

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **26<sup>th</sup> November 2024**.

### Present:

Cllr. Ledger (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Cllrs. Arnold, Bartlett, C Bell, N. Bell, Dean, Feacey, Gathern, Giles, McGeever, Michael, C Suddards.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c) Councillors C Bell and C Suddards attended as Substitute Members for Councillors Shilton and Chilton respectively.

### Apologies:

Cllrs. Chilton, Shilton, Walder, Chief Inspector Sarah Rivett – Kent Police.

### In attendance:

Cllrs. Campkin, Nilsson.

Corporate Director of Place, Space and Leisure; Assistant Director of Environment, Property and Recreation; Assistant Director of People, Communications and Technology; Head of Policy and Performance; Environmental Contracts Manager; Safety and Wellbeing Manager; Monitoring Centre Team Leader; Senior Governance and Data Protection Officer; Democratic Services Manager.

Inspector Richard Batten – Kent Police.

### Also in attendance virtually:

Cllr Harman.

## 214 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
C Bell	Made a Voluntary Announcement that Community Safety was within her KCC Portfolio and she was Chair of the Kent Community Safety Partnership.	216
Feacey	Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was Chair of Ashford Volunteer Centre and Ashford International Development Company	218

## 215 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 216 Community Safety Update

The Assistant Director of Environment, Property and Recreation introduced the report, which provided the Committee with its annual update on community safety. The report explained that the Council had a duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to consider the impact of all their functions and decisions on crime and disorder in their local area. The report outlined how the Council worked in partnership with other agencies to reduce crime and disorder, with this work being progressed through the Ashford Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The report also detailed crime statistics for the Borough and information on current community safety priorities and actions that had been taken to meet those priorities and raised awareness of emerging issues. She advised that the Safety and Wellbeing Manager and Community Safety Inspector Richard Batten from Kent Police, were also present to answer any questions that Members may have.

The report was opened up to the Committee and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- ABC had recruited to its Domestic Abuse Co-Ordinator post earlier that month and that person had now started.
- The majority of the town's licensed premises were engaged with the 'Ask Angela' initiative and the Police Licensing Officers did do regular checks and were supportive.
- The Community Safety Unit (CSU) did still have the safety equipment around drink spiking and that was being distributed in the run up to the festive season.
- The funding for the work with the Charlton Athletic Community Trust did run out in March 2025. A funding proposal for continuation of the work had been submitted but was yet to be agreed. A Member considered it was important that this initiative was supported and secured to remain in Ashford, particularly as it was referred to in Ashford's new Borough Plan up to 2028.
- The CSU would be keen to open up communications with Ward Members on certain types of incidents as much as possible, but this would not always be possible in the case of live Police incidents.
- The CSP was keen to continue to provide funding for engagement with schools. There were further workshop programmes planned with both Year 9 and Year 12/13 students in 2025 but it was fair to say that funding was limited.

There was also engagement with Primary Schools and there was a Child Centred Policing team which engaged with those younger people.

- Kent Police had a platform called 'My Community Voice' which was a two-way engagement tool that allowed the public to report issues in their areas and allowed the Police to create a personalised policing response. This was intended to complement the more traditional ways of reporting issues which were all still there. It was important that all incidents of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) were reported as it allowed the Police to adjust and target their resources accordingly and Members were encouraged to get that message out to their communities. Incidents on new developments that were still in the hands of developers should still be reported to the Police in the normal ways.
- Issues around nuisance motorcycles and e-scooters were recognised locally and had been identified as a particular priority due to the level of reporting.
- Whilst there was a focus on the town centre and urban areas as these were the hotspot areas for community safety issues, there was still a desire to work with Tenterden and the villages and each area had its dedicated Officers (details of which could be found on the Kent Police website). If there were any particular issues or hotspots elsewhere, Members were encouraged to speak to the CSU and Officers were always happy to attend Parish Council and other local meetings.
- There was an ASB case review mechanism if an individual was unsatisfied with how their ASB concern had been addressed. When this threshold was met, a panel meeting took place to consider information relevant to the case, gave complainants the opportunity to voice their concerns and to allow agencies to explain how they had addressed these. The chair of the panel meeting then reviewed all the information and made recommendations to the agencies on what additional actions they could take. This was then shared with the complainant.

The Vice-Chair in the Chair said he wanted to thank all those involved with the Ashford Community Safety Unit for the hard work they undertook throughout the year as demonstrated in this particularly positive report.

