

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held as a virtual meeting on the **14th July 2020**.

Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman)

Cllrs. Chilton, Farrell, Hayward, Howard-Smith, Iliffe, Krause, Ledger, Mulholland.

Apologies:

Cllr. Burgess.

Also Present:

Head of Corporate Policy, ED & Communications, Compliance and Data Protection Manager, Governance & Data Protection Officer, Policy & Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Manager (Operational), Member Services Officer.

444 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Resolved:

That the Minutes of this Committee held on the 10th March 2020 be approved and confirmed as an accurate record.

445 Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

The Policy & Scrutiny Officer introduced the report, which highlighted items over the past year that the Committee had reviewed. Significant items included the Wye Masterplan Task Group, from which 12 recommendations were made by the Task Group, and the Budget Scrutiny Task Group, that had put forward 6 recommendations to Cabinet. A number of presentations were also made on topics including Ashford For You magazine and Aspire.

The Chairman thanked all Officers and Members for their work over the last year and the report was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions and points were raised: -

- A query was raised regarding Ashford For You and Ashford For and the Head of Corporate Policy, ED & Communications confirmed that these were 2 separate projects.
- In response to a question about Ashford College representatives being invited to attend a future meeting, the Chairman and Policy & Scrutiny Officer confirmed that this was an item on the Tracker for future consideration.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

446 Annual Performance Report 2019/20

The Governance & Data Protection Officer introduced this item, which summarised the Council's performance and achievements over the last year, and was also the final report of the Corporate Plan 2015-2020. There was also focus now towards a Recovery Plan to support the economy, local communities and residents of Ashford, and this would act as an interim Forward Plan.

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

- A Member asked about the data included in the residents' survey, in particular in relation to the sample of people questioned. The Head of Corporate Policy, ED & Communications explained that the residents' survey was a sample survey and was sent by post to 10,000 people, of which just over 2000 had responded. She recognised that older residents were more likely to respond, but the data had been weighted according to population structure and this gave a 2% +/- margin of error with a 95% confidence level.
- It was suggested that the 20% response rate could be higher if more innovative methods of surveying people were explored e.g. online questionnaires. The Head of Corporate Policy, ED & Communications agreed that a different approach was needed to engage with the younger generation and various methods were being reviewed, and that Community Engagement was the topic of a Scrutiny Review later in the programme.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

447 Future Reviews Tracker

The Policy & Scrutiny Officer introduced this item and confirmed that some items on the Tracker would inevitably be postponed because of the pandemic. The Digital Transformation Task Group had been formed and had already held their first meeting. The Carbon Neutral Strategy and Corporate Plan and Economic Development Strategy had been moved to 2021 for review by O&S, and these areas would be incorporated into the Council's Recovery Plan.

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

- The Chairman stated that all of the items scheduled within the Tracker should remain on, but there were now other priorities for the Council in light of the pandemic and the Recovery Plan.

- It was agreed that Homelessness could be kept as a priority topic and the Policy and Scrutiny Officer would look at providing an update in September.
- A Member asked about the Carbon Neutral Strategy and wondered if there were any mechanisms in place to track environmental progress since there would be limited monitoring until 2021. The Head of Corporate Policy, ED & Communications confirmed that the Strategy would be coming to the Committee later in the year. The Borough's aim was that it would be carbon neutral by 2030, and the Climate Advisory Committee were still working towards this target. Recent events had resulted in bringing forward shorter term actions, and equally provided an opportunity to embed a greener Recovery Plan. She acknowledged that 2020 would be a blip year with regard to measurements, but that was across the board and would be built into the Strategy. There was a role for the O&S Committee to review and scrutinise the Strategy and a new monitoring group would also be set up.
- A Member queried the possibility of the Committee debating the role of the Property Company in a post Covid society, paying attention to the changes that may be needed concerning planning and building. The Chairman noted that the Council was presently very much in recovery mode, and post Covid times seemed much further into the future. The Recovery Plan was being submitted to Cabinet on the 30th July and would be adopted in October, so the Committee would have sight of the Plan before then.
- Other topics for consideration included the future of Ashford College, Section 106 monies, and the Mojo site (that was earmarked for the Government's customs checking lorry park). The Policy and Scrutiny Officer would assess the topics using the selection matrix and bring the results to the next meeting.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

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