

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of meeting held in Court Room - Town Hall, Eastbourne on 10 October 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Kshama Shore (Chair).

Councillors Josh Babarinde, Peter Diplock, Md. Harun Miah, Amanda Morris, Robert Smart, Hugh Parker and Penny di Cara.

Officers in attendance:

Homira Javadi (Director of Finance and Performance (Chief Finance Officer)), Nick Peeters (Committee Officer), Kate Slattery (Solicitor), Linda Farley (Head of Customer First), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Parmjeet Jassal (Interim Head of Financial Planning), Ross Sutton (Head of Financial Reporting) and Tim Whelan (Director of Service Delivery).

Also in attendance: Councillor Jonathan Dow

24 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2022

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2022 were submitted and approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

25 Apologies for absence / declaration of substitute members

Apologies were received from Councillors Wallis and Lamb, with Councillors Parker and Di Cara acting as substitutes.

26 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) by members as required under Section 31 of the Localism Act and of other interests as required by the Code of Conduct

There were none.

27 Questions by members of the public

There were none.

28 Urgent items of business

There were none.

29 Right to address the meeting/order of business

Requests to speak on item 9 on the agenda – ‘A review of Eastbourne Airshow’ had been received from two members of the public and Councillor Dow. Committee member, Councillor Wallis had provided a statement on this item which would be read out on his behalf.

30 A review of Eastbourne Airshow

Prior to discussion on the item, the following public speakers and Councillor Dow, addressed the Committee.

Mr Ian Elgin, Chair of the United Nations Association, Eastbourne, addressed the Committee and highlighted the issues around offsetting the volume of CO2 emissions from the Town’s population through the planting of trees.

Mr Nicholas Taylor, a resident of Eastbourne, addressed the Committee and expressed his concern that, although Eastbourne Airshow was supported by residents and Businesses in the Town, the Event for 2023 had not received support from the Council.

Councillor Dow addressed the Committee and expressed concern that, through support of the Airshow, the Council would not be delivering on its carbon neutral policies. Councillor Dow felt there was insufficient or unsubstantiated evidence in the report and that the Committee should not support the recommendations.

Councillor Wallis was unable to attend the meeting and a statement was read out on his behalf. The key points were that Councillor Wallis did not consider that Eastbourne was dependent on Airbourne as a visitor destination and for economic prosperity, and he expressed concern that the representation on the Airbourne Project Board was not balanced. Councillor Wallis did not support the recommendations in the report.

Annie Wills, Head of Leisure and Enterprise and Peter Martin, Events Manager, presented the report which provide an update to the Scrutiny Committee on the Eastbourne Airshow (Airbourne). During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- Officers advised that single use plastics had been prohibited at the Event. Where incidents of traders selling plastic bottles of water were identified, it was highlighted that any future purchases in relation to the Event had to be in cans. It was noted, however, that a safe supply of water was needed during hot weather.
- Officers explained that a large volume of people had been transported through the park and ride facility, however, Industrial action on the railways had put increased pressure on the scheme. Discussions with Stagecoach were taking place to deliver a park and ride scheme outside of the Town in 2023.
- Members felt the key issue was the sustainability of transport and that

investment in rail infrastructure was needed to improve connectivity. A reduction in the number of bus services had also impacted on the ability to provide sustainable transport for the Event. If these measures were not achievable, members urged that a road strategy for the Event be introduced with controls on traffic movement in place.

- Members also felt that a further report with quantifiable data, that reflected the actual carbon footprint of the Event, be considered. Officers advised that whatever data was available for the Committee's next meeting would be provided.

Councillor Babarinde proposed that additional recommendations should be added that encouraged a transition for the Event to a more carbon neutral position. This was seconded by Councillor Diplock.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- 1) To note the report;
- 2) To recognise the importance of Airbourne to the economic wellbeing of Eastbourne and its reputation as a visitor destination;
- 3) To recognise that significant efforts have been made by Eastbourne Borough Council and the Airbourne Project Board to reduce Airbourne 2022's carbon footprint, compared to 2019; and
- 4) To continue support for Airbourne on the condition that its carbon footprint for 2023 is further reduced as part of a just transition into a carbon neutral event.

31 Corporate performance - quarter 1 - 2022/23

Luke Dreeling, Performance Lead, presented part A of the performance report which provided an update to Members on the Council's performance against Corporate Plan priority actions, performance indicators and targets for the first quarter of the year 2022-23.

