



Lewes District Council

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Scrutiny Panel – Strengthening our Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Panel – Strengthening our Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector** held in the **Garden Room, Lewes House, 32 High Street, Lewes** on **Tuesday 10 September 2013** at **10.00am**

Present:

Councillors S J Gauntlett (Chair), J M Harrison-Hicks and E E J Russell

Officers Attending:

R Allan, Scrutiny and Committee Officer
J Blackwell, Regeneration Project Manager

In attendance:

K Perrin, 3va

Minutes

9 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

10 Apologies for Absence/Declaration of Substitute Members

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor J V Harris. Councillor Harrison-Hicks declared that she was substituting for Councillor Harris.

11 Scrutiny Review Event Consultation Results

The Chair thanked Councillors and officers for the excellent consultation event that had taken place at Newhaven Fort on 7 July 2013.

The Scrutiny and Committee Officer took the Panel through the consultation results from the event. She explained to Councillors that the report contained draft areas for recommendations that would be developed into firm recommendations for the final report to Cabinet.

The Panel highlighted that one of the most important themes from the consultation day was the need for improved communication between the Council and voluntary and community groups in the District. It expressed the view that a specific officer was required to ensure that the Council was

better able to communicate with members of the voluntary and community sector. Councillors also highlighted that many groups had felt that the level of information they had received from the Council was poor.

The Panel discussed the draft areas for recommendations, and expressed the view that they should be grouped under three themes, namely; information, communications and resources. The Regeneration Project Manager suggested that the Community Engagement Working Group at the Council could help to deliver some of the recommendations regarding communications.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Scrutiny and Committee Officer advised that a section could be included within the final report which contained a snapshot of one of the groups the Council funded, such as 3va. This would include information about who the organisation worked with, how they were funded and further background information.

The Chair advised that it may not be useful for the Panel to recommend that a new Local Strategic Partnership was set up in the District, and that a less structured forum or mechanism would be more appropriate for informal discussions between the Council and voluntary and community sector groups.

The Regeneration Project Manager suggested that there could be a role for staff who worked within the Tourist Information Centres and Customer Services to signpost residents to information regarding the voluntary and community sector. Ms Perrin, 3va, advised that her organisation could deliver training regarding the voluntary and community sector to staff.

Resolved:

11.1 That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to include a section in the final report on the Scrutiny Review – Strengthening our Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector on how a voluntary or community organisation in the District is run; and

SCO

11.2 That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to return to the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel on 31 October 2013 with a draft set of recommendations themed under three headings; information, communications and resources.

SCO

12 Next Steps

The Scrutiny and Committee Officer suggested a proposed timeline for the remainder of the Review to the Panel. She advised that to ensure all Councillors were kept fully informed of the Review, the final report should be presented to the Cabinet meeting on 6 January 2014. The Panel expressed the view that it was better to delay the report, as the new Director for the Department concerned would not start at the Council until

early November 2013.

The Regeneration Project Manager suggested to Councillors that it may be beneficial for the final report to contain background information on how the Council currently monitors funding that has been granted to voluntary and community groups. A discussion followed, and it was agreed that it would be useful for the public to understand how funding was used by voluntary and community groups in the District.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Regeneration Project Manager clarified that a section for the final report would be written which explained how support within the Council for the voluntary and community sector had changed over the past five years.

Resolved:

12.1 That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to ensure that the final Scrutiny Review report on Strengthening our Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector is presented to the Cabinet meeting on 6 January 2014; and

SCO

12.2 That the Regeneration Project Manager be requested to ensure that a section is included in the Scrutiny Review report – Strengthening our Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector, containing background information on how support within the Council for the voluntary and community sector has changed.

RPM

13 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

13.1 That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to arrange a further meeting of the Scrutiny Panel – Strengthening our Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector to be held on 31 October 2013 at 10am in a venue to be notified by the Scrutiny and Committee Officer.

SCO

The meeting ended at 11.00am

S J Gauntlett
Chair