



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane,
Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL on Tuesday 20th October at 7.00 pm.

The Members of this Committee are:-

Cllr Chilton (Chairman)

Cllr Michael (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Aaby, Burgess, Farrell, Feacey, Howard, Knowles, Krause, Link, Sims, Wedgbury.

Agenda

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Nos. |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. Apologies/Substitutes – To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(iii) | |
| 2. Declarations of Interest:- To declare any interests which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document: | (i) |
| a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) | |
| b) Other Significant Interests (OSI) | |
| c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests | |
| See Agenda Item 2 for further details | |
| 3. Minutes – to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 22 nd September 2015 | |

Part I – Matters Referred to the Committee in Relation to Call-In of a Decision made by the Cabinet

None for this meeting

Part II – Responses of the Cabinet to Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

None for this Meeting

Part III – Ordinary Decision Items

4. A More Strategic Approach to Scrutiny – The Chief Executive wishes to discuss his thoughts on adopting a more strategic approach to scrutiny
5. Disabled Adaptions to Council Homes
6. Review of changes made to the Mayoralty following the O&S Review in 2010

Part IV – Information/Monitoring Items

7. Future Reviews and Report Tracker.

KF
12/10/2015

Declarations of Interest (see also “Advice to Members” below)

- (a) **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)** under the Localism Act 2011, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares a DPI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting for that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

- (b) **Other Significant Interests (OSI)** under the Kent Code of Conduct as adopted by the Council on 19 July 2012, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares an OSI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting before the debate and vote on that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted). However, prior to leaving, the Member may address the Committee in the same way that a member of the public may do so.

- (c) **Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests** not required to be disclosed under (a) and (b), i.e. announcements made for transparency reasons alone, such as:

- Membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items, or
- Where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person, or
- Where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position.

[Note: an effect on the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc; OR an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc, would both probably constitute either an OSI or in some cases a DPI].

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG’s Guide for Councillors, at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/240134/Openness_and_transparency_on_personal_interests.pdf
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, with revisions adopted on 17.10.13, and a copy can be found in the Constitution at <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/part-5---codes-and-protocols>
- (c) If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or OSI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democratic Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

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 September 2015**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Britcher, Burgess, Feacey, Knowles, Krause, Link, Sims, Mrs Webb, Wedgbury.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillors Britcher and Mrs Webb attended as Substitute Members for Councillors Farrell and Adby respectively.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Adby, Chilton, Farrell

Also Present:

Cllr. Shorter

Resilience Partnership Manager, Resilience Officer, Strategic Housing and Property Manager, Policy and Performance Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

136 Declarations of Interest

| Councillor | Interest | Minute No. |
|------------|--|------------|
| Wedgbury | Made a "Voluntary Announcement" as he had been in the past involved in reviewing responses to emergency planning activities. | 138 |

137 Minutes

Councillor Feacey referred to Minute No. 87 – Quality Bus Partnership and advised that the Public Transport Liaison Task Group had now been established and this would be the most appropriate medium for Members to discuss matters associated with bus or rail travel. The next meeting of that Group would be held on Friday 9th October 2015 at 9.30 am. All Members would be formally advised of the arrangements for this meeting in due course.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on the 21st July 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

138 Emergency Planning Response to Oak Tree Road Gas Explosion

Further to the request made at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2015, the report gave a brief overview of the Ashford Borough Council Emergency Planning arrangements and a specific response to the Oak Tree Road gas explosion and fire which occurred in June 2015.

The report was opened up to the Committee and the following responses were given to questions/comments:-

- It was normal practice for all notifications of potential emergencies to be channelled via the Monitoring Centre. In terms of funding for Ashford Borough Council costs, there was not a specific budget and costs had to be met from within current services' budgets. In certain cases expenditure on emergencies over a certain threshold could under the Bellwin arrangements enable Local Authorities to recover elements of their costs.
- The Health and Safety Executive had become involved as an employee of Southern Gas Network had been working in the area at the time of the incident and the Health and Safety Executive was responsible for investigating accidents at work.
- The report was a direct response to the Committee in terms of the ABC response to the Oak Tree Road incident. A review of how the incident had been handled in practice would be subject to a debrief report which would be considered by Management Team in early October. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be welcome to see the report and its recommendations following consideration by Management Team.
- In terms of emergency planning generally, the Borough Council did not work in isolation as it was part of the Kent Resilience Forum which was a multi-agency forum that worked together to plan and learn from best practice.
- The delay in undertaking the debrief was largely attributable to the work that the section had to undertake in terms of follow up actions to the response, Operation Stack in July and delays due to the unavailability of staff during the August holiday period.
- One of the Ward Members for the area affected said that there was a high level of contentment from the residents in terms of how the Council had handled the emergency.
- The Fire Service had overall control over the incident with the ABC response team being headed up by the Chief Executive. In the short term the residents displaced by the incident were housed initially by their relatives.
- The Officers present were not aware whether the final cause of the explosion had been determined as that matter was being handled by the Housing