- Officers advised that Action days, including work with residents in the Borough's housing estates had taken place, to remind residents about the items that could be disposed of through the Council. Work had also taken place with 'Furniture Now' to reduce the number of furniture items going into the 'waste-stream'. It was hoped that furniture manufacturers would take responsibility for old items when new, replacement items were delivered.
- Officers noted that the percentage of abandoned calls was a concern and the indicator referred to customers who had abandoned a call after approximately 5 seconds. Vacancy levels (including back-office vacancies) and the resources needed to complete the training for new staff had impacted on the indicator. The process for replacing a member of the

Contact team to the point where the new starter was fully trained took approximately 8 months. Small improvements were being made, with activity specific responses being focused on. Artificial Intelligence had been introduced on the phones and this would provide answers from a database. Calls were more complex as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and therefore took longer with the average Quarter 2 wait time at 11.5 minutes.

- Officers explained that appendix 2 to the report provided a summary of the achievements to date, in the first two years of the Corporate Plan, which had been amended as a result of an assurance review and agreed in May 2022.
- Officers confirmed that the increase in the figure for the number of households living in emergency (nightly paid) accommodation had increased as a direct result of the cost-of-living crisis. The number of people presenting as being at risk of homelessness had also increased. Previous recruitment issues in the House of Multiple Occupation team had been addressed and improvements in Quarter 2 were expected.
- Officers agreed to provide a report to the Committee's next meeting which gave an overview of the work of the customer contact team.

Homira Javadi, Chief Finance Officer, Parmjeet Jassal, Interim Head of Finance and Ross Sutton, Head of Financial Reporting. Presented part B of the report which provided an update to Members on the Council's financial performance in Quarter 1. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- An update on the Council's financial position would be presented to the Cabinet on the 2 of December. However, a fuller picture, reflecting the impact of inflationary changes and changes in interest rates on financial planning, would not be available until later in December. The Chancellor of the Exchequers announcement and the local government financial settlement plans would also have an impact.
- The inflationary impact together with the increase in cost of living meant the Council continues to face an increased demand for its services and the cost of delivering those services would increase. Recruitment was a difficult area for the Council and a pending pay award for staff would add pressure also.

RESOLVED (unanimously) – To note the report.

32 A review of Eastbourne Airshow - Exempt Appendices D & E

This item was not considered by the Committee.

33 Request from the Council for the Scrutiny Committee's consideration of Gatwick Airport's Carbon Neutrality Pledge

The Chair, Councillor Shore, introduced the report, which outlined the request from the Full Council to consider a motion looking at the Carbon Neutrality of Gatwick Airport and how it accords with the Council's pledge to be Carbon Neutral by 2030. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- Members considered a single, additional meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, with relevant stakeholders invited, to be the best option for dealing with the request from the Full Council. Members requested that a range of stakeholders be invited, in order that a balanced discussion could be held. Councillor Shore asked that the Committee Members provide details of organisations that they felt could contribute to the discussion.

RESOLVED - To accept the request from Full Council and arrange an additional meeting of the Committee and invite representatives from Gatwick Airport and other relevant stakeholders to attend.

34 Forward Plan of Decisions

The Chair, Councillor Shore, introduced the Forward Plan of Cabinet decisions. Members requested that the following reports be included on the agenda for the Committee's meeting on the 28 November:

- Local council tax reduction scheme
- Council tax and business rate base 2023/24
- Corporate performance - quarter 2 - 2022/23
- Update to the Local Validation List:- Information required to support/accompany planning applications
- Congress and Devonshire Park Theatres – Future Governance Arrangements
- Eastbourne Carbon Neutral 2030: Annual Progress Report

RESOLVED (unanimously) - To note the Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions.

35 Scrutiny Work Programme

The Chair, Councillor Shore, introduced the Committee's work programme.

Members were reminded that an update from the consultants commissioned to provide robust evidence to support and justify any future decisions on actions regarding HMO planning policy and licensing, was due for consideration at the 28 November meeting

RESOLVED (unanimously) - To note the Committee's work programme.

36 Date of the next meeting

RESOLVED - To note that the date of the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Monday 28 November 2022, in the Court Room, Eastbourne Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4UG.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

Councillor Kshama Shore (Chair)