

## Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Telscombe Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes** on **Thursday 14 January 2016** at **10.15am**.

**Present:**

Councillors P Gardiner (Chair), S Adeniji, J Carter, N Enever, J Harrison Hicks, V Ient, I Linington, R O’Keeffe MBE and J Peterson

**Officers Present:**

R Brittle, Committee Officer  
 J Harper, Head of Business Strategy and Performance  
 S Harvey, Strategic Performance Manager

**In Attendance:**

Councillor T Jones, Cabinet Member for Planning

|           | Minutes  | Action |
|-----------|--|--------|
| <b>30</b> | <p><b>Minutes</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>  |        |
| <b>31</b> | <p><b>Voluntary Sector Report</b></p> <p>The Committee considered Report No 11/16 which highlighted the performance of those voluntary organisations which had been funded by the Council during 2015/2016 under a service level agreement, and confirmed arrangements for such agreements in 2016/2017.</p> <p>The Head of Business Strategy and Performance informed the Committee that the Report was also to be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 8 February 2016.</p> <p>The Head of Business Strategy and Performance provided an update on which areas of work that the Citizens Advice Bureau had focused on, including the possibility of introducing a walk in centre in Newhaven. She highlighted that 3VA had been working on the Dementia Friends Project and that Sompriti had offered support to black and minority ethnic communities and individuals across East Sussex, which included providing bilingual support to residents in a variety of languages.</p> <p>The Committee asked how the effectiveness of the organisations had been monitored. The Head of Business Strategy and Performance confirmed that</p> |        |

there was stringent monitoring of the performance data received from the organisations, and that the service level agreement ensured that the expectations of the Council were met.

Resolved:

**31.1** That Report No 11/16 relating to the Voluntary Sector be noted; and

**31.2** That there were no recommendations to be made to Cabinet.

**32 Scoping Reports for Proposed Scrutiny Reviews**

At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 19 November 2015, two topics had been raised to be considered for future Scrutiny Reviews. The topics to be considered were Housing Supply and Demand, and New Homes Public Consultation.

The Head of Business Strategy and Performance explained that the scope for the proposed Scrutiny Reviews were set out in Appendix A and B of Report No.12/16. She advised that, if the Committee wished to proceed with the Scrutiny Reviews, Scrutiny Panels would need to be appointed.

The Head of Business Strategy and Performance informed the Committee that a separate, independent working group had been set up to review the New Homes Project, so the review included in Appendix B, which may cover some of the same areas, could be discontinued if the Committee so wished.

The Committee agreed that, in relation to the Scrutiny Review set out in Appendix B, there could be some overlap of work between that of the Scrutiny Panel and the working group. However, the Committee agreed that the Scrutiny Panel should proceed. Therefore the working group was to be contacted with the offer that the Scrutiny Panel would proceed to investigate the New Homes Public Consultation and that the work arising from this could be used as a tool to assist the working group..

HDS

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

Resolved:

**32.1** That the scope for the Scrutiny Review of Housing Supply and Demand, as set out in Appendix A of Report No.12/16 be approved;

**32.2** That the scope for the Scrutiny Review of New Homes Public Consultation, as set out in Appendix B of Report No.12/16 be approved;

**32.3** That the Head of Business Strategy and Performance be requested to arrange a meeting of the Housing Supply and Demand Scrutiny Review Panel to consist of five members to be agreed by the Group

HBSP

Leaders; and

- 32.4** That the Head of Business Strategy and Performance be requested to arrange a meeting of the New Homes Public Consultation Scrutiny Review Panel to consist of three members to be agreed by the Group Leaders.

HBSP

### **33 The Council Plan 2016-2020**

The Head of Business Strategy and Performance explained that the public consultation period for the Draft Council Plan was to end on 8 February 2016. She also explained that the purpose of the Council Plan was to provide information to the public about both continuing and new projects that the Council would be undertaking for the next four years.

