



Lewes District Council

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Telscombe Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes** on **Thursday 26 June 2014** at **10.00am**

Present:

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

Officers Present:

R Allan, Scrutiny and Committee Officer
C Bibb, Projects Co-ordinator
A Frost, Parks and Cemeteries Manager
B Lewis, Contracts Manager – Leisure and Facilities
E Sheath, Head of Strategic Policy

Minutes

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2 Apologies

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

3 Disclosure of Interest

Councillor P F Gardiner declared his personal, non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 10 (Homes Zones and after hours use of school fields).

4 Change in Membership of Scrutiny Committee

The Committee noted that, as Councillor E Merry had been appointed onto Cabinet, there was a Conservative seat vacancy on the Scrutiny Committee. In response to a Councillor's question, the Scrutiny and Committee Officer advised that the Leader of the Council was currently

looking for an appointment for that seat.

Resolved:

4.1 That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to contact the Leader of the Council to request that a member of the Liberal Democratic or Independent Group replace Councillor E C Merry as a member of the Scrutiny Committee if a member of the Conservative Group cannot be found in time for its next meeting on 25 July 2014.

SCO

5 Forward Plan

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

In response to a Councillor's question, the Contracts Manager – Leisure and Facilities advised that some technical issues with cashless parking had been addressed, and that this would be revisited once the scheme had been implemented. She added that cashless parking was more financially economical than a pay on exit scheme in car parks.

Resolved:

5.1 That the Forward Plan for the Council be noted.

6 Draft Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered suggestions for the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2014/15.

The Chair of the Committee explained that East Sussex County Council had decided not to work with the District Council on the Aging Population Strategy Review, but a District only Review could go ahead. The Scrutiny and Committee Officer advised that Councillors could ask for witnesses from the County Council as part of that Review.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Chair of the Committee explained that a further meeting had been arranged on 25 July 2014 for the whole Committee to consider the Business Rates Discount Scheme.

The Chair of the Committee advised that the work on the Parks and Open Spaces Contract had been completed, therefore could be removed from the Work Programme.

The Committee discussed the item on the Work Programme detailing how the Council communicated with the public, and noted that this area of work had now been encompassed into the Locally Sorted Project at the Council.

The Chair suggested that the Committee reviewed how the Council could encourage more people to vote and stand at local elections, particularly

groups such as the young who were under represented.

The Chair asked the Committee to consider reviewing the Council's Constitution, and whether changes could be made in order to ensure its language was understandable and the content was accurate. Councillors suggested that this was a topic that the Full Council should consider, and recognized that this project would be a large piece of work for officers.

The Committee discussed devolution, particularly in respect of Town and Parish Councils in the District and the lack of information that had been circulated to Councillors. The Scrutiny and Committee Officer advised that the Devolution Committee at the Council had not met since July 2007.

Resolved:

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| 6.1 | That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to circulate the updated Scoping Report concerning the Aging Population Scrutiny Review to all members of the Scrutiny Committee; | SCO |
| 6.2 | That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to remove Parks and Open Spaces Contract from the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2014/15; | SCO |
| 6.3 | That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to invite Councillors Smith, Eiloart and O'Keeffe to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on the Locally Sorted Project at the Council; | SCO |
| 6.4 | That the Head of Democratic Services be requested to return to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 4 September 2014 with a Report detailing the Council's responsibilities for encouraging more residents to vote and stand as candidates at local elections and suggestions for improvements; and | HDS |
| 6.5 | That the Head of Democratic Services be requested to advise the Chair of the Committee on a likely timescale for potential work on the Council's Constitution. | HDS |

and it was further:

Recommended:

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| 6.6 | That Cabinet be requested note that devolution was a matter of concern for the Scrutiny Committee and to provide members of the Committee with a written response detailing the Council's plans for Devolution and whether the Devolution Committee is required to meet. | SCO |
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7 Future provision of burial space in cemeteries within the District

The Committee considered Report No 91/14 which detailed the future provision of burial space in cemeteries within the District.

