

## **Ashford Borough Council: Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Microsoft Teams on the **13<sup>th</sup> April 2021**.

### **Present:**

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

Cllrs. Blanford, Burgess, Campkin, Farrell, Hayward, Howard-Smith, Iliffe, Krause, Ledger, Mulholland.

### **Apology:**

Head of Corporate Policy, ED and Communications

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs. Feacey, Forest, Harman, Sparks, Wright.

### **In Attendance:**

Head of Culture, Tourism and Leisure, Arts and Cultural Industries Manager, Funding and Partnerships Officer, Compliance and Data Protection Manager, Policy and Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

## **295 Declarations of Interest**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>
Farrell	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as he had volunteered for Ashford Vineyard and was a KCC Councillor	297
Feacey	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as he was Chairman of the Ashford Volunteer Centre.	297
Forest	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as his company provided IT services to the Ashford Volunteer Centre and Repton Community Trust	297
Hayward	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as she was a trustee of a charity that had received funds from ABC	297
Wright	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as she had volunteered for FareShare Kent and Ashford Holiday Kitchen	297

## **296 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021 be approved and confirmed as an accurate record.**

## **297 Report on support given to the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector**

The Arts and Cultural Industries Manager introduced this item. He explained that the report had been produced to provide reassurance to Members about the processes and contract monitoring of grants to the Borough's Voluntary, Community and Faith sector. All of the Council's COVID-19 Community Support had been reviewed and audited by Mid Kent Audit, and had received the highest rating.

The report was then opened up to the Committee and the following is a summary of Members questions and the Officers responses: -

- In response to a query from a Vice-Chairman concerning the criteria for which a charity would be awarded a grant, and whether their annual income was taken into consideration, the Arts and Cultural Industries Manager explained that the grants were not set up for charities/organisations in need, but were for organisations providing essential services to the local community. Criteria

included a clear vision for what was intended to be delivered and achieved by said organisation. The support needed to be advertised and be inclusive to everyone, regardless of background or belief. Several charities including the example mentioned by the Vice-Chairman were allocated funds because they had the resources to enable them to distribute aid across the Borough. He added that faith based organisations were intrinsically linked to providing support to the community, but controls were in place to ensure faith was not used as a criteria. When considering an organisations income, he explained that for some, their income would be ring-fenced for particular projects and consequently these may have been delayed due to the pandemic, so reserves would show higher than in normal years. £3,300 from the VERA fund had been allocated to the organisation mentioned, with additional funding from Government given to cover staffing costs.

- A Member remarked on the excellent job that all of the charities and organisations had undertaken throughout the pandemic. In response to a question asking whether funding had been made available to each and every charity in Ashford, it was explained that there were a variety of funding sources, some smaller amounts that could be distributed more widely, whilst Government funding often had more stringent criteria for larger organisations with greater structures and line management in place.
- The Social Supermarket working in conjunction with FareShare was in receipt of funding from ABC. The Arts and Cultural Industries Manager advised that he would share the figures for this with the Committee.
- A Member requested that a breakdown of the monitoring data be made available and asked about the liaison and co-ordination between County, Borough and Parish Councils, in respect of the grants being awarded. The Arts and Cultural Industries Manager advised that all of the data formed part of the Recovery Plan and through ACER and was available to view on Pentana. The Funding and Partnerships Officer explained that all Parish Councils were made aware of the funding available to them, and many were able to take up the Business Grants Funding. Allocation was made fairer by ensuring those that were eligible for government funding, were not then able to claim the Council's emergency funding. Regular contact was maintained with Parish Councils throughout the pandemic to ascertain what support they may need. Member grants also continued to be distributed throughout the pandemic to local community groups and projects. The Chairman requested that a summary report of the information that had been to ACER be made available to the Committee. The Arts and Cultural Industries Manager confirmed that this information did exist and would be completed by the end of April, when existing contracts were likely to have ended.
- A query was raised regarding what mechanisms of accountability were in place to ensure funds designated for a certain purpose were spent accordingly; this data would also be incorporated into the summary report. In

addition, the report would also include the contract details for each organisation that received funding/grants.

- In view of GDPR and data collected throughout the pandemic by charities and organisations, the Funding and Partnerships Officer confirmed that it was a condition on all grant funding given by the Council that the recipient sign and adhere to GDPR conditions stipulating that any data collected must only be used for that specific reason, and must thereafter be confidentially destroyed. The Chairman added that it would be useful to know who the data controller was in this instance.
- A Member highlighted how quick and efficient the team had worked to support local halls, whose revenue had significantly decreased, to prevent them from becoming insolvent. The Chairman and Members of the Committee thanked the Arts & Cultural Industries Manager and Funding & Partnerships Officer for attending the meeting and for all their efforts throughout the pandemic.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted, with additional information being provided at a future meeting.**

## **298 Review of the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22**

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer introduced this report, which reviewed the work programme for the upcoming year. Two main topics would be explored by several Task Groups. The first would be Section 106 Processes and the first meeting would take place on the 28<sup>th</sup> April. The second topic was the Consultation and Engagement Review and this would take place during the latter part of the year. Other topics for consideration included Mental Health and Wellbeing for young people and the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan & Strategy. Other annual reports were listed, including the Quarterly Corporate Performance Report and the Annual Sickness Update. A further suggestion included a review of the Budget Scrutiny Process, which was expected to take place during the summer.

A request was made for youth unemployment to be incorporated into the topic of Mental Health & Wellbeing for young people, to explore why Ashford now had a higher youth unemployment rate above both the Kent and UK average.

A Member spoke about the Environment Agency's (EA) refusal to share a report of the environmental impact of the Sevington Lorry Park and asked if the EA could be called to attend a Committee meeting to speak about this. The Chairman noted that although the Committee could not insist that any organisation or agency attend the meetings, they could certainly be invited to come along and share that information.

A further suggestion was made to invite representatives from the Community Councils already set up in the Borough to discuss what progress they have made and whether it would be of interest to other areas of Ashford.

The Chairman thanked Members for their input and was pleased to see the work programme now contained some inspiring topics for future review.

**Resolved:**

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

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