Service. The ABC Insurance Officer had all the information in terms of potential claims the Council may be able to make arising from the incident.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the Resilience Partnership Manager and Resilience Officer for attending the meeting and said that he believed the incident had been handled very well.

Resolved:

- That (i) the report be received and noted.**
- (ii) the outcome of the debrief and any recommendations be brought back to the Committee in due course.**

139 International House - Report on Full Year's Trading

The report advised the Committee of the financial outturn from International House following the first full year's trading to 31st March 2015.

The report was opened up to the Committee and the following responses were given to questions/comments:-

- International House had been purchased in April 2014 at a cost of £7.37 million and the income generated up to 31st March 2015 represented a 10.87% return on investment. The outturn figures did not reflect the refurbishment costs of the first floor as this expenditure had been capitalised.
- In terms of how much it was hoped to save on service costs, the issue of facilities management was being examined in terms of both International House and the Park Mall shopping centre which had been purchased in the Summer. It was considered that facilities management could be undertaken in-house which would achieve a saving over the current costs incurred for both properties.
- The Portfolio Holder believed that the purchase of Park Mall had given the Council the opportunity to streamline the management of these properties and a report would be considered by the Cabinet in November 2015. He further advised that although the initial purchase of International House was not related to the core business of the Council, its acquisition and of other properties such as Park Mall would help achieve the aim for Ashford to become grant free from Central Government and by placing the properties in local ownership it would be of benefit to the local community.
- In response to a further question, the Strategic and Housing Property Manager advised that at the present time there was not a need to refurbish other floors within International House. Furthermore it was likely that in the near future tenants would be taking up the last available space within the building.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the Strategic Housing and Property Manager for attending the meeting.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

140 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 4 2014/15 and Quarter 1 2015/16

The Committee considered the report which had been approved by the Cabinet on 10th September 2015.

The report was opened up to the Committee and the following responses were given to questions/comments:-

- It was noted that there was a comment in the report that those claiming Universal Credit were no longer included in the figures for those claiming Job Seekers Allowance and the figure for those claiming Universal Credit was sought. There were currently 103 recipients of Universal Credit in the Borough but this only showed new single claimants. Further information on this particular issue had been set out in the Welfare Impact report which had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting in September 2015. In terms of obtaining a better comparison in terms of the overall unemployment level, the difficulty of comparing both figures had been accepted by the Government and work was under way to identify an appropriate method for identifying the overall unemployment level.
- The Council Tax and Welfare Reform Task Group had been heavily involved in the overall management of the transition to the application of Universal Credit and the report presented to the Cabinet in September 2015 on the welfare impacts contained a significant amount of detailed information which Members were encouraged to read.
- The encouragement for residents to take up the option of direct debit payments for Council Tax was currently approached in two ways. The Communications Team were involved in the production of a leaflet which was sent to all residents with their Council Tax bill. Furthermore, the opportunity to complete a direct debit mandate was available via a live form on the Council's website. It was noted that the practice at one Authority when receiving phone calls from residents was that their details were examined to ascertain whether the residents were paying by direct debit or not and if not, they were encouraged to take up that arrangement. It was accepted that the encouragement of direct debit was the way forward, however, there were a significant number of residents in the Borough who did not have a bank account. Officers were working with the local Banks within the town to try and resolve this and also the option of credit unions to provide banking services was being explored. The Portfolio Holder agreed to ascertain whether callers

to the Council were encouraged to take up direct debit mandates if they did not pay their Council Tax in this way.

