

Monday, 5 February 2018
at 6.00 pm



Scrutiny Committee

Present:-

Members: Councillor di Cara (Chairman)
Councillors Belsey, Miah, Murray, Rodohan, Smart and Wallis

19 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2017.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2017 were submitted and approved, and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

The Committee's attention was drawn to Resolution 13 (2) in the minutes, concerning the findings of the Maternity Research Survey:

"That a further invitation be extended to the East Sussex CCG's and the East Sussex Healthcare Trust to attend the next Scrutiny Committee meeting."

The Committee was informed that, having previously been invited to attend the December meeting with none taking up the offer, the following organisations had then been sent a copy of the minutes of the meeting on 4 December 2017 and an invitation to the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 5 February 2018:

- Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford CCG
- Hastings and Rother CCG
- Horsham and Mid Sussex CCG
- High Weald, Lewes and Haven CCG
- Brighton and Hove City Council
- East Sussex Healthcare Trust; and
- East Sussex County Council

The following replies had been received in response to the invitation:

Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford CCG / Hastings and Rother CCG:

"...it is sadly too late to rearrange the very busy diaries of our senior leaders"

NHS Crawley and Mid Sussex:

"Having read the minutes of the meeting there does not appear to have been any issues raised regarding West Sussex patients. As such I do not feel that we would be able to contribute to the discussions. If there are any issues regarding West Sussex I would be happy to attend a separate meeting."

East Sussex Health Care Trust:

"Unfortunately, due to prior commitments, Dr Adrian Bull will be unable to attend..."

Whilst it was understood that the Scrutiny Committee could not compel external representatives to attend the meeting, the Committee expressed disappointment that the organisations had rejected two opportunities to discuss the findings of the Maternity Research Survey. Consequently, the Chair was authorised to issue a press statement on behalf of the Committee to that effect.

20 Apology for absence.

Councillor Holt.

21 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.

22 Questions by members of the public.

There were none.

23 Urgent items of business.

There were none.

24 Right to address the meeting/order of business.

There were none.

25 Corporate Performance Q3 2017/18

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive regarding Quarter 3 2017/18 performance against the Corporate Plan priority actions, performance indicators and targets.

Members noted the following amendment to page 25 of the report regarding Sickness Absence:

During Quarter 3 the number of long term absences (4 weeks or more) increased significantly. The reasons for those long term absences were varied and included bereavement, heart attack and recovery post - surgery. There were some absences due to stress and those staff were being appropriately supported (those included personal stress, stress resulting from a physical health condition and one relating to Phase 2 of the Joint Transformation Programme).

During December 2017 the Council's short term absences had also increased with reports of viral infections, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Members' discussion included:

- A request that the sub-heading 'Value' in the performance tables be amended to 'Actual' to avoid confusion.
- A continued interest concerning whether there was any correlation between stress related sickness absence and the Joint Transformation Programme.
- A request for more information regarding the Hotel of Excellence, including who the viability study was being conducted by and which stakeholders had been consulted.
- A request for more information regarding the progress of the Victoria Mansions, Eastbourne.
- A request for more information regarding the role of the Health and Housing Coordinator, and the work that was being done in the community to improve the working relationship between health and housing.
- A request for an up-to-date organigram. Members requested confirmation of who the Joint Transformation Programme Manager was.
- A call for the Devolved Ward Budgets to be symbolised for effective monitoring.
- An interest in closely monitoring the recycling and fly tipping indicators, so that the effect of the new garden waste charge could be monitored.

Officers responded that:

- The sub-heading 'Value' was automatically assigned from the Performance Management System. However, the Head of Business Planning & Performance would explore if that could be amended for future meetings.
- The Committee was assured that currently there was no evidence of significant stress related absence. The Human Resources department continually analysed whether there were any trends or concerns with regard to reasons for absence. Members were also assured that there was a robust sickness absence procedure which gave employees the opportunity to discuss any concerns they had, and also encouraged managers to explore any underlying concerns.
- The Head of Business Planning & Performance would circulate more information regarding the Hotel of Excellence in due course.
- The amber status of the Victoria Mansions was due to the Council dealing with immediate remedial works that had become necessary; this work had slightly delayed the progress of the project.
- Questions regarding Health and Housing were noted, and a relevant officer would be requested to prepare a presentation for the Committee at its next meeting on 4 June 2018 to provide members with more information.
- An organigram with the roles currently filled would be provided to Members in due course. Members were informed that not all roles had been filled and that there was currently an external recruitment drive. With regard to the Joint Transformation Programme Manager, members were informed that this was Lee Banner, and he had been appointed in October.
- With regard to Devolved Ward Budgets, members were empowered within wards to spend as they deemed necessary, and as each Ward

would encounter various challenges at different times, the implementation of symbols to monitor and compare how much was being spent was considered inappropriate.

