

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Telscombe Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes** on **Thursday 10 September 2015** at **10.00am**

Present:

Councillors P F Gardiner (Chair), S Adeniji, J K E Carter, N Enever, J M Harrison-Hicks, V Ient, C R O’Keeffe, I Linington, J Peterson and C Sugarman

Officers Present:

R Allan, Performance Officer (Scrutiny)
A Chequers, Head of Customer Service
B Cooke, Head of Organisational Development
S Jump, Head of Finance
J Harper, Head of Business Strategy and Performance
E Sheath, Head of Strategic Policy

Minutes

10 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11 Apologies/ Declaration of Substitute Councillors

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S J Osborne.

12 Urgent Item

The Chair advised that he had agreed, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, that that the following item relating to business accommodation in North Street Quarter development be considered as a matter of urgency in order that the Committee could take its decisions on the most up to date information.

13 Business Accommodation in North Street Quarter, Lewes

The Committee meeting was suspended in order to discuss the possible inclusion of an item relating to business accommodation in North Street

Quarter, Lewes in the Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2015/16. Following discussion it was agreed not to include said item in the Work Programme, as it did not fall within the remit of the Committee to do so.

14 Portfolio Programme and Performance Report Quarter 1 (April – June 2015)

The Committee received Report No 102/15 which related to the Council's progress and performance in respect of key projects and targets for the first quarter of the year (April to June 2015).

The Head of Business Strategy and Performance introduced the Report. She reminded the Committee that the Report was presented to Scrutiny for consideration ahead of Cabinet on 24 September 2015, where any recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the report would be considered. She added that this Report differed from the previous report the Committee received as it related only to the first quarter of the year (April to June 2015) whereas the previous report had addressed performance for the whole year (2014/15). She further added that the list of performance indicators had been refreshed as part of the Council's annual service planning process.

The committee then considered the detail of the report, focusing on areas where performance was off-track, asking questions of the relevant officers in attendance.

The Head of Finance advised Members that it took on average 17 days to process an invoice, and work was being undertaken to ensure that invoices paid within the Council were better able to meet the 98% target of invoices paid on time.

The Committee expressed concern that the target for the payment of invoices on time may not be realistic, but agreed to review this at the end of the year.

A Councillor raised concern that the classification of the Devolution project as amber may not be accurate as they had been time delays within this project.

The Head of Customer Service explained to the Committee that the target relating to the total number of households living in bed and breakfast accommodation was challenging, but that the Council had a duty to house people whilst their situation was investigated. In response to a question he confirmed that the closure of Saxonbury House had had no impact on this figure.

The Committee expressed concern regarding the New Homes Project, and questioned whether the project's status should be "green", given the recent public disquiet which had been expressed by some residents in the District.

The Committee considered the targets that were amber in relation to the collection of waste and recycling. A discussion followed, and Members felt

that some additional communication and promotion activity was required for residents to explain the importance of recycling in order to ensure the Council maximised its recycling potential.

The Head of Strategic Policy took the Committee through the performance indicator relating to net additional homes provided in the District. He explained that these figures related only to housing completions on sites that delivered five or more units, and that smaller sites would be included in the figures at the end of the financial year. A discussion followed, and he clarified the level of affordable housing that was required by developers in the District, and circumstances in which it could be altered. The Committee noted with concern the lack of net additional homes, but understood the constraints regarding this issue.

Resolved:

- 14.1** That Report No 102/15 relating to the Portfolio Programme and Performance Report Quarter 1 (April – June 2015) be agreed; and
- 14.2** That the Head of Customer Service be requested to attend the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to provide an analysis of the barriers to recycling in the District and what the Council is doing to maximise recycling.

and it was further

Recommended:

- 14.3** That Cabinet be requested to agree the development of further public campaigns that promote recycling and its benefits, what can be recycled and encouraging residents to reduce and re-use.

15 Staff Survey Results

The Committee received Report No 110/15 which related to the staff survey and its findings.

At its meeting on 18 June 2015, the Scrutiny Committee expressed concern regarding a performance indicator generated from the staff survey undertaken in October 2014. The performance indicator stated that the proportion of staff who indicated in the survey that they felt they were treated with fairness and respect at work was 57%. The Committee felt that this was a low figure, and wished to find out what was being done to address this.

The Head of Organisational Development took the Committee through the Report. She explained that the Employment Committee had received the full results at its meeting on 23 February 2015. She added that officers had put together an action plan following the survey to address any areas of concern.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Head of Organisational

Development advised that issues relating to specific departments, such as Planning and Waste and Recycling, were being examined. A concern was also raised regarding staff appraisals, and the importance of these being completed in a timely fashion with central monitoring of return rates.

The Committee expressed concern in regard to the 50% response rate to the staff survey, and suggested that the Employment Committee examined methods to maximise this.

The Head of Organisational Development advised that this year's Staff Survey would be launched next month. The Committee requested that when Employment Committee discussed the findings and agreed a new action plan, more detailed notes of the discussions were minuted.

Resolved:

15.1 That Report No 110/15 relating to the Staff Survey be noted;

and it was further

Recommended:

15.2 That the Employment Committee be requested to give consideration to the consistent application of the appraisal process at the Council and central monitoring of return rates; and

15.3 That the Employment Committee be requested to examine how response rates for the Staff Survey can be improved, in particular for staff in Planning and Waste and Recycling.

16 Scoping Reports – Village Agents Scheme and Living Wage Scheme

The Committee considered Report No 103/15 which asked Members to consider two potential future scrutiny reviews, namely "Village Agents" and "Becoming a Living Wage Authority".

The two topics under consideration within the Report were recommended for inclusion in the Work Programme following a decision by Full Council at its meeting on 25 February 2015.

The Chair took requests for volunteers for seats on the two Panels, subject to achieving political balance and approval by Group Leaders.

Resolved:

16.1 That Report No 103/15 relating to two potential future scrutiny reviews be agreed;

16.2 That the Performance Officer (Scrutiny) be requested to arrange a meeting of the Village Agents Scrutiny Review to consist of three councillors, to be nominated by Group Leaders;

16.3 That the Performance Officer (Scrutiny) be requested to arrange a meeting of the Living Wage Scrutiny Review to consist of three councillors, to be nominated by Group Leaders; and

16.4 That a vote of thanks be accorded to the Performance Officer (Scrutiny) for all her work with the Committee as she was leaving the Council's employment.

17 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 consider Cabinet decisions at an early stage of the process.

A question was raised asking for clarification regarding an item on the Forward Plan, namely the heads of terms for the North Street Quarter project.

Resolved:

17.1 That the Forward Plan be noted; and

17.2 That Head of Regeneration and Investment be requested to circulate clarification to the Committee regarding an item on the Forward Plan, namely the heads of terms for the North Street Quarter project.

18 Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/16

The Committee considered the Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2015/16.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Performance Officer (Scrutiny) advised that a pro-forma was available for councillors to use if they wished to suggest a topic for inclusion on the Work Programme.

Resolved:

18.1 That the Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2015/16 be agreed; and

18.2 That the Performance Officer (Scrutiny) be requested to circulate the scrutiny procedure rules, guidance and topic suggestion pro-forma to all Scrutiny Committee members.

19 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

19.1 That the next scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 19 November 2015 in the Telscombe Room, Southover

House, Southover Road, Lewes be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.55am

P F Gardiner
Chair