- In relation to the Channel Shift programme, the Portfolio Holder explained that a significant amount of work had been undertaken on this and although residents were encouraged to use electronic communication they could arrange for face to face appointments. There was insufficient data at the present time to be able to identify whether a reduction in the number of face to face contacts had led to a consequent increase in the use of self-service. A further 12 month period would enable such data to be examined.
- There were no plans to extend the Borough Council's operations to provide a 24/7 service although in practice by utilising web payment systems and applications this enabled residents to transact with the Council outside of the normal working day.
- In response to a comment that it would have been helpful to have information on the effect the new free parking initiative was having on the use of Council car parks, the Portfolio Holder said that this could be considered for inclusion in a future report. He also explained that there were many other areas of the Council's performance which could be reflected in the document.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the Policy and Performance Officer for attending the meeting.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

141 Future Reviews and Report Tracker

The Committee considered two items put forward for review which were Freedom of Information Decisions – Withholding Information from Requests Received and the Effectiveness of the Whistleblowing Policy. Following discussion the Committee decided that they did not wish to review these matters.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

(KRF/AEH)
MINS:OSCX 22.09.15

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Keith Fearon:
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Agenda Item No: 5
Report To: Overview & Scrutiny
Date: 20th October 2015
Report Title: Disabled Adaptations to Council Homes
Report Author: Richard Robinson
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Clokie



Summary:

This report provides an update for members on the impact of policy changes introduced in July 2014 for disabled adaptation work to council homes; information on the levels of spend on such work (including in relation to similar housing providers) and commentary on levels of demand.

Key Decision:

NO

Affected Wards:

All

Recommendations:

The Committee be asked to:-
Note the contents of the report

Policy Overview:

Carrying out adaptation work to council homes is a key element of the health and wellbeing agenda. It promotes independence for the tenants concerned, it enables them to stay in their home, safely and for longer, and helps prevent more expensive health and care interventions.

Such work was one of five key priorities identified by members and agreed in July 2012 as part of the increased flexibility offered by reform of the HRA subsidy arrangements.

Financial Implications:

None

Risk Assessment

NO – not required for this report

Community Impact Assessment

NO – not required for this report

Other Material Implications:

None

Exemption Clauses:

None

Background Papers:

None

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Report Title: Disabled Adaptations to Council Homes

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides an update for members on the impact of policy changes introduced in July 2014 for disabled adaptation work to council homes and funded via the housing revenue account (HRA). The report also provides some comparative information on the levels of spend on such adaptation work by some other Kent housing providers, and commentary on levels of demand.

Issue to be Decided

2. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

Background

3. There are three main strands to carrying out home adaptation work for those affected by some form of disability.
 - Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) provide funds to help people requiring adaptation work. This is largely grant funding from government topped up with general fund contributions. (Such funding is generally used for private sector dwelling adaptations although can be used in any tenure, including for housing association tenants where work costs exceed £1,000.)
 - Disabled adaptations budget within the housing revenue account (HRA.) This is a specific sum set aside within the HRA to fund works specifically recommended for council tenants only.
 - Planned maintenance programmed works where we will deliver wet rooms for example to designated older persons accommodation.
 - This report looks more closely at the work undertaken in the later two areas.
4. Traditionally, occupational therapists (OTs) have made recommendations as to an individual tenant's adaptation needs to this council and that work was in due course carried out. As people increasingly live longer, and look to maintain living independently (as opposed to residential or nursing care settings) demand for adaptation work has increased dramatically over recent years.
5. Adaptations costing less than £1,000 (e.g. minor concreting, grab rails, additional lighting) are not held on a waiting list and such works orders are placed soon after receipt of recommendation. Minor works usually account for approximately 15 – 20 % of the annual budget. Major works are those likely to cost over £1,000 (e.g. wet rooms, stair lifts) and are placed on a waiting list, and since July 2014, are dealt with in priority order based on a points total that assesses need and waiting time.

6. At the Cabinet meeting on 10th July 2014 members agreed to adopt some policy changes with regard to disabled adaptation work for council tenants. These changes restricted the eligibility criteria in certain cases (e.g. those tenants significantly under-occupying properties) but also approved an increase in budget for adaptation works to help tackle levels of demand.
7. Having applied the revised eligibility criteria and pointing system for a year now, and increased the budget provision, it is appropriate to update members on the impact of these changes.

