

## **Scrutiny Committee**

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Ditchling Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes**, on **Friday, 17 February 2017** at 10:00am

### **Present:**

Councillors P Gardiner (Chair), S Adeniji (Minutes 39 to 46), J Carter, N Enever (Minutes 38 to 43), J Harrison-Hicks, V Ient, R O’Keeffe MBE, S Osborne and J Peterson

### **Officers Present:**

J Harper, Head of Business Strategy and Performance

S Harvey, Strategic Performance Officer

J Norman, Committee Officer

H Williams, Community Safety Officer (Minutes 38 to 41)

### **In Attendance:**

Councillor T Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Customers and Partners (Minutes 38 to 41)

<b>Minutes</b>		<b>Action</b>
<b>38</b>	<p><b>Minutes</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	
<b>39</b>	<p><b>Urgent Items</b></p> <p>The Chair advised that he had agreed that, in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, a proposal that had been received from Councillor Carter relating to the demand for affordable workspace within the District be considered as a matter of urgency.</p>	
<b>40</b>	<p><b>Affordable Workspace in Lewes District</b></p> <p>The Chair reported that a proposal had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 14 by Councillor Carter which related the demand for affordable workspace for small and micro businesses within Lewes District.</p>	

He explained that he had tabled a request for a scrutiny review in order that a proposal for a draft scope for the review be considered. The proposal was circulated to Councillors at the meeting, a copy of which is contained in the Minute book.

Following discussion at the meeting, the Committee suggested that a future scoping report should include, in addition the items set out in the tabled proposal:

- Connectivity;
- Rural areas;
- Co-location; and
- Planning.

Resolved:

- 40.1** That the Head of Business Strategy and Performance be requested to prepare a report setting out a draft scope for a potential scrutiny review of how the Council could meet the demand for affordable workspace for small and micro businesses within the District, for consideration at a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

HBS&P

#### **41 Lewes District Community Safety Partnership Annual Report**

The Committee considered Report No 39/17 which detailed the Council's Community Safety Partnership Annual Report.

The Cabinet Member for Customers and Partners introduced the Report. He explained that the information detailed in paragraphs 14 to 14.6 on page 8 of the Report was no longer accurate, as he had been informed the day before the meeting that Wealden District Council (WDC) had decided not to continue to participate in the 'soft merger' of Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) in conjunction with Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council (LDC),.

The Cabinet Member brought the Committee's attention to the resource implications as set out in paragraphs 13 to 13.2 on page 8 of the Report. He explained that the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) maintained direct control over determining the budget allocation to local CSPs, and that this financial year the PCC had allocated £21.9k to the Lewes District Community Safety Partnership (LDCSP). The Committee queried how much was left in the PCC fund and how much had been approved, as it had queried at a previous meeting in 2016.

The Head of Business Strategy and Performance informed the Committee that out of the £505K in the PCC fund, LDC had been allocated £21K. She explained, however, that LDC also had a reserve fund of approximately £51K which was set aside in order to allocate funds for projects across the District.

The Community Safety Officer explained that he was in the process of establishing a Road Safety Action Group for the District which included representation from East Sussex Fire and Rescue, Sussex Police and East Sussex County Council. The aim of the Group was to identify and work to address problems relating to road safety.

Members of the Committee requested that they be put on the distribution list for communications and updates from the LDC Road Safety Action Group. They further requested broader publication by Officers.

CSO  
and  
HBS&P

Resolved:

- 41.1** That the achievements and activities of the Lewes District Community Safety Partnership during 2016/17 and future risks/opportunities to performance as set out in Report No 39/17, be noted;
- 41.2** That the Community Safety Action Plan for 2016/17 which will be adopted by the Director of Service Delivery under delegated authority as set out in Report No 39/17, be endorsed;
- 41.3** That the levelling off of crime within performance years 2015/16 and 2016/17 and the favourable comparison of crime levels in our Most Similar Group as set out in Report No 39/17, be noted;
- 41.4** That the Cabinet Member for Customers and Partners, in their capacity as the Council's representative on the Community Safety Partnership, be asked to give further consideration to ways in which the Community Safety Grants programme could be promoted; and
- 41.5** That the Cabinet Member for Customer and Partners, in their capacity as the Council's representative on the Community Safety Partnership, be asked to promote the establishment of the Road Safety Group to ensure that those who wish to participate and/or feed in their views, knowledge and experience are able to do so.

