

Monday 6 December 2010
at 6.00pm



Scrutiny Committee

MEMBERSHIP:-

Councillor MARSDEN (Chairman) Councillor SZANTO (Deputy Chairman), Councillors BELSEY, Mrs POOLEY, Mrs SALSBURY, THOMPSON and Miss WOODALL.

12 Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2010 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

13 Change of Membership

Members were advised that Councillor Purchase had resigned from membership of the Scrutiny Committee and that Councillor Mrs Salsbury had been appointed as his replacement, in accordance with the Council's governance process.

14 Declarations of Interest.

None were received.

15 Corporate Plan – 2011/12 Refresh – Public Consultation and Timetable.

The committee considered the report of the Head of Strategy and Democracy presenting the findings of the public consultation exercise and setting out the timetable for the production of the 2011/12 version of the Corporate Plan.

The consultation exercise, undertaken purely in face-to-face sessions with a combination of generic and specific community groups, had now taken place. All the results and commentary arising from the exercise were set out in detail in the appendix to the report.

A total of 157 people attended the consultation sessions. This compared to a total 58 people who participated in the 2009 online budget consultation. Having regard to the much larger number of participants, the amount of background context given, the more personal nature of the consultation activity, and the demonstrable engagement with a wide cross-section of the community, the quality and relevance of the feedback was far more robust this year. As a result, the unprecedented level (by Eastbourne Borough Council) of qualitative engagement and opportunity should not be underestimated.

Significantly, on corporate priorities, there was considerable across-the-spectrum support for the continuation of some of the existing corporate plan priority projects which were detailed within the report.

Many of the new suggestions were specific to the interests of the respective groups. However, the following areas were highlighted:

- There was a lot of feedback about maximising use of the voluntary sector in partnership in order to maintain quality public service delivery in the current economic climate, and placing more emphasis on asking the community to take more responsibility. This feedback was in the context of the recently announced public spending cuts, and the promotion of the 'Big Society' concept. Members sought clarification about the input of voluntary services and their assistance in retaining services following proposed budgetary cuts.
- Communities of interest groups were all keen to express their wish for a centrally located facility/building for all members of the community to access as part of the consideration of the town centre master plan. The committee discussed the use of the Town Hall and the Chief Executive advised that different rates were available for various groups and that the facilities would be marketed to maximise their usage by community groups in future.
- The youth consultation showed a strong desire for the Council to enable as far as possible the work being done with youngsters through community centres. A key point raised was that there was a perceived favouritism in assistance for youth centres located in areas with high crime figures leaving other areas less valued. The Senior Head of Community advised that work was being carried out with the ESCC Youth Service to develop a generic offer – it was important that the youth groups understood the pressures and restrictions of funding available so as not to see it as a negative process.

Members noted that the primary purpose behind the consultation was to provide evidence of priority needs to help the Council determine the most appropriate priority activity in the corporate plan. The timetable for re-drafting the corporate plan for 2011/12 had been agreed as part of the wider service and financial planning timetable as was included within the report.

Members expressed concern that the Chamber of Commerce had not responded during the consultation and asked that their concerns be passed to the Chair of the Chamber of Commerce.

NOTED.

16 Corporate Performance Quarter 2 2010-2011.

The 2010/15 Corporate Plan set out a series of key actions and indicators to deliver and measure progress against key priorities. Throughout the year, performance against key indicators and actions are reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny on a quarterly basis.

Members were advised that **Appendix 1** contained information on the Quarter 2 outturns of the performance indicators listed within the Corporate Plan. The report showed the latest available outturns for the National and Local Performance Indicators featured in the 2010/15 Corporate Plan broken down into the 4 theme chapters. There was a summary table at the beginning of each chapter's data to show the number of indicators on and off target. The report provided a detailed explanation of the symbols and gauges used to denote performance.

Notes had been included in the outturn tables where supplied. These provide some contextual background to the performance and this function would be developed further as the Covalent system became used more widely across the organisation.