Impact of Policy Changes and the Current Situation

8. It is clear that since establishing a stricter policy on eligibility demand has effectively reduced for adaptation work. The revised policy in summary basically excluded those people who significantly under-occupy their current council home from being eligible for all but minor adaptation works e.g. a grab rails. Instead officers would work with tenants in such circumstances to encourage them to move to accommodation more suited to their needs, including offering financial support through our assisted moves scheme.
9. The upshot of adopting this policy was that 25 tenants on the waiting list were advised in summer 2014 they could not have adaptation work done, and the value of this work was £98k. Thus far no tenants have sought to appeal the decision to refuse the work. Members may well recall that a robust appeal process, heard by members rather than officers, was a fundamental component of the revised policy adopted last year to ensure fairness and transparency applied to any decisions to refuse work.
10. In terms of demand for adaptation work in the light of the tighter policy and eligibility criteria this too would appear to have tailed off to some extent as OTs advise clients of the council's stricter criteria. Although not all reduced demand can be attributable to such stricter criteria, it nevertheless plays a key part. There will also be the impact of:
 - existing adaptations benefitting new tenants of a property where we better match their needs with the suitability of the property.
 - the benefit of tailoring our planned maintenance programmes for bathroom work to include wet rooms as standard in older persons accommodation
 - greater budget commitment
 - and in due course the effect of remodelled sheltered housing
11. Table 1 below indicates changes in demand and outstanding work requests.

| | 31/03/13 | 01/03/14 | 31/03/15 | 09/09/15 |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Outstanding cases seeking major adaptation work (i.e. work costing more than £1,000) | 161 | 193 | 132 | 122 |
| Estimated total cost of outstanding cases | £622.8k | £766.3k | £544k | £476k |

12. Since introducing the revised policy we have received 52 new requests for major adaptation work (i.e. work costing in excess of £1,000.) Compared to the same 12 month period leading up to July 2014 we received 67 major work requests. Whilst there will always be fluctuations in demand, it does appear the policy change and the message being supported by OTs of what works the council will and will not do, is helping to better manage demand.
13. In addition to trying to manage demand in a better way we have also increased the budget to help tackle the waiting list of outstanding works. Increased commitment to adaptation works was one of the five key priorities established for the HRA in the wake of subsidy reform in 2012 and the budget had been increased in the period to July 2014. However, it was clear that demand was outstripping even these budget increases and members approved a decision to increase the budget still further to address the problem and ensure our ability to deliver adaptation work accorded with best practice recommendations that mean no one should wait more than a year for work to be carried out.
14. As a result the budget for the current year was agreed at £435k and for next year (for 2016/17) there will be a one-off increase to the budget raising it to £605k. This will to help further tackle the waiting list and bring waiting times to within the maximum one year recommended. After that the specific adaptations budget will be set at £300,000 each year as we target a one year maximum waiting time for tenants. This budget provision is at level which is affordable within the overall HRA business plan.
15. The commitment of members to increase budget beyond the government-recommended figure of the equivalent of £60 per council property has helped not only address demand, it has played a significant part in improving the quality of life for many tenants, supported their independence and reduced the number of more costly public sector interventions as a result.
16. We are also due to re-tender the contract for adaptation work, with a new contract due to start in April 2016. We are likely to take the opportunity to alter the contract next time and separate out major and minor works as we feel this may drive better value in the future. Our current price for wet rooms for example is approximately £4,500 per room (this compares with another east Kent authority that is paying £6,500 per room) but we feel we may be able to negotiate better prices and potentially faster response times with a separate 'minor works' contract which may attract more local providers.
17. It should also be borne in mind that over and above the dedicated adaptation budget for work in this area, other works make significant contributions to adaptations and the promotion of independence for our tenants.
 - As a matter of working practice, when refurbishing bathrooms in designated older persons accommodation (sheltered dwellings and 'haven' bungalows) as part of planned maintenance we install flush floor showers. In 2014/15 we installed 53 such bathrooms at a cost of £240k; a further 102 bathrooms are scheduled for work in 2015/16 at

an estimated cost of £560k and we estimate we will spend £95k in 2016/17 providing another 17 wet rooms as part of planned works.

- As part of the council's new build programme since 2012 we have designed and built several properties for specific families with household member(s) with a very significant disability and therefore needs. Additional spend for this work has totalled over £87k
- The council's new build programme has already seen us deliver 45 new homes suitable for older or disabled people since 2011, and the redevelopment of Farrow Court is an excellent example of further commitment to providing such good quality accommodation that promotes independence and encourages moves to more suitable accommodation.
- We have also converted some little-used communal facilities in two haven bungalow schemes into adapted accommodation for disabled people.
- Working with colleagues in planning and housing associations we have been able to actively encourage a number of new developments in the borough suitable for our ageing population. Such developments, across all tenures, help people to continue to live independently whilst also freeing up much needed family houses when they move.