The Parks and Cemeteries Manager took Councillors through the Report. He advised that at a previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, officers had been requested to circulate an update on the provision of burial space in cemeteries within the District to members of the Scrutiny Committee.

He explained that it was estimated that in Lewes Cemetery there were enough burial plots to last a further 18 months and ashes plots to last for 2 years. He added that the Lewes cemetery was completely landlocked without any potential for extension, but that there was potential for an additional extension of the Seaford Cemetery, subject to Planning Permission, into land adjacent to the current extension that is also owned by the Council. This would extend the capacity by up to 20 years

In response to a Councillor's question, the Parks and Cemeteries Manager advised that the provision of cemeteries by district councils was a statutory power, not a duty, therefore the District Council did not have a duty to provide any cemeteries within its area. He added that the re-use of graves was not likely to be permitted outside of London.

The Parks and Cemeteries Manager advised the Committee that a Report had been requested by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) at the Council regarding the future provision of burial space in cemeteries within the District. A discussion followed, and Councillors requested that additional information regarding ongoing maintenance costs and private hire costs of graves were provided to Councillors if not already included in Report to CMT.

Resolved:

- 7.1 That Report No 91/14 detailing the future provision of burial space in cemeteries within the District be noted; and
- 7.2 That the Parks and Cemeteries Manager be requested to contact all members of the Scrutiny Committee via email with the updated Corporate Management Team Report regarding the future provision of burial space in cemeteries within the District, including ongoing maintenance costs and private hire costs of graves.

PCM

8 Home Zones and after hours use of school fields

The Committee received Report No 92/14 which detailed Home Zones and the after hours use of schools fields.

The Projects Co-ordinator took the Committee through the Report. He advised that at a previous meeting, the Scrutiny Committee had requested that a further report on play areas should be brought to the Committee, specifically looking at home zones and the use of school facilities out of term time by members of the public.

He explained that Home Zones were residential streets in which the road space was shared between drivers of motor vehicles and other road users,

with the wider needs of residents being accommodated. A discussion followed, and the Committee questioned whether Homes Zones could be considered as part of the planning process.

The Projects Co-ordinator added that this Report also considered the use of school facilities out of term time by members of the public. A discussion followed, and the Committee expressed concern that there was an obesity problem in England, and that widening the use of school facilities could be an excellent way to address this issue with children and adults.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Projects Co-ordinator advised that many of the matters within this Report were a County Council responsibility, and that it was hard to engage schools in conversations regarding this subject. A discussion followed, and the Committee advised that written approaches to Headteachers, Governors and organisations such as Active Sussex could be made in order to encourage the widening of use of school facilities. It added that it was also important to note that other forms of exercise and play, outside of sport, were important to consider. The Committee questioned whether Section 106 monies could be used for this purpose, the Head of Strategic Policy advised that this may be possible under certain circumstances.

The Contracts Manager – Leisure and Facilities advised the Committee that the Annual Service Delivery Plan between the Council and Wave Leisure was currently being discussed, and these could include the widening out of Wave Leisure's programme to include alternative ways of engaging children in exercise and activity rather than just competitive sport.

(Note: Councillor Gardiner declared his personal, non-prejudicial interest in this item as his son ran a company that provided activities on school facilities out of school times, therefore, was able to take part in the consideration, discussion and voting thereon)

Resolved:

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| 8.1 | That Report No 92/14 which detailed Home Zones and the after-hours use of schools fields be noted; | SCO |
| 8.2 | That the Head of Strategic Policy be requested to circulate an email to all members of the Scrutiny Committee with information on whether planning advice to residents and businesses could include information regarding Home Zones; | HSP |
| 8.3 | That the Parks and Cemeteries Manager be requested to circulate an email to all members of the Scrutiny Committee with details of whether Headteachers and Governors could be contacted to start conversations about the widening of school facilities; and | PCM |
| 8.4 | That the Contracts Manager – Leisure and Facilities be requested to circulate an email to all members of the Scrutiny Committee with the results of the discussion with Wave Leisure about use of widening of | CM-L&F |

its programme.

