

## Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of meeting held in Ditchling Room - Southover House, Lewes on 28 June 2018 at 2.00 pm**

**Present:**

Councillor Peter Gardiner (Chair)

Councillors Sam Adeniji, Bill Bovington, Joanna Carter, Nigel Enever, Vic lent, Sarah Osborne, Julian Peterson and Stephen Catlin (as substitute for Councillor O’Keeffe MBE)

**Officers in attendance:**

Catherine Knight (Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services), Andy Chequers (Head of Homes First), Scott Reid (Head of Customer & Neighbourhood Services), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Millie McDevitt (Performance and Programmes Lead) and Jazmin Victory (Scrutiny Officer)

**Also in attendance:**

Elizabeth Curtis (Communications and Marketing Manager of East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service), Bernie Gorringe (East Sussex Highways), Howard Hodges (Superintendent of Sussex Police)

**1 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2018 were submitted and approved, and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

Members noted the following response, pursuant to the minutes of the Scrutiny committee meeting held on 22 February 2018:

The Director of Service Delivery was pleased to report that the collection figure for both Council tax and rent collection had significantly improved in Quarter 4, with the final years collection against the target reported as:

	Target	Actual
Council tax	98.00%	98.23%
Rents	95%	98%

Universal Credit had only partial been rolled out for Lewes District residents, with a full implementation in September 2018, so the Council would continue to monitor the potential impact through the progress and performance reports

and future Scrutiny committees. The committee noted this positive out-turn and wished to thank all staff involved in the collection of council tax and business rates.

Members noted the following comment, pursuant to the minutes of the Scrutiny committee meeting held on 19 April 2018:

Lewes to Uckfield Railway – East Sussex County Council’s commitment to support and lobby for the re-instatement of the line was set out in the East Sussex Rail Strategy 2013 and its Local Transport Plan 3, which covered the period 2011 to 2026. East Sussex County Council did not have any more responsibility than the District Council for the provision of new rail infrastructure in the County so it was therefore deemed unnecessary for them to attend the Scrutiny committee meeting on 28 June 2018.

## **2 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors R O’Keeffe MBE and R Robertson.

Councillor S Catlin declared that he was acting as substitute for Councillor R O’Keeffe MBE for the duration of the meeting.

## **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

## **4 Urgent Items**

The Committee noted the inclusion of the Lewes Bonfire Celebrations report. The Chair had authorised this report to be included as an urgent item in order for the committee’s recommendations to be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on 2 July 2018.

## **5 Written Questions from Councillors**

There were none.

## **6 Order of business**

The Scrutiny Committee agreed to consider agenda item 7 before item 6 due to officer time constraints.

## **7 Joint Equality Monitoring Policy**

The Scrutiny Committee noted the report of the Strategy and Partnerships Lead and the Policy and Engagement Coordinator. The report asked the committee to consider and endorse the proposed Equality Monitoring Policy and make any relevant recommendations in relation to these for Cabinet to consider.

Discussion included:

Members wanted assurance that the Equality Monitoring Questions were transgender-inclusive. Officers informed members that the following two recommendations had been put forward by an external reference group:

- That 'other' be added as an additional gender option.
- That 'other' be added as an additional sexual orientation option.

Members were pleased to note that the Equality Monitoring Questions took into account where residents lived in the District.

**Resolved:**

That the Scrutiny Committee endorse the proposed Equality Monitoring Policy for Cabinet to consider.

**Reason:**

An Equality Monitoring Policy is required to ensure the Council meets its legal duties under Equality Act 2010 and collects the information required to fulfil its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) whilst complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

## **8 Lewes Bonfire Celebrations**

The Scrutiny Committee received the report of the Director of Service Delivery to consider the consultation event with Members held by the Chair of the Tactical Co-ordination Group for station closures on bonfire night on public safety grounds.

The Superintendent of Sussex Police, the Communications and Marketing Manager of East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and Council Officers appreciated the cultural and historical significance of the event, along with the impact that the proposed station closures would cause; however there was a notable correlation between attendance and injuries at the event, and the risk to life and property outweighed any inconvenience that may be caused.

Discussion included:

Why there was a need for station closures when the event would be taking place on a Monday which historically had a low turnout. Members were informed of the logistical challenge of not being able to assume how many spectators would attend the event, especially considering the lack of accessibility for the last two years. The proposal recognised that station closures would affect weekday commuters, however advanced warning would allow for ample opportunity to plan ahead.

Disappointment that Parish and Town Councillors were not invited to the consultation event held by the Chair of the Tactical Co-ordination Group which took place on 8 June 2018, and that District Councillors were given such short

notice that not everyone could attend - members commented that this consultation was therefore not a fair representative sample. The Superintendent responded that this was the first year that they held a consultation and that feedback from Councillors would feed into their action plan for future events.

Disappointment that Falmer, Glynde, Southease and Cooksbridge would not be able to access Lewes, despite the Bonfire being a community event. Additionally, if this proposal were to go ahead then members recognised that residents of Cooksbridge would not be able to travel home from London as no trains stop before 17:00. Members were informed that Southern Railway was aware of the inconvenience that the proposal would cause, but their priority was to minimise disruption and maximise safety for the event.