18. The decision to also implement a points system to ensure better prioritisation of resources also seems to be working well. The applicant for adaptation work will complete a questionnaire (with assistance if required) to give officers a better indication as to the specific areas they struggle with in their daily lives and points are awarded to reflect this. Additional points are also awarded to reflect time spent on the waiting list, and as such it is now possible for officers to give much better advice as to likely waiting times and where people are on the waiting list.
19. Accompanying these measures, it was also decided that operationally we would dedicate one member of our surveying staff to the adaptations work area. This has helped achieve closer liaison and greater consistency with the OTs involved in making recommendations, and has helped better focus on delivery of the adaptation work itself by earlier input with our contractor.
20. The evidence we have at present in terms of a reduction in demand through stricter eligibility criteria, coupled with the measures we have taken to increase budget and target older peoples accommodation for wet rooms as part of planned works, all indicate we are well on our way to bringing demand for adaptation works under much greater control. This in turn will lead to a better service in terms of reduced waiting times for applicants and a consequent improvement in quality of life for these people. These measures can therefore genuinely be considered a significant contribution towards preventative health interventions.
21. It is also useful to compare the new working arrangements and budget commitment with other similar housing providers and the adaptation work they do. The table in Appendix 1 (Table 2) provides some information from the authorities working as part of the East Kent Housing organisation. This data does indicate some differences between the various councils, and one figure that stands out is that demand for major works in Ashford seems high in comparison to the others. Talking with a colleague working for East Kent this seems in part down to Ashford still addressing the backlog, but also in some cases the other authorities having adopted a more hard line to refusals in the

past. There does seem to be recognition in most cases that there is growing demand for adaptation work, so Ashford is not alone in feeling this effect, and our response, in terms of budget and better management of demand seem to be having a positive effect.

Risk Assessment

22. Not required for this report

Community Impact Assessment

23. Not required for this report

Conclusion

24. Applying a stricter eligibility criteria for adaptation works does appear to have had a positive impact on our ability to better manage our waiting list for such work and to better target resources where most needed. At the same time, members commitment to increasing the budget spend for adaptations, as well as planned maintenance and new build works, have all helped reduce waiting times for applicants thereby making a significant contribution to their quality of life.
25. It is important that we continue to focus on delivering improved sheltered accommodation and installing wet rooms as standard when refurbishing bathrooms in accommodation specifically for older people. It is also important that we closely monitor demand levels and reflect these when setting budgets, whilst at the same time making sure that all other agencies involved (Kent County Council, Health Services) play their part in not setting unrealistic or unachievable expectations for tenants.

Portfolio Holder's Views

26. I am pleased that these policy and practical changes in this important area of work appear to be having a positive impact. It is important that we do provide resources to help support independent living for some of our most vulnerable tenants but equally this needs to be balanced with seeking other solutions where these represent a better all round outcome for the tenant, such as moving home. I am pleased to see Ashford BC once again taking the lead in delivering change and value for money.

Contact: Richard Robinson (01233) 330405

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Appendix 1

| | | East Kent Housing | | | | |
|---|--|---|----------|---|--|---|
| | <i>Ashford</i> | Canterbury | Dover | Shepway | Thanet | Comments From East Kent Housing |
| Stock Numbers (as of 01/04/14) | 5035 | 5196 | 4442 | 3401 | 3038 | |
| Budget for 2015/16 | £435k | £400k | £457.5k | £270k | £300k major £50k minor | |
| Actual Spend 2014/15 | £373k | £455k | £433k | £280k | £220k major £9k minor | Figures provided are estimates as until 2014 work was largely done separately for each authority |
| No. of jobs completed 2014/15 | 54 major; 208 minor | 288 | 349 | 290 | 34 major 26 minor* | * Thanet figure is estimate |
| No. of people on waiting list for work likely to cost £1,000 or more | 122 | 65 | 52 | 43 | 17 | As of September 2015 |
| Do you positively exclude certain categories of tenant from having adaptation work (e.g. under-occupiers) | Yes, since July 2014 | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | All major works have criteria to meet. We will do any minor works to any property. |
| What is the longest timeframe an eligible applicant is likely to have to wait for work? | <i>We estimate by the end of March 2017 no one should be waiting more than 12 months for major works</i> | 4 years due to a points system | 6 months | 12 months | 6 months | Estimates are approximate |
| Have you altered budgets in recent years to reflect changing demand? If yes, by how much since 2013/14? | Yes – in stages the budget has increased by £135k since 13/14 | This year we are requesting an additional 90k | N/A | This year we are requesting an additional 80k | This year we are requesting an additional 100k | Data from previous budgets unavailable, but we are asking for extra money in this financial year, because waiting lists are increasing. |
| Do you operate a process to help prioritise cases? | Yes – points system; | Yes points system | No | No | Yes points system | |

