



Lewes District Council

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Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Telscombe Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes** on **Thursday 21 November 2013** at **10.00am**

Present:

Councillors S J Osborne (Chair), A Dean, 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
A Frost, Parks and Cemeteries Manager
L Rowe, Housing Policy and Development Manager

Minutes

61 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

62 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors J M Harrison-Hicks and E C Merry.

63 Urgent Item

The Chair advised that she had agreed, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the Work Programme 2013/14 be considered as a matter of urgency in order that the Committee could take its decisions on the most up to date information.

64 Work Programme 2013/14

The Chair took the Committee through two suggestions for the Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme that she had received from a Councillor.

She explained that the first suggestion was in relation to the properties on the list of 49 sites that the Council had drawn up, properties which the

Council was considering the future of. The suggestion questioned whether some of these sites on the list of 49 sites were also on the potential list of sites to be devolved to Town and Parish Councils. The Committee was concerned that Lewes District Council may not receive financial reward from sites that had already been devolved to a Town or Parish Council. The Committee added that it was awaiting a response from the Director of Finance and Corporate Head – Legal and Democratic Services on this issue.

The second suggestion received was regarding a change to the Council's Allocation Policy proposed by the Housing Working Party. The Chair suggested that this would be best considered under Item 6 of the Agenda regarding the provision of affordable housing in the rural and urban areas of the District.

Resolved:

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| <p>64.1 That the Corporate Head – Property, Regeneration and Enterprise and the Corporate Head – Legal and Democratic Services be requested to contact all members of the Scrutiny Committee with an explanation on whether Lewes District Council would receive any financial reward from sites that had were devolved to a Town or Parish Council;</p> | <p>CHPRE/C
HLDS</p> |
| <p>64.2 That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to consult members of the Scrutiny Committee regarding whether the Committee needs to consider if Lewes District Council would receive any financial reward from sites that were devolved to a Town or Parish Council; and</p> | <p>SCO</p> |
| <p>64.3 That the Corporate Head – Property, Regeneration and Enterprise and the Corporate Head – Legal and Democratic Services be requested to provide members of the Scrutiny Committee with an updated timetable in regard to consideration of the development of the 49 sites.</p> | <p>CHPRE/C
HLDS</p> |

65 Scrutiny Reviews – Provision of Affordable Housing in Rural and Urban Areas

The Committee received an oral update from the Housing Policy and Development Manager in regard to the Scrutiny Reviews on the Provision of Housing in Rural and Urban Areas of the District.

The Housing Policy and Development Manager updated the Committee on the progress of the recommendations that had been agreed by Cabinet as a result of both reviews. He explained that no organisations had bid for the Housing Needs Survey tender that applied to the whole District, but that by splitting the work between the rural and urban areas, work had now commenced. He added that once the survey had been completed, work to establish a formal partnership with a housing provider could commence.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Housing Policy and Development Manager explained the level of detail that the final Report would contain. He added that a protocol for working practices between Parish Councils and the District Council regarding the provision of housing had been drafted.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Housing Policy and Development Manager explained that the changes in the Council's Allocation's Policy would not apply to exception sites, and that the draft Allocation's Policy would be publically available for consultation in January 2014.

The Committee discussed the recommendation that had resulted from the urban housing scrutiny review, regarding the development of a business charter, and questioned its progress.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Housing Policy and Development Manager explained the different level of housing need to the Committee.

Resolved:

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| 65.1 | That the Housing Policy and Development Manager be requested to incorporate explanations of the different levels of housing need in the Housing Needs Survey Report; | HPDM |
| 65.2 | That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to circulate the draft Protocol for working practices between Parish Councils and the District Council for comment; and | SCO |
| 65.3 | That the Leader of the Council be requested to ensure that the recommendation from the Scrutiny Review – Provision of Affordable Housing in Urban Areas concerning business charter be considered as a priority and in conjunction with the present regeneration work concerning the 49 sites within the District. | SCO |

66 Outdoor Play Provision in the Lewes District

The Committee considered Report No 191/13 regarding outdoor play provision in the District.

The Parks and Cemeteries Manager took the Committee through the Report. He explained that at a previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, it had been requested that a Report be considered that outlined the provision of outdoor play facilities within the Lewes District.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Parks and Cemeteries Manager explained that there were approximately 62 play areas within Lewes District. Lewes District Council currently owned and managed 32 of these, with the remainder owned by Town or Parish Councils. Lewes District Council play areas were inspected on a weekly basis by an inspector trained to RPII certificate standards (Register of Play Inspectors International). An independent play area inspector was employed annually to carry out a more detailed inspection. Both of these services were also offered to Town and

Parish Councils.

The Park and Cemeteries Manager drew the Committee's attention to Appendices 1 – 6 of Report No 191/13 which showed all of the District play areas. He added that the circles around each site were coloured dependent on the play area's designation.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Parks and Cemeteries Manager advised that in order to provide a definitive report on where play facilities were lacking, a detailed piece of work would be required. He added that using walking distance on a plan should be used as a guide only, as other considerations such as busy roads, water courses and blocked access routes all needed to be taken into account. He added that it was not often possible to find sites for new play areas that were suitable and that most new play area sites would come as a result of planning agreements for new developments, where the provision of on-site play facilities may be a requirement.

The Committee questioned the types of play areas that were required within the District and whether areas could be designated as "homezones", when roads were closed at certain times of the day in order that children could play on roads, especially ball games.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Head of Parks and Cemeteries explained that discussions had been held in previous years with schools to establish whether schools facilities could be used by members of the public out of term time. He added that a similar model has been adopted in Sweden.

Resolved:

- 66.1** That Report No 191/13 regarding outdoor play provision in the District be noted; and
- 66.2** That the Parks and Cemeteries Manager be requested to return to the Scrutiny Committee meeting in March 2014 with a further report on play areas, specifically looking at homes zone and the use of school facilities out of term time by members of the public.

PCM

67 Draft Communications Plan for Scrutiny

The Committee considered the draft Communications Plan for Scrutiny at the Council.

The Scrutiny and Committee Officer took Councillors through the draft Communications Plan. She advised that the use of social media was an area that could be utilised by the Council to promote current work and engage with the community.

The Chair of the Committee drew Councillor's attention to the importance of tracking recommendations that had been agreed by members of the Scrutiny Committee. She added that a mechanism was required that

demonstrated to other councilors and members of the public the value that Scrutiny added.

Resolved:

- 67.1** That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to develop a template in order to monitor recommendations that arise from Scrutiny Committee or Panel meetings; SCO
- 67.2** That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to arrange a short training session after the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 6 March 2014 to demonstrate twitter; SCO
- 67.3** That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to draft a six monthly scrutiny newsletter; and SCO
- 67.4** That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to add a standing item to future Agendas of the Scrutiny Committee to discuss communications. SCO

68 Engagement with Young People

The Committee considered the Report written by the Centre for Public scrutiny that advised that young people could get involved in Scrutiny at the Council.

The Committee questioned how Councillors could engage with young people who do not usually get involved in council activities, such as members of youth councils. It added that topics needed to be relevant to young people and in their own language.

Resolved:

- 68.1** That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to return to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 6 March 2014 with a proposal to engage young people in Scrutiny at the Council. SCO

69 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

- 69.1** That the next scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 16 January 2014 at 10.00am in the Telscombe Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes be noted. All to note

The meeting ended at 11.35am

S J Osborne
Chair