

## **Scrutiny Committee**

**Minutes of meeting held in Ditchling & Telscombe Rooms - Southover House, Lewes on 27 June 2019 at 2.00 pm**

### **Present:**

Councillor Johnny Denis (Chair)

Councillors Matthew Bird (Vice-Chair), Sam Adeniji, Nancy Bikson, Julian Peterson, Robert Banks, Roy Burman, Sylvia Lord, James MacCleary, Ruth O'Keeffe and Christine Robinson

### **Officers in attendance:**

Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Millie McDevitt (Performance and Programmes Lead), Rosalind Irving (Projects and Performance Analyst), Sarah Roberts (New Initiative Development Officer) and Nick Peeters (Committee Officer)

**Also in attendance:** Phil Abbott and Dr Dan Elliot (Seaford Medical Practice), Katie Burke and Neda Kayyali (Environment Agency).

### **Chairman for the meeting**

In the absence of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Councillor Mathew Bird, took the Chair for the start of the meeting.

### **1 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2019 were submitted and approved, and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

### **2 Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence received.

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Peterson and Lord declared a personal interest in item 6. on the agenda – the Seaford Health Hub report, as they were both patients at the Old School Surgery, Seaford.

### **4 Urgent Items**

There were no requests for urgent items at the meeting.

## **5 Written questions from councillors**

There were no written questions received from Councillors at the meeting.

## **6 Seaford Health Hub**

Following the introduction of this item, Councillor Denis joined the meeting and took over the Chair of the meeting.

The Chairman introduced the item and asked Councillor Adeniji to provide a summary of the request for the item to be considered by the Committee. Councillor Adeniji explained that, as a Member for Seaford, he was campaigning for health improvements in the town and the key issues were the potential loss of green space as a result of the proposals, whether other sites had been explored, and concerns that the development would be subsidising the NHS. Councillor Adeniji requested that a task and finish group be appointed to look at the issues raised.

Prior to discussion on the item, Officers provided a presentation. Phil Abbot and Dr Dan Elliot, representing Seaford Medical Practice and Seaford Old School Surgery, also presented to the Committee. The main points highlighted were:

- National Health Service Property Services (NHSPS) had ownership of the Seaford Medical Practice site and had been approached in the past to provide improved facilities and more recently, to identify potential sites for relocation. The NHSPS had not engaged with the process at any point. The practices had engaged a property consultant who concluded that the Downs site was the only viable option to bring healthcare, leisure and community services in one space.
- The current facilities at the practices were not fit to meet the demand and range of medical needs in Seaford. Services such as ultrasound, memory assessment and social prescriber, could only be provided on a limited basis. The Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) confirmed that the sites were not large enough to provide the facilities to meet future demand for primary health care.
- The proposals for relocation of the two surgeries to one site included an improved leisure offer (run by Wave Leisure Trust) and would provide an increased parking provision, and new facilities for the 60+ Club. The new facilities were needed to ensure the recruitment and retention of medical and healthcare staff.
- The two satellite surgeries for the Old School Surgery, in Alfriston and East Dean would be retained within the proposals.

- A communications programme had been undertaken including two public exhibitions attended by 1240 people and a public survey which received 569 responses (a summary of the survey responses was available on the Council's website).

During discussion by Members the following points were highlighted:

- Members recognised that there was a present need to improve primary healthcare in Seaford. However, there were concerns over the re-providing of green space. Officers confirmed that, as part of the process, the Council's playing field strategy across Seaford would be considered - the Council was not looking to decrease the leisure space currently available in Seaford.
- Members wanted assurance that an undertaking would be sought if the current sites were released, as they provided amenities for the community. Officers advised that, although the NHSPS was a private company, the NHSPS and the Council's officers would need to work alongside each other should a site become available. It was confirmed that the Old School Surgery site was privately owned but that any future plans would need to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- The Committee asked how the two existing practices would function within the proposals. The Practice representatives advised that they would look to work together as effectively as possible and would share the administrative work with, for example, one reception area freeing up as much space as possible for clinical space.
- Members enquired about the borrowing period for the scheme and officers confirmed that the proposals included a 40 year borrowing strategy. Officers also confirmed that the scheme proposals included a food outlet, a pharmacy and 8 X two bedroom residential units, with an affordable housing element (possibly social housing – subject to income offset against construction costs). It was added that the financial element had some commercial sensitivities and an update could be provided outside of the meeting. The Practice representatives confirmed that under a decade's old national agreement, NHS England was responsible for rent reimbursements to medical practices, to cover rental costs.
- The Committee asked if the sale of the existing site could be offset against the cost of the scheme and what the percentage of income for each stakeholder would be. Officers said they were working through the lease arrangements to identify opportunities to reduce the rent (possible through grants). The Practice representatives confirmed that, occupancy of the proposed new site by each stakeholder would be two thirds by the GP practices and community services, and one third by East Sussex HealthCare Trust.

