

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 **25th April 2017**.

Present:

Cllr. Chilton (Chairman)

Cllrs. Burgess, Heyes, Hicks, Krause, Link, Michael.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Cllr. Heyes attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Feacey.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Aaby, Feacey, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin.

Also Present:

Cllr. Smith.

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

389 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 28th March 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

390 Programme Setting for 2017/2018

The Chairman introduced this item and thanked Members for putting forward suggestions since the last meeting, of topics for Scrutiny to work on. The Committee then discussed which specific areas they would like to investigate and the following questions/comments were made:

- Members agreed that Air Quality was a priority subject, particularly since UK air pollution had been linked to increasing numbers of early deaths each year. The report suggested that a Task and Finish Group be assembled to help formulate an Air Quality Strategy for the Borough for pre-scrutiny by the Committee and submission to the Cabinet. It was hoped that Officers would provide an update on the strategy at the next O&S meeting, where the makeup of the Task Group could also be discussed in more detail. A Member suggested that the current research findings should be examined more frequently, since an annual observation would present an incomplete picture. A point was also raised as to whether Air Quality would overlap

Infrastructure and if the two topics should be looked at collectively. Members agreed that the subjects were inter-connected, but that scrutinising them together might result in loss of visibility and impact in each area.

- The Committee discussed Infrastructure and agreed that the primary areas for scrutiny would be roads and major transport policies. With the development of Chimington Green and expansion of the A28 road, it was imperative that capacity, or rather lack of, be explored in order to assess how the Borough would cope with the inevitable extra congestion caused by infrastructure improvements. Parking capacity, particularly in the town centre, was also considered by the Committee to be a worthwhile subject to scrutinise. A comment was made that the information provided by partners overseeing infrastructure improvements was often inaccurate or unavailable, and this was unsatisfactory. Members agreed that the concept of 'future-proofing' and co-ordination between organisations and providers was essential to ensure project management was sufficient. A suggestion was made that Ashford would benefit from an outer ring road that would help to reduce the number of vehicles passing through the town centre.
- In relation to The Wellbeing Agenda for Ashford, several Members advised that it was important for the Committee not to duplicate any work that the Ashford Health & Wellbeing Board (AH&WBB) undertook. The Chairman agreed that it would be beneficial for him to meet informally with the Chairman of the AH&WBB.
- The Committee discussed Youth Engagement and the shift away from youth centres towards outreach workers visiting hotspots in the borough to engage with young people. It was noted that there had been significant cuts to budgets for youth work across Kent and this often resulted in a high turnover of volunteers in the field. The Chairman suggested continuing the discussion at the next meeting when some absent Members concerned about this topic would be present.
- The topic of rented accommodation conditions was put forward for discussion, specifically poor living standards of accommodation and the number of tenants increasingly struggling to pay high rents. Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) were growing across the borough and properties that were previously family homes were increasingly being converted into HMOs, the implications of which included anti-social behaviour and parking issues. A Member made a suggestion that planning conditions be put on new developments to tackle this, in both urban and rural areas. The Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer advised that this topic could be added to the work plan and he would liaise with officers to arrange for them to present something to the Committee.
- The Policy & Performance Manager had received notification from an Officer Group meeting that some funding had become available to be used to source renewable energy and they had asked if the Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be interested in researching how the funding could be used. An energy efficiency report had been drafted by the Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer and would be submitted to Cabinet in May,

after which the Committee would be in a better position to review what could be taken forward. Members discussed the possibility of joining this topic with Air Quality and the Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer would draft some ideas for the next O&S meeting.

Resolved:

That the Work Programme report be received and noted, and that the three thematic areas be endorsed.

391 Future Reviews and Report Tracker and Topic Selection Flowchart

A Member suggested that cycle paths, in particular signage along the paths, be added to the Tracker since it had been brought to one Member's attention that the signage was confusing for both cyclists and pedestrians and a few incidents had occurred. The Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer noted this, and would return to the committee with further details.

Resolved:

That the Report Tracker be received and noted.

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Clare Ricketts:
Telephone: 01233 330491 Email: clare.ricketts@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.gov.uk/committees