

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Telscombe Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes** on **Thursday 5 March 2015** at **10.00am**

Present:

Councillors S J Osborne (Chair), S J Gauntlett, C R O’Keeffe and J Stockdale, E Russell, J Harris, I White and P Gardiner

Officers Present:

R Brittle, Committee Officer
J Harper, Head of Business Strategy and Performance
P Sharp, Regeneration Project Manager
M Woodford, Head of Regeneration and Investment

In Attendance:

Councillor R Blackman

Minutes

47 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

48 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors S Saunders and J M Harrison-Hicks

49 Forward Plan

The Chair advised that at the previous meeting on 15 January 2015, members of the Committee had agreed that the Forward Plan of the Council should be considered at each meeting to enable the Committee to be involved with Cabinet decisions at an earlier stage in the process.

The Committee considered the Forward Plan, and discussed the possible implications of the Provision of Burial Services. It agreed that the Scrutiny Committee should be involved with future work relating to the Provision of Burial Services.

Members of the Committee queried whether there would be further work related to the Strategy for Managing Industrial Estates. The Forward Plan had contained information relating to the approach taken by surrounding Local Authorities regarding “Mitigating the impact of development with 7km of the Ashdown Forest”. The Committee agreed that only a small area of the District would be affected. Councillor Blackman informed the Committee that Wealden District Council was producing a related report. He suggested that there could be a postponement to discussion until the report was published. There was a further discussion regarding whether the issue was one that the Committee would be dealing with.

The Committee expressed its interest in the report which would set out the Environment Agency’s proposal to end its management of water levels in lowland areas close to key rivers, as these areas were defined as Inland Drainage Districts (IDD). The Committee commented that an update had been requested at a previous Committee meeting regarding the proposal, and that it would await a response to that request from the Environmental Health Manager.

EHM

Resolved:

49.1 That the Forward Plan be noted;

49.2 That the Parks and Cemeteries Manager be requested to provide a further update relating to the Future Provision of Burial Services within Lewes District to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee; and

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49.3 That the Head of Property and Facilities be requested to provide a further update relating to the Management of Industrial Estates to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

HPF

50 LEAP

The Committee considered Report No 27/15 which provided an overview of the Local Enterprise and Apprenticeship Platform (LEAP) pilot programme.

The Regeneration Project Manager explained that there were two strands to the LEAP Programme; the promotion of young people and support for business pre-starts. He explained that the pilot was launched in 2013 and that initially it had a slow start. However this had now changed and LEAP had played an important part in raising awareness of entrepreneurship and apprenticeships. The Regeneration Project Manager continued that as of 1 January 2015, 77 apprenticeships had started in Lewes District, 37 new employers had recruited apprentices, 31 entrepreneurs had completed LEAP training and 21 new business had started.

Councillor Blackman informed the Committee that LEAP had a successful pilot period but that there was an issue with the future of the scheme. He

continued that since LEAP started there had been changes in the Education system including the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) to 18 years old. There had also been an increase in providers of apprenticeships. Councillor Blackman confirmed that entrepreneurship schemes would continue. The Regeneration Project Manager responded to a Councillor's question that, although apprenticeships would not be stopped, they would be provided by external organisations. The Head of Regeneration and Investment added that it was more resource efficient to outsource the management of the apprenticeships and a tender specification will be prepared later in 2015.

The Committee asked how the dedicated support service was provided. The Regeneration Project Manager responded that there had been a variety of meetings with young people and that the Council had used the forum of social media to promote LEAP. Events were held in the evenings for parents and young people to attend, along with events in the reception of Southover House where young people could meet career advisers.

Councillors highlighted some of their own experiences with apprentices on the LEAP scheme and commented that they had had positive results, with some apprenticeships leading to full time work. The Committee commented that the Council was integrated with small local businesses, and suggested that these links be used to promote LEAP. Councillor Blackman stated at the last Lewes District Business Awards that there had been lots of promotion for LEAP and that Local Chambers of Commerce had been contacted to aid promotion. He continued that the Council had engaged with employers on behalf of the apprentices so as to not leave them unsupported.

A Councillor queried whether there were plans to engage with the new University Technical College at Harbourside in Newhaven. Councillor Blackman responded that LEAP will feed into the work undertaken by the UTC, signposting new opportunities for young people.

