

## 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 **24<sup>th</sup> May 2016**.

### Present:

Cllr. Michael (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Cllrs. Burgess, Feacey, A. Howard, Hicks, Krause, Link, Mrs. Martin, Sims, Wedgbury.

### Apology:

Cllr. Chilton

### Also Present:

Member Services & Scrutiny Manager, Policy & Performance Manager, Policy & Performance Officer, Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

The Vice-Chairman in the Chair welcomed Cllr Mrs Martin to the Committee and expressed his thanks on behalf of the Committee to Cllr Knowles, who was now a Member of the Cabinet. He also welcomed the Policy & Performance Manager and Policy & Performance Officer. He then went on to explain that he had recently attended a training course on Overview & Scrutiny and after the first item on the Agenda he would discuss his findings with the Committee.

## 14 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2016 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 15 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

The report highlighted the work that had been undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee during the Municipal Year 2015/2016. The Vice Chairman opened up the report to the Committee and the following questions/comments were raised: -

- A Member expressed disappointment that only one external topic had been scrutinised. He considered that the Committee needed to be more outward looking and should deal with issues which would further benefit the community. He stated that the lack of call-in's undertaken was also disappointing and that they should not be viewed negatively.
- A query was raised as to whether certain subjects which had previously been scrutinised could be added again to be looked at. These included Rat

infestations, public seating and toilets within the Borough and Hospital transport.

- The Committee discussed Water Supply and the privatisation of sewerage works that was due to be completed by October 2016. Concerns were given regarding the location of sewerage works within the town centre and infrastructure within rural areas.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be approved, and Water Supply remain a priority.**

In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.5, Cllr. Wedgbury asked that it be recorded in the minutes that he had voted against the recommendation.

## **16 Future Reviews and Report Tracker**

The Vice Chairman gave an overview of his findings from a training course he had attended. He explained that effective Overview & Scrutiny should have: - support from the Cabinet; in-depth reviews; partner and public engagement; and demonstrate impact.

He introduced a Topic Selection Flowchart which he considered could prove to be a valuable tool in assisting the Committee when deciding what subjects to scrutinise. Additionally he advised that it should be viewed as a live document.

Members discussed how the flowchart would be used and agreed that it would be very useful. A Member requested that any topic raised by three or more Committee Members be considered for review and passed through the flowchart.

A query was raised regarding 'low priority' ideas – would they be discarded or set aside for review at a later date? The Vice Chairman explained that the Committee should consider what impact they could have, and any issues for which a review would not add value should not be considered.

The Vice Chairman then asked the Committee for their thoughts on periodically completing a self-evaluation form and Members were apprehensive about who would collect the data and what action would be taken in response. Therefore Members considered that it would not serve any real purpose.

The Policy & Performance Manager welcomed Scrutiny back into the 'Corporate Centre' and explained that their aim was to develop an exciting and interesting Programme, which would add benefit to the Council and the community. The Policy & Performance Officer would be overseeing and managing the process and a new Scrutiny Officer had been appointed, with part of his role dedicated to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Policy & Performance Manager explained that the new Officer would commence their work in one month and the Member Services Team would continue to clerk the meeting. The Policy & Performance Officer went on to advise that the team would also provide research and analytical support to the Committee. The Policy & Performance Manager suggested that raising the profile of

Scrutiny and engaging the public could be an initial consideration to be placed on a reshaped Tracker.

The Vice Chairman expressed his overwhelming thanks on behalf of the Committee to the Member Services & Scrutiny Manager for all of his hard work.

The Vice Chairman then invited the Committee to discuss the Tracker and decide whether any items should be removed. The Member Services & Scrutiny Manager explained that the Tracker reflected previous discussions by the Committee and was also a log of what items had been requested to be put back onto the Tracker. The Vice Chairman suggested that Task Groups with two to three Members could look in detail at an issue, and then convey back their investigation to the whole Committee. Members agreed in principle, and clarification was given that only Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee could sit on a Task Group, but Members outside the Committee (but not Cabinet Members) with specific expertise could be invited to attend for specific topics under review. The Committee provisionally agreed the following: -

In relation to items already on the Tracker: -

- Refurbishment of the Stour Centre would remain on the Tracker, subject to the usual scoping being conducted. The Terms of Reference for the Stour Centre Redevelopment & Leisure Management Steering Group were currently being developed.
- Council Play Parks would be removed from the Tracker.
- Quality Bus Partnership would be removed from the Tracker, since this was duplicated by a separate Committee and KCC.

In relation to items previously raised for potential review: -

- Education and Free Schools would not be added to the Tracker.
- Local Council's Public Health and Social Care would be added to the Tracker.
- HMO'S would not be added, since this was duplicated by a separate Committee.
- HS1 and Eurostar Services would not be added as this was part of a dedicated Cabinet Task Group.
- The Syrian Vulnerable Persons relocation scheme would not be added to the Tracker as a report was due to be submitted to Cabinet in September.
- Water Supply would remain on the Tracker, specifically around maintenance of private sewers

- Power supply and IT Disaster Recovery at the Civic Centre would remain on the Tracker. The Policy & Performance Officer would liaise with Officers to provide an update.
- Flooding would not be added to the Tracker, since this was duplicated by a separate Task Group.
- Social Housing Providers be further considered in light of the Housing enforcement report to be submitted to Cabinet in June.
- Rat infestations would also be added to the list of other potential items for review.

The Policy and Performance Officer said he would reshape the Tracker into a chronological order, with additional information. The Vice Chairman advised that he also had a list of other potential items for review which would be circulated to Members and would be discussed further at the next meeting.

**Resolved:**

- (i) that the Topic Selection Flowchart be adopted by the Committee and be used as a first step in determining the validity of subjects for review.**
- (ii) that the Tracker be amended to reflect the decisions recorded above.**