Resolved:

- (1) That members note the achievements and progress against Corporate Plan priorities for 2017/18;
- (2) That more information regarding the performance of the recycling service be incorporated as part of the Corporate Performance Report in 2018/19; and
- (3) That the Health and Housing Coordinator be requested to prepare a presentation for the committee at its next meeting on 4 June 2018.

Reason:

To demonstrate the discharge of the Scrutiny Committee function to monitor all aspects of performance management activities as required by Part 3 section 2.2 (7) of the Constitution of the Council.

26 HRA Revenue Budget and Rent Setting 2018/19 and HRA Capital Programme 2017/21

The Committee noted the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Direct Services which detailed HRA budget proposals, rent levels, service charges and heating costs for 2018/19, and the HRA Capital Programme 2017/21.

Members' discussion included:

- A request for more information regarding how many rental properties the Council owned, and what the average rental figure was.
- A request for an analysis of the Supervision and Management budget heading.
- If there would be an independent review regarding the Eastbourne Homes Management Fee which was set at £7,219,500 for 2017/18 and was proposed to remain the same for 2018/19.

Officers responded that:

- The Council currently owned around 3,500 properties and the Head of Finance would circulate the average rental figure in due course.
- The Head of Finance would provide a breakdown of the Supervision and Management budget head.
- There would be no independent review of the Eastbourne Homes Management Fee, as extensive work had gone into assuring that the fee appropriately covered the necessary operational and administrative costs, as well as responsive and cyclical maintenance.

Resolved:

- (1) That members note the following recommendations to be considered by the Cabinet on 7 February 2018:

- i. The HRA budget for 2018/19 and revised HRA budget for 2017/18 as set out in **Appendix 1**;
- ii. That social and affordable rents (including Shared Ownership) are decreased by 1% in line with government policy;
- iii. That service charges for general needs properties are increased by 5.14%;
- iv. That service charges for the Older Persons Sheltered Accommodation are increased by 1.78%;
- v. That the Support charge for Sheltered Housing Residents remains at £7.50 per unit, per week pending a review in the summer;
- vi. To give delegated authority to the Director of Service Delivery, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Financial Services and Direct Assistance Services to set the support charge for Sheltered Housing Residents following a review of costs in the summer;
- vii. That heating costs are set at a level designed to recover the estimated actual cost;
- viii. That water charges are set at a level designed to recover the estimated cost of metered consumption;
- ix. Garage rents are increased by 4% this year following the disposal and repurposing of designated garage sites;
- x. To give delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio holders for Financial Services and Direct Assistance Service and the Head of Finance to finalise Eastbourne Homes' Management Fee and Delivery Plan; and
- xi. The HRA Capital Programme as set out in **Appendix 2**.

Reason:

For the Scrutiny Committee to contribute to the Cabinet's responsibility to recommend to Full Council the setting of the HRA revenue and capital budget and the level of social and affordable housing rents for the forthcoming year.

27 General Fund Revenue Budget 2018/19 and Capital Programme 2017/21

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Chief Executive which detailed the General Fund budget proposals for 2018/19 and Capital Programme 2017/21.

Members' discussion included:

- A request for further detail on the £51 million increase on capital project spend and borrowing over the four year period.
- A reminder that the Director of Regeneration and Planning had assured the Committee that she would provide a copy of the Asset Challenge report with a full analysis of assets and their returns.
- A request for more information regarding the proposed Waste and Recycling Income, specifically, clarification on the reasons for the

increased income target from £300k to £450k since the December Cabinet meeting.

- If the new £52 Green waste charge was to be calculated per bin or per household.
- If the anticipated savings that would arise from moving to a fortnightly black bin collection could be calculated and compared with the proposed green waste charge income target.
- If further analysis could be provided with regard to the Tourism & Enterprise and Corporate Landlord budget heads.