9 Off-Street Car Parking in Lewes District

The Committee considered Report No 93/14 which responded to the Notice of Motion submitted to Council in February 2014 by Councillor Edmunds in relation to off-street parking charges and updated the Committee on the proposed service improvements.

The Contracts Manager – Leisure and Facilities took the Committee through the Report. She advised that In February 2014, Cllr Edmunds proposed the following motion:

- That this Council commit to ending all charges for off-road car-parking across Lewes District by the end of this Council Term, that is, by May 2015.
- That the car parks in the District which had their maximum stay reduced from 72 hours reduced to 10 or 24 hours in 2012, be restored to a 72 hour maximum stay.
- That this council write to East Sussex County Council to ask them to consider either abolishing on-road car parking charges, or, at the very least, making the first hour of parking free on-road.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Contracts Manager – Leisure and Facilities explained how the surplus figures was calculated, and how any surplus was used. Revenue from Penalty Charge Notices was ring-fenced to pay for the cost of the parking scheme, but any surplus from ticket sales could be used to support a wide range of Council priorities and was not exclusively ring-fenced to transport in the same way that surpluses from on-street parking were. A discussion followed, and the Committee questioned whether the voice of residents was heard in relation to car parking as it was their duty to ensure resident's concerns were represented.

The Committee expressed concern that businesses were affected by parking charges and restrictions, and questioned whether Newhaven should have the same parking system as Lewes as the towns were very different. A discussion followed and Councillors considered whether other methods, such as time limited spaces rather than charging money, could be utilized for car parking in the District.

Resolved:

- 9.1** That Report No 93/14 which responded to the Notice of Motion submitted to Council in February 2014 by Councillor Edmunds in relation to off-street parking charges be noted; and
- 9.2** That the Contracts Manager – Leisure and Facilities, be requested to return to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2014 with an updated Report detailing the separate requirements for parking in the major towns in Lewes District and whether different

CM-L&F

the

schemes should be implemented.

10 Planning Regulations

The Committee received an oral update on planning regulations from the Head of Strategic Policy.

The Head of Strategic Policy circulated a Briefing Paper titled "Update on Reforms in Planning (a copy of which is contained in the Minute Book). He took the Committee through the context of planning reform in the District, changes that have happened and potential changes for the future.

In response to a Councillor's question, he explained that one of the key drivers for reform and change had been the Government's aim to get Britain building out of recession. He added that some reforms were being discussed at a national level that could affect the District's policy on planning, specifically a potential increased minimum threshold for Section 106 agreements. He added that the Council, along with the South Downs National Park Authority, had appealed against this change.

He further advised that there was an increased emphasis from the Government on the time taken and quality of decision on planning application, but plans were being put in place at the Council to prepare for this change.

The Head of Strategic Policy informed the Committee that a briefing regarding planning reform was being held on Monday 30 June at 5pm in Southover House, Lewes which all Councillors were invited.

Resolved:

- 10.1** That the Head of Strategic Policy be requested to circulate the Briefing Paper titled "Update on Reforms in Planning" to all Councillors.

HSP

11 Chair of the Council's Business Report

The Committee received Report No 94/14 which related to the outgoing Chair's civic programme, the civic programme for the forthcoming year and budget provision.

Resolved:

- 11.1** That Report No 94/14 concerning the Chair of the Council's Business Report be noted; and
- 11.2** That a vote of thanks be accorded to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council in 2013/14 for their excellent work.

SCO

12 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

- 12.1** That the next scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to be held on Friday 25 July at 9.30am in the Ditchling Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes be noted.

All to note

The meeting ended at 12.34pm

S J Osborne
Chair