

## 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 **25<sup>th</sup> September 2018**.

### Present:

Cllr. Michael (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Cllrs. Bartlett, Burgess, Feacey, Hicks, A.Howard, Knowles, Krause, Miss. Martin, Mrs. Webb.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Cllrs. Hicks, A. Howard and Mrs. Webb attended as Substitute Members for Cllrs. Dehnel, Mrs Martin and Buchanan respectively.

### Apologies:

Cllrs. Buchanan, Chilton, Dehnel, Farrell, Mrs Martin.

### Also Present:

Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT.

Director of Finance & Economy, Head of Finance, Senior Accountant, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications, Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

## 168 Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Feacey made a Voluntary Announcement as he was Chairman of Ashford Volunteer Centre and on the Management Committee for UK LPG.

## 169 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 2018 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 170 Future Reviews and Report Tracker and Topic Selection Flowchart

Two Members enquired as to the date(s) for the meetings of the Task Group in respect of the Waste Water Treatment Works. The Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer advised that a meeting was due to take place later in the week following on from

which the Environmental Protection and Licensing Team Leader would provide an update and meetings of the Task Group would be scheduled.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

## **171 Air Quality Strategy Update**

The Chairman introduced this item and read out comments received from Cllr Mrs. Martin, who had been unable to attend. She was supportive of the report however felt that other areas of pollution, save for car pollution, should be included. Further, she had made reference to 'cumulative odour exposure' and experiences of some of her residents due to issues emanating from the Water Treatment Works. She considered that matters such as these should be part of Section 106 contributions or at the very least be considered by the Council. In conclusion, she had advised that over 600 people had signed a petition pertaining to the Water Treatment Works, with a letter being sent to Michael Gove MP on the matter. Should Ashford pioneer a stance on such pollution it would further ensure future development progressing with less rancour.

A Member, who Chaired the Air Quality Task Group, drew Members' attention to a number of recommendations and the following comments were made:

- Recommendation 2 – it did not matter which method the contributions were gathered through, just that they were.
- Recommendation 3 – in respect of electric vehicle charging points a number of sites that had been constructed or had been granted planning permission had made provision for such points. This having occurred without any contribution from either the Council or Government was enlightening and encouraging. The majority of developers were content with providing charging points.
- Recommendation 3 - the reluctance to ensure that gas boilers met a minimum standard due to this being too onerous was not welcomed. Public Health England advised that air pollution in the Borough contributed to 50 deaths per year. It was therefore vital that the air quality was improved and the introduction of air quality neutral boilers was a way to do this. Many other Councils had taken this approach, and he was concerned that not taking this forward would add to pollution levels throughout the Borough.
- Recommendation 4 – it was vital that the Council was aware of 'canyoning' as it did add to air pollution. This was a phenomenon and ignoring it would not be conducive to improving air quality. The case studies from Australia, as noted within the report, were not comparable.
- Recommendation 9 – the removal of parking charges for electric vehicles should be considered for a period. By nurturing and encouraging the use of electric vehicles there would be a benefit for the wider community.

- Recommendation 12 – Members fully supported the aims of a modal shift from use of the private car to public transport, however raised concerns regarding the continuation of bus services once Section 106 money had been spent. There were some routes that Stagecoach had deemed to not be viable so residents had no choice but to rely on cars. A Member also raised concerns over the wording of Policy TRA4 within the new Local Plan in particular the words ‘wherever possible’ which the Member felt could be deemed to be a ‘get out’ for developers.
- Recommendation 13 – at a recent meeting of the Taxi Forum, a presentation had been given in partnership with KCC regarding a scheme to provide up to 40% off the price of new or second hand electric vehicles. This incentive had greatly increased the interest of the Taxi trade in moving towards electric vehicles. Furthermore a scheme had been launched in Essex in regards to driving training with results showing that savings could be made on fuel, wear and tear and ultimately pollution.
- The Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership had produced draft Air Quality Supplementary Planning Documents. A Member questioned whether it would be feasible to look at these with a view to adapting them for Ashford and adopting in due course.
- Of the 19 automated air quality monitoring centres in Kent, none were near the Borough. Other Local Authorities had utilised Section 106 agreements to fund air quality monitoring points. A Member felt that overall it would be difficult to determine the air quality in the Borough if it was only being monitored passively through NOx diffusion tubes.
- Due to the advanced stage of the Local Plan 2030 it would not be right to introduce new policies, however work could be undertaken on preparing such policies and these be adopted once the Local Plan 2030 had been formally adopted. It would be pertinent to make a recommendation to the Planning Policy Task Group in respect of such a policy. Furthermore, it was noted that the NPPF made reference to quality of life and the impact that air quality had, whilst it was unclear whether further information would be included within future versions of the NPPF. This was an important point.

Noting that the final report of the Air Quality Task Group had been approved by Cabinet and Council, a Member questioned why some of the recommendations were not being acted upon. It appeared that Officers were being selective and Members would welcome the opportunity to understand their reasoning for this.

Members discussed the ongoing issues at the Water Treatment Plant run by Southern Water. Southern Water had assured the Council that they had capacity for the development allocated in the Local Plan, however there were concerns regarding this claim. A meeting was due to take place later in the week with stakeholders, following on from which meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Task Group – Waste Water Treatment Works would be scheduled.

**Resolved:**

**That Officers be invited to a meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to explain the reasoning behind taking forward some, not all, of the recommendations contained within the report.**

**Recommended:**

**That;**

- (i) The Planning Department be asked to ensure that bus services were delivered on sites included in the Local Plan.**
- (ii) Cabinet requests that the Planning Policy Task Group formulate a planning policy in respect of Air Quality at an appropriate time given the current status of the Local Plan 2030.**

## **172 Quarter 1 Performance Report 2018/2019**

The Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer introduced the report, which was the first in its new format, and included the revised suite of performance indicators.

Members welcomed the new format and raised a number of points for clarification, including;

- the inclusion of gas safety certificates had been included in previous incarnations of the Performance Report. Taking the incident in Oak Tree Road into account, it was considered appropriate for such certificates to be monitored.
- In respect of KPI20 – 22 (homelessness targets) a Member queried the level of homelessness cases that were currently outstanding, as from his workings there was a large number that had yet to be resolved. The Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer advised that Quarter 1 represented the first quarter of reporting performance in this manner. However, the annual review of the Council's Housing Statement would be coming before the Committee's next meeting, at which an overview of the Council's work under the operation under the Homelessness Reduction Act could be sought. He would report back to the Committee on this matter.
- In respect of KPI30 – 32 (private sector rentals) a Member queried the level of cases awaiting resolution. The Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer advised that he would report back to the Committee on this matter.
- The low percentage of residents who felt that they could influence the Council's decisions was concerning. The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications advised that this percentage was on par with other Councils and it should be noted that there were a lot of respondents that provided no definitive answer to this question in the residents survey. The survey would be carried out on a 2 yearly basis. Residents selected for the

survey had been done so using 'ACORN' to ensure a range of respondents of all ages and dwelling types.

- An additional KPI was requested to monitor the time taken to resolve planning contraventions as there was concern amongst Members regarding the number outstanding.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

## **173 Exclusion of the Public**

**Resolved:**

**That Pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item as it is likely that in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

## **174 Budget Scrutiny Report**

The Head of Finance took the Committee through the assumptions made as part of the MTFP. The Committee noted the assumptions made and thanked Officers for their work in preparing the MTFP.

**Resolved:**

**That;**

- (i) The Budget Scrutiny Task Group be formed with Members advising the Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer of their wish to participate in said Task Group.**
- (ii) The report be received and noted.**

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