Officers responded that:

- The Head of Finance would send a detailed analysis to the Committee of the increase in the capital programme.
- The Director of Regeneration and Planning would be requested to provide members with details of assets and their yields.
- Since the December Cabinet meeting, further work had been undertaken in respect of the proposed Green Waste service charges, including additional modelling as to the likely take-up and, as a result, the revised income target was deemed more accurate.
- The Head of Finance would confirm whether the £52 charge was per bin or household and the answer would be circulated to members in due course.
- The anticipated savings of a fortnightly black bin collection would be provided by the Head of Finance and circulated in due course.
- Members overall concerns regarding the the future of waste services were noted, and the Strategy and Partnership Lead for Quality Environment would be invited to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting on 4 June 2018 to present a report on this service including issues around waste collection, recycling, and service delivery.
- The Head of Finance would circulate more information regarding the Tourism & Enterprise and Corporate Landlord budgets in due course.

Resolved:

- (1) That members note the following recommendations to be considered by Cabinet on 7 February 2018:
 - i. General Fund budget for 2017/2018 (Revised) and 2018/2019 (original) **Appendix 1** including growth and savings proposals for 2018/2019 as set out in **Appendix 2**;
 - ii. An increase in the Council Tax for Eastbourne Borough Council of 2.9% resulting in a Band D charge of £239.67 for 2018/2019;
 - iii. Revised General Fund capital programme 2017/2021 as set out in **Appendix 3**; and
 - iv. The section s151 Officers sign off as outlined in paragraph 1.6.

Reason:

For the Scrutiny Committee to contribute to the Cabinet's responsibility to recommend to Full Council the setting of a revenue budget and associated council tax for the forthcoming financial year.

28 Equality and Fairness Policy, Equality Objectives, Annual Report and Action Plan

The Committee noted the report of the Director of Regeneration and Planning. The report set out progress against the Council's current Equality Objectives, a proposed Equality and Fairness Policy, a new set of Equality Objectives, and an Action Plan for 2018.

Members' discussion included:

- What support was available for employees who were affected by stress.
- A request for more information regarding Paternity Leave.
- If potential costs of the Action Plan could be quantified, despite the report stating that there were no resource implications, particularly as appendix C indicates officer time.

Officers responded that:

- The Council had an Occupational Health Service which provided professional medical advice; that service was provided on both a self-referral and management referral basis.
- The Strategy and Partnerships Lead for Thriving Communities would find out more about the Human Resources policy regarding Paternity Leave and circulate that to members in due course.
- Historically there was a dedicated Equalities Officer, but the work was now covered by various members of the team. Consequently, there were no additional costs to the Council, other than officer time required to ensure compliance with our statutory duty.

Resolved:

- (1) That the draft Equality and Fairness Policy set out at Appendix A be noted;
- (2) That the Equality Objectives proposed for 2018 to 2021 as set out in paragraph 4.1 be noted;
- (3) That the Annual Report of activities carried out in 2017 as set out at Appendix B be noted; and
- (4) That the Action Plan as detailed in Appendix C be noted.

Reason:

To promote equality and fairness and eliminate discrimination, ensuring fair access to services and opportunities; and to comply with the Council's general and specific duties under the Equality Act 2010.

29 Exclusion of the public.

Resolved:

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting as otherwise there was a likelihood of disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The relevant paragraph of schedule 12A and a description of the exempt information is shown below. (The requisite notice having been given under regulation 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.)

30 Community Grants Programme - Small Grants

The Committee noted the report of the Director of Regeneration and Planning. The report set out the level of grants to voluntary organisations in Eastbourne for the year 2018/19 and proposed priorities for Small Grants 2019/20.

Members' discussion included:

- If the Council had noticed a significant improvement in the quality of applications following the increased level of training.

Officers responded that:

- There had been a vast improvement in the quality of applications for Small Grants. Officers stated that some organisations were being funded for the first time due to more refined applications.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Committee note the proposals for small grants to specified voluntary and community organisations as set out in the report;
- (2) That the Committee note the proposal for £2,500 of the Small Grants budget to be set aside for annual events for the organisations set out in the report;
- (3) That the Committee note the proposal to set aside £2,000 of the Small Grants budget as a contingency fund; and
- (4) That the Committee note the priorities for the 2019/20 Small Grants programme.

Reason:

For the Scrutiny Committee to note the Small Grants proposals, in accordance with the Recommendation of the Grants Task Group.

*Notes: (1) The report remains confidential but the minute was declared open.
(2) Exempt information reason 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs or any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm

Councillor di Cara (Chairman)