CM for  
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## **42 Local Tax Reduction Scheme**

The Committee considered Report No 40/17 which set out the background of the implementation of the Council's Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) and its subsequent maintenance.

Following a discussion, the Committee identified a number of questions it wanted the Head of Planning and Revenues to address in a future report to be considered at its next meeting:

- What was the council tax collection rate for self-employed people? How did this compare with the collection rate for those in the 'only pay 20%' category?
- Would it be possible for self-employed people's income, based on their previous year's tax return, to be used in calculating their entitlement for council tax reduction?

- Did it cost more in staff time to pursue/collect unpaid council tax than the amounts we got back?
- How much did the Council have to pay to bailiffs to act in cases of unpaid council tax?
- The Committee understands that there have been low levels of applications to the Hardship Fund – why is this? How has it been promoted?
- The Committee understands that Cabinet had agreed to further promote the Hardship Fund – how will this be done?
- The Committee understands that, if individuals making applications to the Hardship Fund have savings (of over £6.5K), they will not be entitled to a payment. Was this correct? If so, was this a significant enough reason for unentitlement? How many people had been turned down due to this?
- Why were applications to the Hardship Fund failing?

Resolved:

- 42.1** That Report No 40/17 be noted; and
- 42.2** That the questions set out above in Scrutiny Committee Minute No 42 be addressed by the Head of Planning and Revenues in a future report on council tax collection and reduction to be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 23 March 2017.

HP&R

**43 Portfolio Progress and Performance Report 2016/17 – Quarter 3 (October to December 2016)**

The Committee considered Report No 41/17 which detailed the Council's progress and performance in respect of key projects and targets for the third quarter of the year (October to December 2016) as shown in Appendix 1 on page 37 of the Report.

The Strategic Performance Officer brought the Committee's attention to paragraph 10 on pages 31 to 32 of the Report which set out the Council's performance at the end of the third quarter for the year 2016. She highlighted the Cabinet Portfolios' project progress and performance achievements as set out in paragraphs 12 to 16 on pages 32 to 33 of the Report.

The Strategic Performance Officer also highlighted paragraph 19 on page 34 of the Report which set out the areas for improvement. She explained that where service performance had fallen below target levels, or a project was significantly off track or had been significantly revised, priority was given to addressing these issues. There were two areas where this was the case in the third quarter: temporary accommodation and major planning applications allowed on appeal.

The Committee asked that consideration be given to sub-dividing the Waste and Recycling Key Performance Indicators as shown on page 42 of the Report in future years.

Councillors requested that a relevant Officer be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to explain in greater detail the progress and performance updates regarding the North Street Quarter, as set out on page 37 of the Report.

HBS&amp;P

Resolved:

- 43.1** That the Portfolio Progress and Performance 2016/17 – Quarter 3 (October to December 2016) as set out in Report No 41/17, be agreed.

**44 Forward Plan of Decisions – 1 February 2017 to 31 May 2017**

The Committee received the Forward Plan of the Council, as set out under pages 48 to 55 of the Agenda.

Resolved:

- 44.1** That the Forward Plan of the Council for the period from 1 February 2017 to 31 May 2017, be noted.

**45 Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016/17**

The Committee considered its Work Programme for 2016/17, as set out on page 56 of the Agenda.

Resolved:

- 45.1** That the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016/17 be agreed.

**46 Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

- 46.1** That the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee scheduled to be held on Thursday, 23 March 2017 in the Ditchling Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes commencing at 10:00am be noted.

The meeting ended at 11:45am.

P Gardiner  
Chair