

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 **24th September 2019**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Farrell, Forest, Howard-Smith, Krause, Ledger, Link, Spain.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillor Spain attended as Substitute Member for Councillor. Chilton.

Apologies:

Cllrs. N. Bell, Chilton, Iliffe.

Also Present:

Cllr. Campkin

Director of Finance & Economy, Head of Corporate Policy, ED & Comms, Compliance and Data Protection Manager, Governance & Data Protection Officer, Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

141 Declaration of Interest

Councillor Ovenden made a 'Voluntary Announcement' since he was the Ward Member for Wye and a member of the Parish Council. He would relinquish the Chair when the item for Wye Masterplan arose.

142 Minutes

Resolved:

The Minutes of this Committee held on the 23rd July 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

143 Budget Scrutiny Presentation

The Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer introduced this item that provided Members with an outline of how the Budget Scrutiny process in the Council worked.

The presentation covered

- What is Budget Scrutiny?

- Expectations of the Scrutiny Process
- Key Considerations
- The 4 stages
- Next steps

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

- Members thanked the Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer for the presentation and since this was his last meeting before moving to a new job, they expressed their gratitude to him for all the hard work he had undertaken on Budget Scrutiny over the last few years.
- A Member asked about resilience within the Council if another financial recession were to occur. The Director of Finance and Economy explained that full risk assessments and stress tests were undertaken periodically to manage risks including financial recession. The Council worked in line with Treasury guidelines to ensure mitigation strategies were in place.
- The Chairman explained that any questions arising through the Budget Scrutiny process relating to process and policy would be re-directed and addressed at the Committee meetings, where Members could decide if they wanted to review certain issues in more depth.

The Chairman then asked for volunteers to sit on the Task Group, and Cllrs. Ledger, Forrest, Ovenden and Michael put themselves forward. Cllrs. Chilton, Iliffe and Mulholland had also expressed an interest.

144 Quarter 1 Performance Report

The Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer introduced this item and explained that the report summarised performance against the Council's suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Quarter 1 (1st April to 30th June) 2019/20. The KPI's would be reviewed in line with the new Corporate Plan. The report also provided an overview of key developments in the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities over the same period.

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

- KPI1. A Member pointed out that alongside the vacancy rate for Park Mall, the rental income figures would be a good indicator to determine if the Council was performing well with regards to return and growth. The Director of Finance and Economy explained that the Corporate Performance Report would include data on rental income, and reminded the Committee that the rationale behind purchasing Park Mall was to improve and revive that area, and not primarily about profit.
- KPI2. In response to a question concerning car parking by Ashford College, it was confirmed that a temporary car park was situated next to the train station

on Elwick Road.

- KPI 20, it was confirmed that anyone presenting themselves as homeless to the Council had to show evidence of a local connection to the area. A Member asked if the figures pertaining to homelessness in the Borough could be examined in more detail, and the Director of Finance and Economy agreed that it would be a good idea for the Committee to review this topic expansively to establish whether the Council was rising to the challenge, after the change to legislation in 2017.
- KPI39. A Member asked a question regarding extensions to the statutory obligation to determine a planning application within 8 weeks. The Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer advised that the Head of Planning would be best placed to discuss Planning procedures.
- In response to a question concerning financial returns on investments, the Director of Finance and Economy explained that that this information could be found in the Quarterly Corporate Property Report.
- KPI 34. A Member asked if it was possible to provide the actual figures alongside percentages and the Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the Ashford Monitoring Centre would be able to generate that data.
- KPI 40/41. The Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer advised that figures pertaining to Appeals and how they were recorded could be generated in the future.
- A request was made for vacancy rates at the new Coachworks to be included in future reports and for the numbers on permanent and temporary staff within the Council also.
- In answer to a question from Members regarding carbon emissions, it was confirmed that this was already reported on annually, but in addition, Cllr. Howard and ABC Officers were looking into this and the wider subject of climate change, and a report would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

145 Task Group review into Wye3 Masterplan

The Chairman relinquished the Chair and handed over to the Vice Chairman. He took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

The Vice-Chairman introduced this item and spoke about the aims of the Task Group, which included looking at making consultation processes more robust and offering clarity on roles and responsibilities. He added that developers were sometimes

inclined to steer towards their own self-interests, and it was the responsibility of the Council and other parties involved to maintain a balanced approach.

He went on to say that the Task Group found nothing untoward during their inquiries; the main problem they found was that there had been no Terms of Reference from the beginning of the consultation process. The Vice-Chairman then outlined the recommendations made by the Task Group.

A Member of the Task Group commended the Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer for the work he undertook in arranging the meetings and liaising with the other parties involved in the consultation. He added that it was a very interesting exercise and the report included all the elements that were covered. The Council needed to be sure of their role within the process and in situations where communication lines failed, then constraints were in place to support the progression.

The Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the recommendations had been shared with the Planning Department, and these would be put forward to Cabinet for their approval on the 10th October 2019. Management Team would be on hand to advise Members.

Resolved:

That the Committee endorse the recommendations made by the Task Group:

Recommendation 1: That in light of the seeming failure of KCC to review the MLM study fully, the Council engage an independent transport consultant to review, assess and determine the validity of the traffic assessments submitted in relation to the Masterplan by both Telereal Trillium and Wye Parish Council.

Recommendation 2: That the Council engage an independent transport consultant or a suitably qualified member of the Council's staff to review, assess and determine the validity of all future traffic assessments for planning applications.

Recommendation 3: That specific budgetary allocations and additional administrative support for case officers be committed for any future masterplanning exercises.

Recommendation 4: That a clearly defined scope and timeline be agreed at the commencement of any future masterplanning exercises.

Recommendation 5: That, where masterplanning exercises are to be carried out collaboratively with a steering group, clearly defined terms of reference for the steering group including the roles of each partner to the steering group are jointly agreed prior to the commencement of any future masterplanning exercise.

Recommendation 6: That, where masterplanning exercises are to be carried out collaboratively with a steering group, an independent chair should be engaged to lead the steering group.

Recommendation 7: That future masterplanning exercises be supported and overseen internally by a member led task group, the membership of which to include the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development and the relevant Ward member(s).

Recommendation 8: That an independent external facilitator be retained for all workshop elements of any future masterplanning exercises.

Recommendation 9: That, in order to ensure continuity as far as possible throughout future masterplanning exercises, a single list of invitees should be maintained for all workshop events.

Recommendation 10: That the Council ensure it provides clear, regular updates on the development of any masterplan to stakeholders throughout any future masterplanning exercise.

Recommendation 11: That the Council maintain a single point of contact throughout any future masterplanning process for the gathering and dissemination of any and all information related to the masterplanning exercise.

Recommendation 12: That the Council ensure that any and all responses to consultation or engagement exercises conducted on masterplanning be submitted directly to the Council.

146 Future Reviews and Report Tracker and Topic Selection Flowchart

The Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer explained that it was likely that the meeting scheduled for 22nd October would be cancelled; this would be confirmed to Members.

Owing to the change in the schedule for Cabinet Meetings, the cycle for Overview and Scrutiny had also changed. The new dates would be circulated to Members accordingly.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

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