- Members asked about the ability to attract and retain key medical staff and the Practice representatives confirmed that, although there were issues nationally with staff recruitment/retention in the medical sector, a lot of work had gone into ensuring that staff stayed in Seaford, and it was important that the town remained as an attractive place for GPs and nurses to work and live.
- Members asked for clarity on what was termed as outside/green space. Officers explained that the existing 3G pitch would be upgraded to 4G and that a smaller junior pitch would be re-provided in another area. Officers added that the Council would want good architecture that was sympathetic to green areas. Members noted that there was an evidenced need for an increase in sports pitches in Seaford.
- The Committee expressed concern that two practices becoming one, would involve a wide geographical area. The practice representatives confirmed that the two sites in Seaford were less than a mile apart.
- The Committee asked what consideration had been given to the impact on the local economy and employment. Officers said this was an element included in previous consultation and that it was being looked at by the Head of Regeneration. The Practice representatives said that, in terms of the impact on the pharmacies in the town, 80 percent of subscriptions were repeats and the majority of customers used a pharmacy of their choice, therefore the impact would be minimal.
- The Committee asked if the provision of health/community services by third party organisations had been considered. The Practice representatives advised that they were approached on a regular basis with requests from other organisations but did not have the capacity within the existing sites to accommodate them.
- Members noted that the issue was a significant one and agreed that a task and finish group should be appointed to look further at the issues discussed. The Members cautioned however, that there was a pressing need for the provision of a fit-for-purpose, primary healthcare network in Seaford and any scrutiny of the issues should be expedited. It was suggested that the work being done already on the scheme did not have to be delayed and the two pieces of work could be done in tandem. Members agreed to discuss the membership of the task and finish group and the scope of the work under item 9. the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the presentation be noted; and
2. That a task and finish group be appointed to look at the issues raised.

**7 Update on Petition regarding night time noise on the East Quay at Newhaven Harbour**

The Functional Lead, Quality Environment introduced the update. He confirmed that a report had been received from the Environment Agency (EA) and that, while there was evidence of dust being generated from the Ripley's site, it was within UK quality guidelines.

Representatives from the EA addressed the Committee and confirmed the following:

- Air quality measuring devices had been sited at West Park, where the results were positive, in that there was no impact on human health, and at East Quay, where there were no substantiated reports of emissions. The report confirmed that sediment from the sea was recorded, rather than from any work at Ripley's.
- Noise levels were not within the EA's remit and outside of its regulatory framework. The duty of care for noise levels was the responsibility of the local authority.

During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The Committee asked how the noise levels could be managed and officers confirmed that the port (including Ripley's) was a 24 hour, seven days a week operation and as such, noise levels were difficult to limit. It was confirmed, however, that Ripley's would restrict boat movements where possible and look at a noise management plan. Members were advised that Ripley's operations involved metal on metal and this part of the work was being done as quickly as possible. The EA representatives added that they regularly checked in with operators at the port and Ripley's were being proactive.
- The Committee cautioned against the Council seeming to patronise the residents near the port, who were aware of the nature of the operations there and fully supportive of the economic benefit to Newhaven. Members asked if there was anything within Ripley's operational model that could be considered. The EA representatives advised that Ripley's would already be looking at minimising the size of the metal being moved; however, the process would require the grinding, cutting or shredding of metal, which produced noise itself.
- Members asked if information could be provided that could then be passed on to residents around the port in answer to their questions. Officers and the EA representatives agreed that a joint response would be provided following the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

1. To note the update.
2. That the Council and the Environment Agency be asked to provide joint response on the current status of operations at East Quay that can also be made available to the public.