The Committee considered Report No 13/16. The Committee thanked Officers for their work on the Draft Council Plan, and commented that the Plan was easy to read and accessible to the public. . The Plan followed the format previously established, but Committee members believed the format needed revision and expressed the following views:

HBSP

- That the time allocated for public consultation had been shorter than would be desirable,
- That data and statistics in the Plan should show where they were sourced.
- That the projects included in the Council Plan, where the Council would be working in partnership but are not the lead agency for the work, should highlight the other organisations involved.
- There was concern that the plan included outcomes which were beyond the scope of LDC to achieve.
- That the Plan should explain how the commitments and targets would be monitored.
- That the information included relating to the New Homes Project should be re worked, to reflect the position of the Project at the time of publishing.
- That greater emphasis given to the Council's role in delivering environmental and cultural projects and initiatives.
- That projects should, where appropriate, be more inclusive (whilst acknowledging the specific needs of, say, older people, or rural areas)
- With regard to community safety, that it be made clear that outcomes are achieved in partnership with the Police and others.

- That a greater emphasis be given to our work in partnership with Wave Leisure and other health partners.
- That reference be made to the Community Infrastructure Levy and how it is used to support infrastructure development.
- That greater emphasis be given to business support, job creation and apprenticeships, and that this should not just focus on Newhaven.
- That it be made clearer that our current customer service performance requires improvement, particularly regarding telephony

Resolved:

- 33.1** That Report No 13/16 relating to the Draft Council Plan 2016-2020 be noted;
- 33.2** That the feedback received from the consultation with the public and partner organisations relating to the Draft Council Plan 2016-2020 be noted; and
- 33.3** That the Draft Council Plan 2016-2020 be recommended to Council, subject to the amendments proposed by the Committee.

HBSP

**34 Finance Update – Including 2016/2017 Budget Overview and Tax Base Setting**

Councillor Adeniji left the meeting during the initial presentation of this Report.

The Committee considered Report No 14/16 which provided an update on financial matters affecting the General Fund Revenue Account, the Housing Revenue Account and the approved Capital Programme.

The Director of Corporate Services took the Committee through the Report and highlighted that the Government had been slowly introducing universal credit and had reduced the direct grant receivable for the administration of housing benefit over the last few years, and had signalled that it wished to retain the New Homes Bonus.

The Director of Corporate Services explained to the Committee that there had been a collection rate adjustment to the Tax Base, specifically an increase of £817.30 from £34,979.80 to £35,797.10 Band D Equivalents. He highlighted table 6.10 in section 7 on page 40 of the Report which offered the analysis of the increase.

One area which required addressing in relation to the base budget was the income from recycling materials. The Director of Corporate Services

explained that an approximate adjustment of £200,000 was required to the base budget of £350,000 to address any short fall over the medium term.

With changes to employers National Insurance and due to the loss of the rebate for contracting out, there will be a cost to the Council in the region of £100,000 per annum from 2016/2017.

The Director of Corporate Services explained that there would be a reduction in rate for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2016/2017. He also explained that “high value” voided properties would be made available for sale on the open market from 1 April 2017. Although the legislation was not final, it would mean a levy would be placed on the HRA. Proceeds from the sales would have to be set aside to pay the levy and there would be a loss of stock.

The Director of Corporate Services informed the Committee that the Government had announced that outside London “households” that had incomes in excess of £30,000 per annum would have to pay market rents instead of social or affordable rents from 1 April 2017. He explained that this may result in further means testing for all Council tenants. Any additional income raised by the change would be paid directly to the Government and will not benefit the HRA.

The 30 year HRA business plan will require further amendments, and will be used to inform the budget setting process in the medium term. The Director of Corporate Services explained that there may be areas of work relating to this in the future which the Committee may wish to be made aware of.

Resolved:

- 34.1** That Report No. 14/16 relating to the Finance Update be noted; and
- 34.2** The Committee would be involved in the updating of the 30 Year Business Plan in 2016/2017, subject to it being part of the approved Scrutiny Plan when adopted.

**35 Forward Plan**

The Committee received the Forward Plan for the period of 1 February 2016 to 31 May 2016.

Resolved:

- 35.1** That the Forward Plan for the period 1 February 2016 to 31 May 2016 be noted.

**36 Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

The Committee received the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme. The Head of Business Strategy and Performance informed the Committee that Village Agents, whose role was to provide older people in rural communities with easier access to information and services, had now been introduced within the District and were being funded by East Sussex County Council. It was agreed, therefore, that the planned Scrutiny Panel proposed to work on this topic would no longer proceed.

Resolved:

**36.1** That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

**37 Date of Next Meeting**Resolved:

**37.1** That the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee scheduled to be held on Thursday 3 March 2016 in the Telscombe Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes commencing at 10:00am be noted.

All to note

The meeting ended at 12:15pm.

P Gardiner  
Chair