to help. Clarification was given on paragraph 5.9 regarding the household green waste collections and associated bin deliveries. The paragraph had been incorporated in the report to illustrate that there was greater demand which had to be dealt with via a small team and therefore limited resources were available to assist in areas such as enforcement.
- In terms of the Council possibly assisting in tracing evidence of fly tipping and the source of that fly tipping was a resources issue. The legislation stipulated that it was the Council's responsibility to clear up fly tipping and if evidence was available this would be followed up.
- It was accepted that for certain items which were illegally dumped such as old cookers and fridges and such appliances, it was impossible to trace who had actually owned that equipment.
- Assistance was available for Members from the Cleaning Team in terms of community clean up initiatives.
- Relationships with the various schools were fostered and higher cleaning regimes were in place around the school vicinities. However, the Council had no enforcement powers to go on to school premises.

In terms of any recommendations to make to the Cabinet on this issue, the Committee agreed that the Cabinet be asked to consider the placement of covert camera traps to identify the perpetrators of fly tipping.

Resolved:

- That (i) the report be received and noted.**
- (ii) the Cabinet be asked to consider the placement of covert camera traps to identify the perpetrators of fly tipping.**

17 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 4 2013/14

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report. He explained that the report aimed to provide Members and the public with a transparent overview on the performance of the Council during the Quarter. The report included information on what the Cabinet had achieved through its decision-making processes, key

performance data and consideration of the wider borough picture which impacted on the Council's work. The report was focussed around the 2013-2015 Corporate Projects. The Policy and Performance Officer drew particular attention to a number of issues set out within the report which included the purchase of International House; the extension of the popular PopUp Ashford Initiative; the addition of two more priority projects making eight in total, the performance of which he explained was monitored by the Ashford Strategic Development Board. The reduction throughout the year in terms of the number of households in B & B accommodation reflected the additional resources made available to enable the Council to be more proactive on the homelessness issue.

A Member referred to the statement that of those checked in the last three months, 100% of the Borough's Council homes had a Gas Safety Certificate and said that he believed this was misleading as he understood that there were three properties which still did not have such a Certificate. The Policy and Performance Officer confirmed that the report only dealt with those properties checked in the last three months and said that he understood that the Portfolio Holder had raised this issue with the Housing Department. He also agreed to provide Members with information relating to the staffing of the team which dealt with the recycling roll-out now compared to those employed during the peak period last Summer.

In response to a question and comment from a Member regarding the PopUp Shop Initiative and the figures for the use of the Ashford International Railway Station, the Portfolio Holder explained that none of the users of the PopUp Initiative had opened premises in Ashford but this was not one of the driving forces behind the Initiative. He said that they had, however, benefitted from exposure in the business world and had received significant support from the Town Team Manager. Many, however, traded via the Internet and the longer tenancies which would now be offered would allow the Initiative to bed in for a longer period of time. In terms of the International Station, the Portfolio Holder said the future would see competitors other than Eurostar being able to operate services and therefore that was why the Council and Kent County Council were pursuing a project with Network Rail to ensure that the signalling at the Station would be able to take the next generation of high speed trains using the station.

In terms of current figures for "bedroom tax and welfare issues", the Policy and Performance Officer said that at the Cabinet meeting in May there had been a full report on welfare which had examined the whole welfare issue in detail.

A Member commented that he believed the report presented a comfortable picture and explained in his view it should be an operational document and therefore references to benchmarking and comparative data should be incorporated.

The Policy and Performance Officer advised that at the end of every performance year, he met with each Head of Service to discuss the appropriate measures to form the basis of monitoring over the next twelve month period. He said he would welcome any feedback that Members had on the future format of the report and the information it contained.

In response to a question about the electric vehicle charging points, the Policy and Performance Officer said he understood that they would have the mechanism of recording the usage of each meter, however, he could not confirm whether they were all installed and operational.

Following discussion the Committee agreed to make two recommendations to the Cabinet, one regarding Gas Safety Certificates and the other about suggested changes to the format of the Quarterly Performance Report.

Resolved:

- That (i) the report be received and noted.**
- (ii) the Cabinet be advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers that steps should be taken to ensure that all Borough Council owned properties have a current Gas Certificate.**
- (iii) the Cabinet be asked to consider the view of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Quarterly Performance Report be improved by providing more comparative performance information.**

18 Future Reviews and Report Tracker

The Chairman explained that as the Committee was meeting to consider the call-in on the 11th June 2014, it was his view that as the report on sickness and absenteeism was the only item currently scheduled for the 24th June 2014 and which would be presented for information only with no presenting Officers present, this meeting should be cancelled and the sickness report be deferred to the July meeting.

The Chairman then asked the Committee whether there were any suggestions from Members for items to be considered by the Committee in 2014/15.

A Member suggested that he would like to see an update report in terms of the Portas Pilot Project for the Town Centre.

The Vice-Chairman advised that he had a number of suggestions which included the operation of 106 Agreements and Parish Council involvement; an update as to the position in terms of the Conningbrook Country Park (which is on the agenda tracker for the July meeting); an update on the operations of the two commercial companies the Council had agreed to establish; lorry parking (although he accepted that it might be sensible to wait for a report from the Truck Stop Task Group) and the Railway Museum.

In view of the lack of attendance from several Members, the Committee considered it appropriate for the suggestions made at the meeting to be considered by the Committee at the next Ordinary Meeting of the Committee in July. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget Resource Management and Procurement said he wished to express a plea for caution in terms of the reviews the Committee were considering

undertaking particularly in terms of the amount of Officers' time which might be required to support those reviews. He therefore asked that when the programme was determined that it would be scheduled accordingly.

Resolved:

- That (i) the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on the 24th June 2014 be cancelled in view of the call-in meeting established for the 11th June 2014 and the sickness and absenteeism report be considered at the July meeting.**
- (ii) a list of the suggestions made at the meeting, together with any others which may be sent to the Senior Scrutiny Officer in due course, be included within the Agenda for the July meeting of the Committee.**

(KRF/AEH)

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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Keith Fearon:
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