(Note: Councillor MacCleary left the meeting following discussion on the item.)

**8 Performance monitoring 2018/2019 - quarter 4**

The Head of Business Planning and Performance introduced the report.  
During discussion the following points were raised:

- Members asked for an update on Springman House and officers advised that the project was still in the negotiation stage for the heads of terms and that obtaining an agreement was a lengthy process, as there were a number of organisations involved. It was agreed that more detail would be provided following the meeting.
- Members asked if Clear Sustainable Futures (CSF) was involved in the Seaford Health Hub scheme. Officers advised that CSF may be involved in any of the Council's schemes where this proves the most cost effective approach.
- Members felt that the commentary on the launch of the lottery needed more detail and were advised by officers that the launch was dependent on statutory clearances being obtained and therefore the timescale was difficult to estimate at this stage.
- As part of the Joint Transformation Programme, the Committee discussed Members' ID passes, and whilst some Members were unhappy that they included the logos of both Lewes and Eastbourne Councils, it was recognised that the passes were the same as used by staff. It was suggested that the issue could be considered again when replacements were needed.
- The Committee discussed the performance indicator for the average number of staff days lost to sickness and noted that sickness levels in the waste service were higher than in other areas. Members felt that, when the Eastbourne waste service was brought in-house there would be an opportunity to look at the issues and officers agreed that, although the overall figure compared favourably to other authorities, a separate commentary could be provided on sickness within that service area.
- The Committee noted the collection rates for council tax and business rates (also noting that the figures were cumulative through the year).

Officers agreed to provide further information regarding any known impact that Universal Credit has had on the ability for the Council to collect council tax.

- Members discussed the performance indicator for the length of time taken to process housing and council tax benefit claims and were advised by officers that staff had worked hard over the previous six to nine months to improve performance. Officers explained that an intervention called a Solution Sprint had been used to bring about improvement and it was noted that over the last two months performance been within target. Officers agreed to consider how the views of customers and staff could be surveyed following this intervention.
- Members asked for further detail on the performance indicator for the length of time the Council took to re-let its properties. Officers explained that the housing team worked closely with repairs staff and that the level of repairs required when properties became vacant was not always evident until the work started. The Committee inquired whether there was a quality-recording mechanism for the Mears contract. It was suggested that the performance of the Mears contract be added to the Committee's work programme and the relevant stakeholders invited to a future meeting.
- The Committee discussed the increase in homelessness numbers. Officers advised that it was a national issue and there were not any exceptional factors within Lewes that contributed to the increase.
- With regard to neighbourhood plans, the Committee sought clarification on the status of the plan for Telscombe and Peacehaven Town Councils. Officers agreed to provide further details.
- The Committee was advised that the Head of Planning was unable to attend the meeting to respond to concerns over the performance indicators for the processing of minor/other planning applications and the percentage of appeals allowed. However, a written response had been provided to Members (shown at appendix A to the minutes).
- Members asked for an update on the Hollycroft Field site in East Chiltington. Officers agreed to provide a further update following the meeting. Members felt that the broader issue of the devolution of open spaces was a possible topic for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.
- The Committee considered the performance indicators for the Customer Contact Centre and expressed concerns. Members were advised that there difficulties recruiting locally in Lewes and the team was currently 1.5 full time equivalents short. Members asked if a customer experience survey could be included following each call.

Officers advised that there was not currently a facility costings/feasibility could be undertaken regarding this. Officers confirmed that the purpose of the Customer Contact Team was to provide first-time resolutions to contacts wherever possible and it was agreed that future reports would provide more detail on the most common enquiries. Officers agreed to the Committee's request for a (key-staff) contact directory for Members.

- Officers confirmed that the Lewes and Eastbourne Community Safety Partnership had formally merged, following the agreement of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Sussex in January 2019. The PCC had previously indicated her desire for the merger. Officers confirmed that an operational Joint Action Group would be retained in the Lewes area.