Table 2

Agenda Item No: 6

Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 20th October 2015

Report Title: Review of changes made to the Mayoralty following the O&S review in 2010

Report Author: Member Services and Scrutiny Manager



Summary: Following a review of the Mayoralty in 2010 some amendments were made to its day-to-day functioning. These amendments were introduced at the start of the municipal year in May 2011. An update report on the effect of these changes was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th September 2012. At that meeting the report was noted subject to it being acknowledged that the Committee would not wish to see the Mayor restricted by the budget in their role as Ambassador to the Borough and that the effect of changes be further reviewed in three years' time. This report presents information for the 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 Mayoral years.

Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: N/A

Recommendations: **The O&S Committee is asked to note the report.**

Policy Overview: None

Financial Implications: None

Risk Assessment N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment N/A

Other Material Implications: N/A

Exemption Clauses: N/A

Background Papers: None

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Report Title: Review of changes made to the Mayoralty following the O&S review in 2010

Purpose of the Report

1. Following a review of the Mayoralty in 2010 some amendments were made to its day-to-day functioning. These amendments were introduced at the start of the municipal year in May 2011. An update report on the effect of these changes was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th September 2012. At that meeting the report was noted subject to it being acknowledged that the Committee would not wish to see the Mayor restricted by the budget in their role as Ambassador to the Borough and that the effect of the changes be further reviewed in three years' time. This report presents information for the 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 Mayoral years.

Background

2. One of the recommendations arising from the scrutiny of the council's 2010/11 budget was that the O&S Committee should review the corporate objectives of the Mayoralty prior to the 2011/12 budget.
3. In response to this recommendation the O&S Committee set up a task group to review all aspects of the Mayoralty with a view to making financial savings and details of the recommendations adopted by the Council in December 2010 are set out in the Appendix attached to the report.
4. The changes agreed were implemented from the start of the 2011/12 municipal year and were reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th September 2012.

Mayoral Budget

5. Throughout the period since the initial review the budgets for the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Allowance, Entertainment Allowance and Transportation have been maintained at their 2011/12 levels being:-

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| Mayor's Allowance | £3,460 |
| Deputy Mayor's Allowance | £1,370 |
| Mayoral Entertainment Allowance | £5,800 |
| Transportation | £12,050 |

The other elements of the budget include employee costs, civic regalia, insurance and internal recharges, and the overall budget for the current year is £57,830.

Engagements

6. The following table shows information in respect of engagements undertaken for 2012/13 and 2013/14 and 2014/15.

| Engagements | Year | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
|----------------------------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| In the borough | | 246 | 167 | 181 |
| Ticket cost £ | | 210 | 517 | 539 |
| Out of the borough - total | | 54 | 37 | 50 |
| Civic | | 32 | 28 | 36 |
| Charity | | 22 | 9 | 14 |
| Ticket cost £ | | 1,223 | 927 | 1,333 |
| Total Engagements | | 300 | 204 | 231 |
| Total ticket cost £ | | 1,433 | 1,444 | 1,872 |

Expenditure from Mayor's Allowance

7. The totals set out below details a breakdown of expenditure from the Mayor's Entertainment Allowance for 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15

The expenditure figure includes the cost of any tickets for events, charity donations, expenses for hosting events, flowers, wreaths etc. The sort of events hosted by the Mayor include visits by students/schoolchildren, local groups and guests from other Boroughs/Districts to the parlour/chamber/other venue.

| Year | 2012/13 £ | 2013/14 £ | 2014/15 £ |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Entertainment Allowance | 5,800 | 5,800 | 5,800 |
| Expenditure | 4,784 | 3,736 | 3,808 |

The figures above show that the expenditure on this allowance has always been well within budget.