The Committee agreed that although Councillors supported apprenticeships they questioned whether best value for money had been achieved. The Committee asked for clarification on how the success of LEAP had been measured, for example if the 77 apprenticeships had been created by the LEAP project, if they had already existed or would have been generated in any case. The Regeneration Project Manager confirmed that some employers would have run apprenticeship schemes any way, and that with LEAP there had been a low drop out rate. The Committee asked that they be provided with numbers of how many apprenticeships had been run before LEAP, and which businesses employed apprentices through LEAP but had not done so beforehand.

RGPM

The Committee commented that it was difficult to separate the results of other initiatives currently active in the District with the results of LEAP. They asked if part of the achievements recorded had been how many apprenticeships had followed through to full time employment. The Committee requested the figures for this from before and after the LEAP

RGPM

programme had started.

The Regeneration Project Manager confirmed that he would obtain the figures requested by the Committee in relation to the data which broke down the amount of people who did not finish their apprenticeships, but who had utilised the skills they had learnt to gain full time employment. The Committee suggested that a possible reason why young people were reluctant to join apprenticeships was due to young people being unable to afford the cut to their incomes. The Regeneration Project Manager confirmed that the Council encouraged all employers involved with the LEAP project to pay the National Minimum Wage.

RGPM

In response to a Councillor's question, the Regeneration Project Manager informed the Committee that ESCC (East Sussex County Council) have their own apprenticeship scheme, and that the apprentices employed by Lewes District Council had come out of each individual department's budget.

The Regeneration Project Manager informed the Committee that Plumpton College and Sussex Downs College were in the process of entering into a license agreement with Lewes District Council. The license will be for one year and it utilises the LEAP brand to support the Colleges existing delivery of apprenticeships. There will be a review after six months.

The Committee commented that the apprenticeships had been concentrated to urban areas, and queried whether anyone had problems with transportation. The Regeneration Project Manager confirmed that all apprentices were asked if they needed assistance with travel, but there had been nil take-up thus far.

Resolved:

50.1 That Report No 27/15 be noted;

50.2 That the Regeneration Project Manager be requested to email all members of the Scrutiny Committee with the comparisons with other apprenticeship programmes regarding best value for money;

RGPM

50.3 That the Regeneration Project Manager be requested to email all members of the Scrutiny Committee with figures on how many apprenticeships had been run before LEAP, and which businesses who employed apprentices through LEAP but had not done so before LEAP started;

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50.4 That the Regeneration Project Manager be requested to email all members of the Scrutiny Committee with figures for how many apprenticeships followed through to full time employment, before and after the LEAP programme had started;

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50.5	That the Regeneration Project Manager be requested to email all members of the Scrutiny Committee with figures relating to people who did not finish their apprenticeships, but utilised the skills learnt to gain full time employment	RGPM
50.6	That the Regeneration Project Manager be requested to produce a report to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in quarter one of 2016 which offers supporting evidence and comparatives to the findings of Report No 27/15;	RGPM
50.7	That the Regeneration Project Manager be requested to email all members of the Scrutiny Committee the cost of the Business Plan which was reported to Cabinet in November 2012 which gave a guarantee of employment which had been deemed unworkable;	RGPM
50.8	That the Regeneration Project Manager be requested to email to all members of the Scrutiny Committee clarification as to what Cost Per Business means along with a cost comparison, as referred to in paragraph 7.5 on page 11 of Report No 27/15; and	RGPM
50.9	That the Regeneration Project Manager be requested to email all members of the Scrutiny Committee with the figures for how many apprenticeships had been started with the Sussex Downs College and how many apprentices had been placed into job opportunities while working with the Smart Training and Recruitment Organisation as referred to in Report No 27/15 on page 22 at paragraphs 8.4 and 8.6.	RGPM
51	Date of Next Meeting	
	<u>Resolved:</u>	
51.1	That the Committee agreed that the next meeting scheduled for the 30 April 2015 be postponed until 18 June 2015 at 10:00am in the Ditchling Room, Southover House, Lewes; and	All to note
51.2	That the Committee commented that this was the last meeting before the election in May 2015 and extended it's thanks to all the officers who had assisted them and attended meetings, in particular the Performance Officer (Scrutiny) for all the assistance and work she had done for the Scrutiny Committee.	

The meeting ended at 11:00am

S J Osborne
Chair