Members noted that **Appendix 1** also contained a headline summary of progress against the projects within the Corporate Plan – taking the form of actions and milestones in the Covalent system. The table on page one showed that delivery of the agreed Corporate Plan actions stood at 51% at the end of Quarter 2. More detail on specific sub-actions and milestones could be found on the Covalent system (www.covalentcpm.com/eastbourne) and background papers for each chapter were available on request.

Members noted that the report provided an overview of performance against the authority's priorities as at the second quarter of 2010/11. The progress on actions shows that the Council were currently on target to achieve their actions by 31st March 2011.

Members asked for clarification and further information on the following:

CD_011 Taxis and private hire – number of applications processed and requested a breakdown between Taxi and Private Hire licences. The Chief Executive advised members that this information would be provided following the meeting.

TL_004 Hits to the VisitEastbourne website – has the website reduced the effectiveness of the Guide. The Senior Head of Tourism and Leisure advised the work was currently being carried out to ascertain the conversion of hits on the Council's website to the number of bookings placed – this work was ongoing and was conducted on an annual basis with the hotels in Eastbourne.

NI157b – Processing of planning applications: Minor Applications – Councillor Marsden queried whether having a member of staff seconded to the Agile working project had affected the processing of applications. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the secondment would continue until March 2011 and that all necessary steps were being taken to mitigate any issues and that the secondment had not caused any material effect to the department.

NI191 – Residual household waste per household – Councillor Belsey queried the reasons for the increase over the last six months. The Chief Executive advised that more waste was generated during spring/summer and that the Council was maximising its recycling and was on target to reach the predicted outturn by the end of the year.

CP10_3_07 – Housing: Provide Support to Vulnerable People – Councillor Marsden queried the progress for this area at 8%. Senior Head of Community advised that a focus worker had been recruited to work with families.

CP10_3_06 – Decent Homes Funding – Members were advised that Eastbourne Homes were currently rebidding for funding for 2011/13 although they had been advised that funding would not be granted to authorities who had more than 90% of homes at a 'decent' standard. However, as the majority of works outstanding were for retirement housing, Eastbourne Homes were working to develop contingency plans with the Homes and Community Agency.

CP10_3_02 – Youth Activities – the Senior Head of Community advised the further information would be provided following the meeting.

CD-013 – Local arrears of Council Tax collected – Councillor Marsden stated that this area was always an area of concern for Members. The Senior Head of Community advised that the mail shot had gone out, but would check further and report back following the meeting.

Councillor Szanto queried the crime figures (page 14) and was advised that East Sussex County Council had been contacted and had provided information for quarters 3 and 4, the Senior Head of Community advised that he would contact the County Council again to request quarter 1 and 2 information, The Strategic Performance Manager advised that information would be back loaded onto the system as and when available.

The Chief Finance Officer addressed the committee and advised that the current financial situation and draft budget proposals for 2011/12 would be considered by Cabinet on 15 December 2010 – there were no significant issues to report. However, there was an underspend and Housing Benefits marker which would be quantified later in the year.

The Deputy Chief Executive thanked the Strategic Performance Manager and his team for their input and ongoing development of the Covalent system to ensure the information was meaningful and correct.

NOTED.

17 Devolved Budgets and Neighbourhood Panels.

Members considered reports from Hampden Park, Devonshire and Langney regarding the Devolved Budgets and Schemes for each ward. Details can be found at <http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/council/ward-budgets/completed-projects/>

Members also discussed the Neighbourhood Panels within Hampden Park, Devonshire and Langney Wards. It was clear from the discussion that some of the Panels were working better in some wards than others, as residents were more proactive in promoting the work of the panels in their areas, particularly Devonshire, Sovereign and Upperton. It was apparent that the panels worked better where other community groups, such as residents associations, were already in existence. Members agreed it was important to encourage residents groups to develop in those areas where the panels were less successful. Members also discussed the number of Neighbourhood Panels in comparison to Wards. The Chief Executive advised the committee

that he would report their concerns and diversity of the panels back to the Borough Commander. The Committee felt it important to thank the Police for their time and input into the panels.

NOTED.

The meeting closed at 7.41 p.m.

Councillor Marsden
Chairman