Members went on to discuss the performance and project measures for 2019/20 and highlighted the following points:

- The Committee recommended removal of the target for incidents of fly-tipping and suggested that there should be a measure for response times and the quality of the response. Officers said the target was to reflect the work undertaken to reduce the number of incidents and the wording would reflect this.
- There were concerns regarding the targets for customer contact and social media response rate targets. Officers explained that targets were in line with the Council's policies regarding channel shift. This enabled those residents who wished to access the Council's services electronically to do so and allowing more capacity for responding to residents who most needed support by phone. In response to a question about text contacts, officers confirmed that there was a facility for outgoing texts to notify residents of actions within services (such as reminders for council tax) but currently no incoming text option. However, it was noted that the 'Report It' app could be used to report issues. Officers agreed to provide data on level of usage of the 'Report it' app.

## **RESOLVED**

1. To note the Council's progress and performance for Quarter 4 of 2018/19 and the proposed performance indicators for 2019/20, and that the following be included as updates to the committee at future meetings or as part of the 2019/20 performance reports:
  - the length of time the Council takes to re-let its properties
  - the devolution of open spaces
  - A separate commentary on sickness within the waste service after the Eastbourne service has been brought in-house be provided.
  - That further data be provided on the Report It app.

- Further detail to be provided on Springman House
- Further information to be provided regarding the impact of Universal Credit on the collection of council tax.
- Consideration of a post-Solution Sprint intervention customer survey.
- Further detail to be provided on the Peacehaven/Telscombe Town Councils neighbourhood plan.
- An update to be provided on the Hollycroft Field site in East Chiltington.
- A (key-staff) contact directory for Members to be provided.

(Note: Councillor Bikson left the meeting after consideration of this item)

## **9 Discussion of Future work programme for 2019/20 (Discussion / Verbal Update)**

The Chair introduced the item and advised Members that the work programme was an evolving document throughout the year. The Committee discussed the item and the following topics were suggested for inclusion in the work programme:

- a. Planning Policy – it was felt that this was an area where public involvement and understanding could be improved. Officers asked the Committee to note that the induction programme for Members provided training in many areas including planning policy. The Council's intranet (The Hub) also provided information.
- b. Renewable/alternative energy supplies for all new housing – with a focus on policy development and how to achieve a programme for new developments.
- c. Online learning for Councillors – there was an existing online interface for staff which could be expanded for the use of Members also.
- d. Customer contact with the Council – a review of the initial contact by customers, with Lewes District Council.
- e. Sustainable transport in the District – exploring opportunities for cycling and walking infrastructure, including road safety. To include the possible reinstatement of the Scrutiny Transport Panel and to look at the impact of congestion on the A259.
- f. Anti-social behaviour – the linking of communications with town and parish councils, as well as other stakeholders (including Neighbourhood First).
- g. Tourism in Eastbourne – a proposal would be going to the Cabinet on the issue, on 1 July 2019.

h. The Seaford Hub – a task and finish group of five members to be constituted and reporting back to the September 2019 meeting, and that functions without impacting on any ongoing work being done by the Council, with the terms of reference and the scoping report to look at the following issues:

- The impact on the movement of GPs and the Council's role in provision of the services.
- Demonstrating that other sites have been considered for viability.
- The impact on green spaces in Seaford.
- The impact on the wider economy in Seaford.
- The form of tenure within the proposals and the business plan.
- The financial viability of the scheme from the Council's perspective.

**RESOLVED** to note the Committee's work programme for 2019/20 and that the items listed above be considered for inclusion.

(Note: Councillors Burman and Robinson left the meeting after consideration of this item).

## **10 Forward Plan of Decisions**

The Chair introduced the item and officers advised that there were a number of items within the Forward Plan that were already scheduled to be included on Scrutiny Committee agendas as part of the consultation process, including recycling in the district. The Committee had the option of looking at other items on the Forward Plan should they wish.

**RESOLVED** to note the Forward Plan of decisions to be taken by the Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 4.20 pm

Councillor Johnny Denis (Chair)