Transport

8. Prior to the changes being implemented, the Council had a car and a full time attendant/chauffeur for the Mayor.
9. Following the adoption of the review recommendations in 2010, it was decided to relinquish the lease on the Mayor's car and to employ a private hire company to transport the Mayor as and when necessary.
10. There is no obvious trend in the level of transport costs incurred from one mayoral year to the next. Factors that influence the cost include the number of engagements, how many are in/out of the borough, where the Mayor lives, if the Mayor drives him/herself to many engagements and, if so, how much

mileage was claimed for this. As can be seen from the table below, transport costs have been kept within the budget of £12,050.

| Year | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Transport costs £ | 7,275 | 11,452 | 11,852 |

Mayor's attendance at Events out of the Borough

11. Before May 2011 there was no restriction imposed on what events the Mayor could attend. Many invitations and requests for attendance of the Mayor, for events both in and out of the Borough, are received every year. Some Mayors had previously decided to concentrate their events and engagements within the borough, whilst others attended events which were more widely spread (mainly within Kent but with some in London).
12. The restricting of events that the Mayor can attend out of the borough (see recommendations (vii) and (viii)) has ensured that the amount spent on transport and tickets (where applicable) for those events has been kept within the respective budgets, and at the same time has not restricted the Mayor in their role as Ambassador to the Borough. Under the revised arrangements the Mayor is still able to attend certain prestigious events such as the Queen's Garden Party and others detailed within the guidelines. For other events outside the Borough consent would have been obtained either by Precedent, i.e permission given to previous Mayors, or via the Leader or Chief Executive.

Conclusion

13. The Committee is asked to note that the revised arrangements introduced in 2011 are working well and are being kept within the overall Mayoral budget.

Portfolio Holder's Views

14. This is a progress report that confirms that the new arrangements have worked well and within the budget provisions and I commend the report to the Committee.

Contact: Keith Fearon, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager

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Recommendations Adopted by Council – December 2010

- (i) the selection procedure for choosing a Mayor should remain unchanged but nominations be discussed by Group Leaders prior to discussion within the Groups themselves followed by the Group Leader reporting them to the informal Group Leader meeting which would consider the nominations.
- (ii) the Mayor's Parlour be used more often for internal meetings and for those meetings of visiting dignitaries with the Leader/Chief Executive.
- (iii) the Mayor's Guidance Notes be amended as below and as necessary to reflect any other changes:-

The Borough Duties part of the "Responsibilities" section, to be amended to read:

"To promote the Borough as a place to visit through external contacts, and tourism events; the Mayor to attend engagements only within the Borough of Ashford with the exception of the Queen's Garden Party, the High Sheriff of Kent's Inauguration Service and events hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, other events should be regarded as exceptional. If the Mayor wishes to attend other engagements outside of the Borough, unless his/her attendance has been agreed, the total cost (ie ticket and travel) would have to be funded personally or from the Mayor's Allowance."

An additional duty to be added to this section:

"To be involved in events marking the achievement of major milestones in Ashford's growth".

- (iv) the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Entertainment Allowances be combined and reduced from (combined total) £7,390 to £5,800 and re-named "Mayoral Entertainment Allowance".
- (v) the Personal Allowance of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor be unchanged.
- (vi) if the Mayor's Allowances are used up before the year end, no further funding be made available.
- (vii) the majority of the Mayor's engagements should be in the Borough of Ashford with only a few exceptions: the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, the Inauguration Service for the High Sheriff of Kent and events hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent. Other events should be regarded as exceptional.
- (viii) the Mayor could attend any engagement that fell outside of these guidelines but would be expected to fund the total cost of that

engagement (ie ticket and travel cost) either personally or from the Personal Allowance.

- (ix) the lease on the current Mayoral car be terminated and when the Mayor needs transport, this is to be provided by a private hire company.**
- (x) the accompanying of the Mayor on “walkabout” when wearing the Civic regalia be regularised. On occasions when it is not possible for the Mayor to be accompanied, the Mayor to wear the badge only.**
- (xi) on occasions when the Mace is required, these duties be covered by an employee of the Council, other duties be covered by an employee of the Council on an ad hoc basis.**
- (xii) it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive a progress report in September 2012.**

20 October 2015

Future Reviews and Report Tracker

1. The current Year Plan for 2015/16 and the report tracker is attached to this report.
2. Reports on Disabled Adaptions to Council Houses and the Mayoralty are on the agenda for this meeting.
3. The Committee is asked to consider whether there are any other items they wish to suggest that the Committee considers for review as part of its 2015/16 work programme. Apart from items such as scrutinising the Council's draft budget, which the Constitution requires the O&S Committee to do every year; the O&S Committee sets its own work programme for the year. Some items recur on a regular basis e.g. the yearly update from the Community Safety Partnership and the Quarterly Business Plan Performance Report; others are of a 'one-off' nature.
4. With the agreement of the Chairman, items can be put on the O&S agenda following a request from Cabinet or another Committee (e.g. Audit). Members of the O&S Committee are also able to suggest items that the Chairman may wish to put on the Committee's agenda (**by putting their proposal in writing to him**) – such items must represent a Borough wide perspective and provide the opportunity to influence, to improve services or contribute to policy development.
5. The Chairman will then decide if the item is appropriate for O&S to consider and, if so, is there room on the work programme. Any such item will be put to the Committee for Members to decide if they wish to add it to the work programme.
6. The Committee will need to agree any items put forward for review.