**Resolved:**

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

## **217 Waste Services Contract**

The Assistant Director of Environment, Property and Recreation introduced the report, which provided an update on the performance and communication of the new waste contract with Suez which started on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024. It was clear that the start of the contract had seen some disruption to collections due to route changes, new vehicles, digitalisation and the challenges of entering into a new three-way partnership. The changes undoubtedly led to an increase in inquiries, particularly via social media, and the report covered how communication had been handled and the

lessons learned. This was the first time that such a key front line service change affecting the whole Borough had taken place in the age of intense scrutiny via social media and lessons had certainly been learned. It was pleasing to note that things had settled down from those initial months and current performance was the best it had been for over 10 years so they were now beginning to reap the benefits. They now needed to ensure this continued and was managed through robust contract management.

The report was opened up to the Committee and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- The aim of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) was to provide funding, from the manufacturer and reseller to Local Authorities to fund the collection of packaging for recycling. It would only be payable on packaging materials and not currently anticipated to fund to the level previously provided by KCC. This was anticipated for the next financial year, although the extent had not yet been confirmed or published. There were no changes for the bins or how the public disposed of their rubbish.
- Comms and further messaging reminding the public how to dispose of different types of waste would be considered going forward. More positive comms about the contract were also planned, but Officers had consciously held back on those for now as things settled down.
- Suez had its own Project Officer in place who would work across the three Authorities and now the contract had settled down they would be pursuing education projects and some of the more analytical parts of the contract. Data was building up now which would allow specific areas and issues to be targeted and further improvements to be made. Suez would also take on the local community roadshows.
- Street cleansing was not affected by the changes to the contract, although it was recognised that there were areas where efficiency and effectiveness could be increased and these were being considered with the contractor. Members were encouraged to report any particular issues or areas of concern so these could be considered.
- It was noted that disposable coffee pods could be collected and recycled via Evri.
- Contamination of waste was not a big issue in Ashford with only the odd load being rejected, however the situation would continue to be reviewed.
- Electric vehicles had not been pursued at the outset of the contract due to the prohibitive costs involved and the lack of necessary range.
- It was true to say that the initial communications with both residents and Ward Members had not hit the right note and lessons had been learned.

The Vice-Chair in the Chair said he wanted to thank everyone involved with such a huge piece of work. The Committee recognised the initial problems but the way

everybody pitched in to get things resolved was admirable and deserved praise. Nearly 18,500 contacts had been received from residents in the first three months of the contract and this had placed an enormous burden on Council staff, so Members wanted to express their thanks and appreciation.

**Resolved:**

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

## **218 Corporate Performance Report**

The Senior Governance and Data Protection Officer introduced the report which summarised performance against the Council's suite of Key Performance Indicators set out on the Borough Plan 2024-28, for the Quarter 2 period 2024/25.

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

- A Member asked about the plans to bring the clock tower at Newtown Works back in to use as part of the new development. A Member who was also Chair of the Ashford International Development Company confirmed that reinstatement of this was part of the plans.
- Regarding the Council's self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing, some concerns were expressed about health and safety failings, particularly around smoke and carbon monoxide detection, and a timescale for completion was requested. The Head of Policy and Performance explained that progress updates were being provided to the Audit Committee from the Asset and Compliance Board, but she did know that a lot of work was going on in this area. She also understood that there was a recording mechanism now in place within the service called True Compliance which was being used. Given the Committee's interest in housing issues, it was considered that the Housing KPI's contained in this report could be revisited for a sense check.

**Resolved:**

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

## **219 Schedule of Key Cabinet Decisions**

**Resolved:**

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

## **220 Work Programme and Tracker**

A Member said he had some concerns about the Section 106 process. He believed that funds which had been promised had gone missing and he would like a better understanding of the process, how it was being measured, what was happening to the funding and how Ward Members could have more of an input alongside Parish

OSC  
261124

Councils. This funding was significant for the Borough and he asked if this was something the Committee could examine. The Head of Policy and Performance advised that the Committee did undertake a review of Section 106 a couple of years ago, so it might be timely to re-visit the outcomes of that review in the context of the current position.

**Resolved:**

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

---

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Democratic Services  
Telephone: (01233) 330491 Email - [democraticservices@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@ashford.gov.uk)  
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: <https://ashford.moderngov.co.uk>