



Lewes District Council

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Ditchling Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes** on **Tuesday 4 March 2014** at **10.00am**

Present:

Councillors S J Osborne (Chair), P F Gardiner, S J Gauntlett, J V Harris, E E J Russell, J Stockdale and I J White

Officers Present:

R Allan, Scrutiny and Committee Officer

Minutes

76 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

77 Apologies

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor J M Harrison-Hicks.

78 Urgent Item

The Chair advised that she had agreed, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, that Flooding in Lewes District be considered as a matter of urgency in order that the Committee could take its decisions on the most up to date information.

79 Flooding in Lewes District

The Chair advised that a request had been submitted by a member of the Scrutiny Committee to consider flooding in Lewes District. This followed a discussion at Full Council on 26 February 2014 on the same subject. It was agreed by full Council at its meeting of 26 February that the Council set aside the following:

- A sum of £50,000 (including on-costs and operational budget) for a fixed term post of a Flood and Coastal Risk Engineer be set into the

budget for each of next two financial years period 2014-15 and 2015-16. This was to be funded from the budget for Service Priorities and the commitment to be reviewed in October 2015.

- A capital budget of £350,000 be allocated from the second call on capital receipts generated from the Council's 49 sites regeneration project. This was to be used for pump priming flooding and drainage projects. (Cabinet had already agreed that the first call was to repay the loan for the Agile Working project)
- A further capital budget of £100,000 from the same source for development with adjacent authorities, of local measures to reduce the peak flow through the catchments in East Sussex and for the implementation of small schemes which fell outside of the funding schemes of the Environment Agency but which could be demonstrated to have a valuable return for the District
- A budget of £30,000 for the investigation of the vulnerability of business and residential property to wind and storm damage and to develop an action plan that business and residents can use to minimise damage to their properties. This would be funded from the budget for Service Priorities
- A sum of £30,000 to investigate the potential damage to infrastructure from slope failure, outside of failures affecting with roads and railways themselves. This would also be funded from the budget for Service Priorities.

It was proposed that these funds would be ring-fenced for the proposed use, and any unused allocation could be transferred into the following financial year. The capital budget would be activated upon the banking of receipts from the regeneration project.

The Committee discussed in some detail how the proposals could be supervised by an advisory group, membership of which could include Lindsay Frost (previous Director of Planning at the Council), Tom Crossett (previously a senior scientist at Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food), a local hydraulics engineer, Tim Bartlett (Principal Environmental Health Officer at the Council), a Flood and Coastal Risk Engineer, a Cabinet member from the Council and Councillor P F Gardiner.

A discussion followed, and the Committee advised that the suggested monitoring of cliffs from Seaford Head to Telscombe should be welcomed by Cabinet as part of the slope stability project, being complementary to the very refined offshore laser data collection by the British Geological Society, as lower technology evaluation might reveal possible failures in advance of collapse.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Committee agreed that working with adjacent boroughs would enhance the opportunities for the Flood and Coastal Risk Engineer, and that local measures to reduce peak flow would also benefit from across-border consultation and much was to be gained from contact other organisations already involved in flood protection and river management.

The level at which the Flood and Coastal Risk Engineer would be appointed was discussed, but Councillors advised the proposed advisory group should define the level of this post. The proposal to develop a local action plan to show how to minimise wind and storm damage was welcomed by Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee advised that the wealth of local knowledge concerning flooding held by the public should be used. This would help to refine the Environment's Agency's flood maps, and would be a good cooperative venture for the Council within the District. It was noted that some preliminary work would have to be done to avoid raising expectations of a complete solution to all flooding problems. It added that work undertaken in other parts of the country would assist this work, and that the mobilising of local people to help themselves ('crowd sourcing') was a challenging but worthwhile development.

The Scrutiny Committee welcomed the contact already made by Councillor P F Gardiner to a local landowner (Gus Christie of Glyndebourne), to Rupert Clubb, Director of Economy, Transport and Environment at East Sussex County Council, and to potential members of the advisory Group, Lindsay Frost and Tom Crossett.

