

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 **26th March 2019**.

Present:

Cllr. Chilton (Chairman);
Cllr. Michael (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Bartlett, Burgess, Dehnel, Farrell, Krause, Miss. Martin.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Feacey, Mrs. Martin.

Head of Environment & Land Management, Head of Cultural Services.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Mrs. C. Bell, White.

Director of Finance & Economy, Housing Operations Manager, Environmental Operations Manager, Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

403 Minutes

The Minutes of this Committee held on the 26th February 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

404 Community Toilet Scheme

The Environmental Operations Manager introduced the report that gave detail on toilet provision in the Town Centre and the impact that the Community Toilet Scheme had.

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

- A Member asked whether the use of Aid Cards would be considered, whereby card holders would be permitted to park anywhere (within reason and for a reasonable, brief amount of time) and be exempt from parking charges. The Environmental Operations Manager agreed that this could be considered and would take the idea away to discuss with Parking Services.
- In response to a question asking whether costs for the scheme would increase going forward, the Director of Finance & Economy explained that there was the

likely possibility that late charges and invoicing would not yet have been accounted for which would change the outturn position. In addition, the Council were looking to expand the scheme so any underspend could be allocated to costs associated with development. A Member commented that although this scheme had made savings, it was important to remember that the Council were responsible for providing adequate services to residents, even if resulting costs were higher.

- Signage for the scheme and the possibility of disability apparatus e.g. a speaking facility for those hard of hearing were discussed. It was confirmed that lots of work was still ongoing between the Council and other agencies to continually improve the scheme, and this included the possibility of working with charities including Ashford Access. A Member expressed concern that not all sections of the disabled community were consulted, and the Council needed to be mindful to communicate and liaise with a variety of charities and advocacy groups to ensure inclusivity.
- A Member asked about signage at Ashford Gateway. The Environmental Operations Manager confirmed that there were signs at Ashford Gateway, but she would look at making them more visible and conspicuous.
- In response to a question asking about premises insurance for the two toilets remaining and why the 'actual' figures for 2018/19 were not displayed on page 6 of the report, the Director of Finance confirmed that the figures were too de-minimus to charge out.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

405 Safeguarding Update

The Housing Operations Manager introduced this item and explained that a number of changes had occurred to the Council's work towards safeguarding, which were highlighted in the report. These changes included a revision of the policy and the completion of the biannual Section 11.

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

- A Member asked what, if any, tracking procedures were in place after the Council made referrals to other partners and agencies. Was there a degree of accountability for the Council and were we culpable to a certain extent. The Housing Operations Manager explained that although KCC had overall responsibility, the potential for accountability was there. Officers used an internal system to track referrals made, but added that communication with KCC could sometimes be inconsistent. Officers had met to discuss this problem, and sought to improve communication channels. She added that so long as an audit trail existed, the Council were covered in terms of fulfilling their duties. A recent domestic homicide review had been undertaken and ABC

were commended for their work. The Councillor for KCC spoke about a recent safeguarding case she had reported to ABC, but had not had a response giving feedback on the case. She appreciated a detailed response would not be appropriate, but a simple email to say the case was being dealt with would offer some reassurances. The Housing Operations Manager advised that Officers would normally respond.

- In response to a question asking how ABC were performing compared to other Councils, the Housing Operations Manager advised that she would obtain that information from KCC.
- The Committee went onto discuss the One Stop Shop at the Willow Centre. The Chairman noted that an increase in domestic abuse had been reported by the Police at a recent O&S meeting, and wondered whether this type of provision was adequate or should be increased. A further point was made stating that the County and Local Authority often worked separately when there may be opportunities for them to work together, in providing outlets for victims. The Housing Operations Manager agreed and would look at the potential to expand and develop the One Stop Shop. She added that Domestic Abuse Officers were available all the time for victims to contact.
- A Member requested that up to date information regarding support for victims be circulated to all Councillors and Parish Councils also.
- The Committee discussed safeguarding training, since only 43% of Members had completed safeguarding training. From May 2019 this training would be mandatory. A Member added that the Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer had drafted an excellent report outlining the responsibilities held by Councillors.
- The Housing Operations Manager went on to talk about her involvement with the peer group review regarding submission of Section 11 toolkit. This submission was required every two years and the peer review gave a valuable insight into how other Local Authorities were approaching safeguarding. Ashford had increased its evaluation score from 'partially met' to 'met'.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

406 Future Agenda Items

It was agreed that future agenda items would be reviewed by the new Committee Members after the election in May 2019.

407 Future Reviews and Report Tracker and Topic Selection Flowchart

A Member commented that Stagecoach had recently attended the Joint Transportation Board meeting to discuss public transport provision, and therefore

were not likely to be receptive to being invited again to attend an O&S Meeting, so the topic of public transport may be better scheduled for later in the committee's work programme.

An additional comment was made regarding the two recommendations on page 33 of the tracker concerning planning applications, and that Officers must follow these instructions that are set out in the Constitution.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

408 Thanks

Cllr. Miss Martin relayed a message from Cllr. Mrs Martin expressing her gratitude to all Members of the Committee and Officers, since she would not be standing for re-election. The Chairman responded with a message of thanks to Cllr. Mrs Martin for her long-standing contribution to the Committee and her hard work as a Ward Member. He went onto thank fellow Committee Members, Officers and the Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer and Member Services Officer for their efforts and wished everyone a safe and enjoyable election.

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