Members commented that last year Councillors were assured that the station closures at the Lewes Bonfire would be a one off, and were therefore disappointed that it was once again being proposed.

**Resolved:**

That the Scrutiny Committee put forward the following recommendations to the Cabinet:

1. That train stations are not shut and access to the event is unrestricted; or
2. That trains stations reopen later in the evening;
3. That station closures are rethought with consideration for the Lewes wider community who wanted to access the Bonfire event; and
4. That there be an increase in carriages for alternative routes to accommodate for commuters taking alternative routes.

**Reason:**

It is recognised that public safety at this event is of considerable concern and of paramount importance; however the impact of station closures would cause significant disruption and disproportionate inconvenience to public users of the service.

## **9 Council Plan 2016 - 2020**

The Scrutiny Committee received the report of the Director of Regeneration and Planning which set out the results of a review and refresh which had been undertaken of the Council's four year plan (2016 – 2020) at the end of the second year. Members noted the design changes of the Corporate Plan and its new focus on key content and outcomes.

**Resolved:**

1. That the Scrutiny Committee recommend to the Cabinet that a reference to the South Downs National Park be included;
2. That the Scrutiny Committee noted the progress made in the second year of delivery of the Corporate plan; and
3. That the Scrutiny Committee noted the design changes to the Corporate Plan.

**Reason:**

During the period of a four year Corporate Plan, adjustments and refinements may need to be made to respond to changed circumstances and emerging opportunities. In acknowledgement of this, an annual review is a helpful way of ensuring that the Plan remains focused on delivery of the organisations overall strategic objectives.

**10 Corporate Performance Quarter 4 2017/18**

The Scrutiny Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive regarding Quarter 4 2017/18 performance against the Corporate Plan priority actions, performance indicators and targets.

Key discussions and officer actions arising from the report were detailed below:

North Street Quarter – the Project Manager would be invited to the next meeting of the committee to update members regarding how the Council were supporting businesses/social enterprises that were currently on the site, as well as further details regarding the anticipated target completion date of April 2021.

Upper Ouse Flood Protection and Water – members praised Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust and commented that the initiatives were good value for money.

Human Resources - members noted that absence figures had decreased continuously every year for the last 7 years and wished to commend staff on this.

Tenant satisfaction – members were pleased to note that surveys now included an open-ended question to ascertain what clients were dissatisfied about - this allowed the Council to write back to respondents and solve their issues more efficiently.

Local Plan Part 2 - members asked for further details on when this would be coming back to councillors for further comment and for more details on the timetable.

Recycling – members queried how residents that lived in flats were being supported to compost practicality and were informed that flats would be revisited in order to determine the practicality of the current recycling facilities. Members thanked the Customer and Neighbourhood Services team for promptly responding to recent fly-tipping incidents in Falmer and Malling.

Contact Centre – members noted that there was a 25% vacancy rate in the department and, although 5 positions were recently filled, new starters would require approximately 3 months of training and development. Due to a higher than normal call volume, a triage officer actively encouraged callers to

complete their transactions online (when possible), supporting the aspirations of the Channel Shift Strategy and managing the call queue.

Website – members commented that the new website was not easily accessible, and that there were too many steps required to complete transactions. Comments would be passed to the Customer Communications and Engagement Lead and to the Web Governance Board.

Housing – members noted the following amendments to the end of year average values:

Number of Households living in temporary accommodation – 75 days  
Total number of households living in emergency (nightly paid) accommodation – 12

Committee members also requested that definitions be provided for the following terms in future reports: ‘prevention duty’, ‘relief duty’ and ‘full homelessness duty’.

The following queries regarding housing development were raised during the meeting and passed on to the Development Project Manager who would be attending the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 13 September 2018.

- That an explanation be provided regarding the low 160 Net additional homes provided target for 2018/19; and
- That further information be provided regarding the Modular Temporary Accommodation project and any potential sites that had been identified.

Members thanked the Development Project Manager and his team for the delivery of 22 new homes in 2017/18.

Devolution of Open Spaces – the Director of Legal and Democratic Services informed the committee that the devolution of Landport Bottom had been completed. The 5 sites in Newhaven Town were all progressing, but were subject to the resolution of issues regarding third party rights for the industrial estates and contamination issues.

**Resolved:**

That the Scrutiny Committee note the achievements and progress against Corporate Plan priorities for 2017/18, as set out in this report.

**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.

## **11 Forward Plan of Decisions – 1 June 2018 – 30 September 2018**

The committee received the Forward Plan for the period from 1 February 2018 – 31 May 2018.

**Resolved:**

That the Forward Plan of the Council for the period from 1 June 2018 – 30 September 2018, be noted.

**Reason:**

To demonstrate the discharge of the Scrutiny Procedure Rule 9 (d) to have regard to the Forward Plan of Decisions.

**12 Work Programme 2018-19**

The committee considered the Work Programme, which set out in-year variations to the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme for the forthcoming year.

**Resolved:**

That the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.

**Reason:**

To demonstrate the Scrutiny Committee's entitlement of in-year variations to the Work Programme, as indicated by Part 4 Rule 7 (c) of the Constitution of the Council.

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

Councillor Peter Gardiner (Chair)