Recommended:

- 79.1** That Cabinet be requested to support fully the Scrutiny Committee's commitment and comments to ensure the delivery of the work to improve flood defences; SCO
- 79.2** That Cabinet be requested to approve the establishment of an expert advisory group to help interact with outside bodies and supplement existing skills and to oversee the use of the proposed funding for flood alleviation projects, flow reduction, review of wind and storm damage, and slope failure, including cliff failure; and SCO
- 79.3** That Cabinet be requested to keep the Scrutiny Committee fully informed of any work being undertaken in the prevention of flooding within Lewes District by means of an oral report be made to Cabinet at approximately 6 month intervals with an annual report to Scrutiny Committee, then Cabinet. SCO

80 Forward Plan

The Chair advised that at its previous meeting, members of the Committee had agreed that the Forward Plan of the Council should be considered at the Committee in order to get involved with Cabinet decisions at an early stage in the process.

The Committee considered the Forward Plan, and was concerned that the present layout may not be clearly understandable to members of the public. It questioned whether the recommendation for a business charter that had arisen from the recent Scrutiny Review into urban housing had been undertaken as part of the North Street review. It added that it would be

helpful to be informed on how many photovoltaic panels to housing priorities had been added onto Council properties.

Resolved:

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| 80.1 | That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to investigate whether a new layout of the Forward Plan could be implemented; | SCO |
| 80.2 | That the Leader of the Council be requested to update the Scrutiny Committee on whether the recommendation from the Scrutiny Review – Provision of Affordable Housing in Urban Areas concerning the establishment of a business charter had been considered as a priority and in conjunction with the present regeneration work concerning the 49 sites within the District; and | SCO |
| 80.3 | That the Housing Contract Manager be requested to attend a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee with an update on the take-up of Photovoltaic Panels to housing properties. | HCM |

81 Scrutiny Review – Strengthening our Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector

The Committee considered Report No 45/14, which detailed the final report of the Scrutiny Panel, Strengthening our Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Panel took the Committee through the Report. He advised that this Report had been considered by the Scrutiny Committee in November 2014, which advised that in light of the forthcoming restructure at the Council, this Report would be best considered after the new Director for that Department had joined the Council.

The Scrutiny and Committee Officer advised the Committee that a further meeting had taken place with the Panel and the new Director of Business Strategy and Development in January 2014, who had provided her comments on the draft Report. She added that the Report was due to be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 24 April 2014.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Chair of the Panel highlighted the importance of managing expectations, and that use of the web would be advocated ahead of existing Council publications to help promote the work of voluntary and community sector groups within the District.

Members of the Committee were concerned that the detailed information in Appendix E to Report No 45/14 did not highlight the amount of monies that the voluntary and community sector brought to the District.

Resolved:

- 81.1** That Report No 45/14 of the Scrutiny Panel, Strengthening our

Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector be agreed;

- 81.2** That a vote of thanks be accorded the Chair and members of the Scrutiny Panel, Strengthening our Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector for their hard work;
- 81.3** That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to include the use of the web as a means for groups to promote themselves in the background information for Recommendation 4 as set out on page 21 of Report No 45/14; and
- 81.4** That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to include information in Report No 45/14 which details the amount of monetary benefit the voluntary and community sector bring to the District.

82 Monitoring Scrutiny Committee Recommendations

The Chair of the Committee took Councillors through the list of recommendations that had been approved by the Scrutiny Committee since June 2011.

The Committee considered whether a list of recommendations should be a regular item on the Scrutiny committee agenda, and was concerned that some updates were older than twelve months. It added that it would be useful for all recommendations to be numbered.

Resolved:

- 82.1** That the Parks and Cemeteries Manager be requested to circulate an update on the provision of burial space in cemeteries in the District to all members of the Scrutiny Committee; PCM
- 82.2** That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to add the Monitoring of Scrutiny Committee Recommendations as a regular item on the Scrutiny Committee agenda; SCO
- 82.3** That the Cabinet Member for Planning be requested to update the Committee on whether planning regulations could be loosed in areas of the District that required regeneration in order to attract investment; and SCO
- 82.4** That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to ensure that all recommendations within the template are numbered. SCO

83 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

- 83.1** That the next scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to be held on Tuesday 22 April 2014 at 10.00am in the Telscombe Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes be noted. All to note

The meeting ended at 11.15am

S J Osborne
Chair