

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 **27th September 2016**.

Present:

Cllr. Chilton (Chairman)

Cllr. Michael (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Apps, Feacey, Mrs. Dyer, A. Howard, Krause, Link, Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Webb.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillors Apps, Mrs. Dyer and Mrs. Webb attended as Substitute Members for Councillor W. Howard, Burgess and Hicks, respectively.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Burgess, Hicks, W. Howard, Sims, Shorter.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Miss Martin, Smith.

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

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Cllr Mrs. Martin explained that she previously had not received a hard copy of the Agenda for the July O&S meeting until a week after the meeting took place.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 26th July 2016 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

144 Quarter 1 2016/2017 Performance Report

The Chairman explained that unfortunately the Portfolio Holder and Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer were unable to attend the meeting, but the Policy & Performance Manager and the Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer were present and able to answer any questions from Members. He then opened up the report to the Committee and the following questions/comments were raised: -

- A Member stated that he felt the new style report was very good and

informative. He had tried using the Performance Dashboard and although he had found it a little frustrating, he understood this was because it was still a work in progress. The Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer responded that he was happy to meet with Members to take them through the Dashboard.

- A question was raised as to why no financial information was contained within the report; the Policy & Performance Manager explained that although the ideal would be to have a combined report, the new performance dashboard system was still in its infancy and it was important to ensure the non-financial information was relevant and accurate before trying to amalgamate the two systems. However, both performance and budget reports were considered by Cabinet on a quarterly basis, so they could be cross-referenced if necessary.
- A Member explained that she felt that some of the text in the report was unnecessary.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted

145 Raising the Profile of Overview & Scrutiny

The Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer introduced the report following which the following questions/comments were raised: -

- A Member asked if the Leader of the Council was involved with the Agenda for O&S and the Chairman confirmed this was not the case. He advised that Members had the opportunity to call-in or examine any decisions the Cabinet made. The Chairman further explained that the report stemmed from Members' frustration with O&S and had been produced following research on best practice. It set out the broad framework and was about adding value to the O&S function. He reiterated Members' earlier comments and said that O&S should be viewed as the "Critical Friend" of the Cabinet and Council.
- In response to a question, the Chairman explained that any external organisation could be asked to meet with the Committee provided there was a valid reason or public need, although O&S had no powers to require people from external bodies to attend.
- In terms of recommendation 8 within the report, the Chairman explained that a Social Media page would be set up to enable members of the public to report issues back to the Committee. The Committee agreed that this should be pursued in conjunction with the Communications Team.
- A Member suggested that by agreeing to recommendation 1 in the report, the Committee would in effect be agreeing to all the recommendations.

Resolved that:

- (i) Recommendation 1 in the report be adopted.**
- (ii) Recommendations 2 -10 in the report be adopted as potential methods for highlighting and heightening the profile of scrutiny, both within the authority and in its external relationships.**
- (iii) Cllr. Feacey and Cllr. Howard to work with Officers, the Chair and Vice-Chair to bring forward the agreed changes.**

146 Budget Scrutiny Task Group

The Chairman explained to the Committee that two further Members were required to finalise membership of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group. Cllr. Mrs Martin and Cllr. A. Howard volunteered.

Resolved:

That the Membership for the Budget Scrutiny Task Group for 2016/2017 (2017/2018 budget) be Cllrs. Chilton, Michael, Burgess, Mrs. Martin and A. Howard.

147 Future Reviews and Report Tracker

The Chairman and Members suggested that the Group delegated to work on Raising the Profile of O&S, Minute no 145, might also assist with ensuring appropriate topics were placed onto the Tracker for review by the Committee.

Resolved:

That Cllr. Feacey and Cllr. A Howard assist the Chair and Vice-Chair with selecting appropriate issues.

148 Topic Selection Flowchart

The Chairman reminded the Committee of the Topic Selection Flowchart and of its benefits when deciding which topics to scrutinise and the following questions/comments were raised: -

- A Member raised concerns that the general public were often not made aware of why changes were being made to public services, including cuts and charges for services. She re-iterated the importance of the Overview & Scrutiny role within the Council, to challenge decisions made by the Cabinet.

- Another Member spoke about the financial challenges facing the Council and Officers when trying to provide services to a high standard, but with less budget than in previous years.
- The Chairman agreed the points raised were valid and would no doubt be discussed at the Budget Scrutiny Task Group meetings.

Resolved:

That the tracker be noted.

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Clare Ricketts:
Telephone: 01233 330499 Email: clare.ricketts@ashford.gov.uk
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