Recommendation

The Committee has asked to consider:-

- **Items for future review or report.**

Keith Fearon
Member Services and Scrutiny Manager
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Year Plan 2015/16

| Month | items | Task Group |
|-----------|--|---|
| June | O&S Annual Report 2015/15 Sickness and Absenteeism Annual Report | |
| July | Formation of Budget Scrutiny Task Group Annual Report on the Housing Framework Quality Bus Partnership Implementing the Social Value Act 2012 | |
| August | No Meeting | |
| September | ABC Business Plan Performance Report International House – report on full years trading Emergency Planning | |
| October | 3 Year Review of Mayoralty Disabled Adaptions The Chief Executive – A more strategic approach to scrutiny. | |
| November | Emergency Planning – report back on outcome of debrief report ABC Business Plan Performance Report | Introduction to Budget Scrutiny and MTFP Assumptions – Task Group – 10 November 2015 |
| December | | Council's draft 2016/17 budget - Budget Scrutiny TG meetings:- 14, 15 and 22 December 2015. All at 10.00am |
| January | Budget Scrutiny Report | Budget Scrutiny TG meetings:- 5 and 12 January 2016. |
| February | ABC Business Plan Performance Report Community Safety Partnership – Annual Update | |
| March | | |

| | | |
|-------|--------------------------------------|--|
| April | | |
| May | ABC Business Plan Performance Report | |

O&S Committee – Report Tracker – Current position

| Minute No. | Report Title | Officer | Date due | Current position | Recommended action |
|------------|---|--|--------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 405/04/14 | Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report | Member Services and Scrutiny Manager | May/June 2015 | On the agenda for June 2015 | Timetable for May/June each year |
| 142/09/12 | O&S Review of Mayoralty – Further Review - 2015 | Member Services and Scrutiny Manager | Oct 2015 | In 2010 the O&S Task examined the Mayoralty and put forward changes to make savings in line with Business Plan at that time. The operation of the service following the changes was reviewed in September 2012. A further review was requested in 3 years. | |
| 431/04/12 | ABC Business Plan performance reports – 2013/14 | Policy & Performance Officer | Sept/Nov/ Feb/ May | The report comes before the O&S Committee following consideration by the Cabinet. | |
| 398/03/13 | Refurbishment of the Stour Centre | TBA | TBA | Final Report from Task Group to be presented to O&S | |
| 367/02/15 | Community Safety Partnership – annual update | Health, Parking & Community Safety Manager | February 2016 | Annual update for the Committee in fulfilling its Crime and Disorder responsibilities | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------------|--|-----------|---|--|
| 216/11/13 | Council play parks | TBA | TBA | Awaiting confirmation of date of report | |
| 102/07/14 | Annual report on Housing Framework | Housing Strategy Manager/Head of Housing | July 2016 | Report will be on the agenda for the July 2016 meeting. | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|----------------|---|--|
| 301/12/14 | Disabled Adaptations | Head of Communities and Housing | October 2015 | Report to include the current policy, scheduled programme of works, spending for the last two years and planned spend and benchmarking against other authorities. | |
| 413/3/15 | Report of Budget Scrutiny Task Group on HRA Business Plan – Universal Credit | Head of Communities and Housing | September 2016 | The O&S Committee wishes to have an update report on the roll out of Universal Credit. | |
| 44/06/15 | Sickness and Absenteeism Annual Report | Head of Personnel and Development | June 2016 | Further annual progress report | |
| 87/07/15 | Quality Bus Partnership | Head of Health, Parking and Community Safety | July 2016 | Update report one year on from report considered in July 2015 | |
| 88/07/15 | Public Services(Social Value Act) 2012 | Head of Communities and Housing | July 2016 | Update report one year on from report considered in July 2015 | |
| 45/06/15 and 138/9/15 | Emergency Planning Update | Resilience Partnership Manager | TBA | The outcome of the debrief and any recommendations on the Emergency Planning response to Oak Tree Road Gas Explosion be considered by the Committee in due course | |