

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 **23rd May 2017**.

Present:

Cllr. Chilton (Chairman);
Cllr. Ovenden (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Bartlett, Hicks, A Howard, W Howard, Krause, Link, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Mrs Webb.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Cllr. W Howard attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Burgess.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Burgess, Feacey.

Also Present:

Policy & Performance Manager, Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer, Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer, Senior Member Services Officer.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting all present stood in silence for two minutes in respect of those who had died in the Manchester bombings the previous evening, their families and those who were still fighting for their lives in hospital.

13 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 25th April 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

14 Annual Report 2016/17

The Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer introduced the report, which provided a summary of the activity of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the past year (2016/17) and proposed a draft work programme for the coming year (2017/18). The report also sought nominations for membership of the Task Group dealing with the review of Air Quality.

With reference to the 'Futureproofing' review, in terms of Infrastructure, the Committee had a lengthy discussion on flood risk and drainage issues and was keen to see more reference to this in the review. Going forward, this would be an extremely important consideration for the Council's Planning Officers in terms of development happening across the Borough. A Member mentioned the ongoing Planning Inquiry on M20 Junction 10A and said that flooding issues had been discussed in detail and

he agreed that this would be a very important issue in any review on 'future proofing the Borough'. He believed that this Committee had to be absolutely sure that the Council's Officers had considered this issue in full and were up to date on all matters pertaining to flooding and flood modelling. The Committee agreed to add an overview of watercourses, flood risks and drainage issues to the scope of the Futureproofing review to be undertaken in early 2018 (at the March meeting).

On a more general point, it was considered that no building should be allowed to take place without guarantees that proper arrangements for drainage and discharge of wastewater were in place. A Member made reference to the Government Housing White Paper, which stated that Local Plans should be clear in their Five Year Housing Land Supplies about what infrastructure was needed, who would fund it and how development would be phased. At present, no such statement appeared in Ashford's Local Plan. There was also discussion about the difficulties experienced when responsibilities lay with multiple agencies and organisations, including statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency. Other Members considered the Committee should also seek the advice of Internal Drainage Boards as they were being encouraged to take on maintenance of rivers where costs were low and it may be useful to get an update from them on the current situation.

The Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer advised that Officers had attended meetings at KCC which were looking in to the relationship between different water organisations, so there was the possibility for some joint scrutiny work to take place. On the specific point of maintenance of ditches and waterways, the Infrastructure report later on this Agenda referred to Southern Water's response in April 2016 that they would undertake remedial work over the following 12 months, with a view to transferring responsibility for cleaning and maintenance to the Council's in-house Aspire team. The Committee could ask for an update on progress on this matter.

Nominations were then sought for the Task Group on Air Quality. The Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer advised that Officers were conscious of the demands that such a task and finish group could place on Members' time and would look to schedule meetings at the best time for Members – possibly directly in advance of regular Committee meetings or on other evenings, or conducting work via email if this was more suitable. On a separate but related point he advised that the Council's Section 106 Working Group had advised that there was a pot of contributions from Policy CS10 (circa £80,000), drawn down from various sites, which was available to fund environmental improvements. The Working Group felt that O&S could undertake a review to consider how the contributions could be spent and make recommendations on their best use. This Task Group could therefore undertake this work as part of, or as a follow on, from an Air Quality review. It was agreed that the following Members be appointed to the Task Group – Councillors Bartlett, Chilton, Feacey, A Howard and Mrs Martin.

Resolved:

That (i) subject to the comments made at the meeting the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2016/17 and the Work Programme for 2017/18 be approved with the addition of watercourses and drainage to the theme of 'Future Proofing the Borough'.

- (ii) **the Membership of the Air Quality Task Group be Councillors Bartlett, Chilton, Feacey, A Howard and Mrs Martin**

15 Future Proofing the Borough – Reflections on the Committee’s Recent Findings on Infrastructure

The Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer introduced the report, which detailed the work already undertaken on one of the Committee’s three key themes for their 2017/18 Work Programme – Infrastructure and Future Proofing. It was intended for the Committee to commence the review proper in February 2018 and there had already been discussion on this particular review as part of the previous agenda item. This report picked out the key findings of the Committee, particularly with regard to the plans of key partners, since January 2016. It had been agreed, and further reinforced at this meeting, that the review should focus on engaging further with infrastructure providers, examining major road and transport projects, as well as flooding and drainage issues. The Infrastructure Delivery Schedule would also come out of the Local Plan consultation during the summer so this would be another useful piece of evidence for the review. He reminded Members that the scope of the review was flexible though and could be added to throughout the year.

The report was then opened up to the Committee and the following points were raised: -

- Education provision would need to form part of this review. If it was not going to be possible to provide more Grammar Schools, perhaps existing Grammars could be encouraged to expand and provide more places. The Committee said they would also benefit from a better understanding of how KCC decided who was going to run schools (both primary and secondary) as well as how they decided what qualifications were offered and how they dovetailed with the needs of local economies. Apprenticeships and work placement training would be key considerations for the future of Ashford.
- A possible lack of input in to the Local Plan process by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) was disappointing, as there needed to be engagement around healthcare provision and perhaps the methods of engagement needed to be reviewed and this Committee could get more involved.
- The issue of major road and transport projects should include rail and any opportunities for Ashford to benefit from new high speed and international Eurostar services. The Committee said it would like to encourage Eurostar to have more stopping services at Ashford.
- The cumulative process of individual small developments, as promoted in the five year housing land supply, was considered to be having a serious impact on the money available for infrastructure in the rural areas. A Member asked if this Committee could scrutinise the updated Infrastructure Delivery Schedule before it went out for consultation with the Local Plan. The Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer said that there was nothing to stop the Committee requesting to have a look at the schedule, however there was a

timing issue in that the Local Plan was going out for consultation this summer, so this was unlikely to be able to happen before then. He said he would speak to the Officers on this point and the lack of a response from the CCGs and ask if there was any possibility of them attending the next meeting of this Committee in June. He would report to Members separately.

- The provision of broadband was considered another important element of this review. New properties did stand to be well served but there was concern that existing communities were not being given the same opportunities to upgrade to superfast broadband. A Member advised that Councillor Knowles was heavily involved in this issue through his previous Cabinet position and the new IT and Digital Transformation Task Group that was being set up. It was considered that the Committee might wish to seek some information from him.

On a more general point a Member said although the power of this Committee was limited in many respects, they did have the opportunity to influence matters that they thought were important. Therefore, even if they could not make changes themselves, if they could bring other Authorities and Providers to the table and start a process for change, they would be doing a useful job and adding value to the Council.

It was agreed that the discussions above should form the basis of the review of Infrastructure and Future Proofing the Borough and the main elements should be Infrastructure provision (including the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule); Roads; Rail; Major Transport Projects; Watercourses; Flooding and Drainage; Healthcare; Education; and Broadband.

Resolved:

- That (i) the report be received and noted and the discussions above form the basis of the 'Future Proofing the Borough' review.**
- (ii) The Planning Policy Manager and the Portfolio Holder for Planning be invited to the next meeting in June to report on the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule and the response to the Local Plan from Clinical Commissioning Groups.**

16 Future Reviews and Report Tracker and Topic Selection Flowchart

A Member noted that KCC Councillors had been given access to a short e-learning programme on Safeguarding Children and asked if that could be made available to ABC Members. It was confirmed that this was already in train.

Resolved:

That the Report Tracker be received and noted.

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Danny Sheppard:
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