

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES**  
**3 JUNE 2013**

Present: Councillors Poole (in the Chair), Cooke, Davies, Rogers, Scott, Turner

Lead Members in attendance: Councillors Birch, Chowney, Forward and Kramer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gurney.

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following councillors declared an interest in the minutes as indicated:

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Chowney	3	Personal – HBRL Director and Seachange Director

**2. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2013 be approved as a true record.

**3. CORPORATE PLAN PART III – YEAR END PERFORMANCE  
INFORMATION AND TARGET SETTING 2013/14**

The Policy and Partnerships Officer presented a report to advise Members of the year end actual performance against the targets set out in Part II of the Corporate Plan for 2012/13. The report considered areas of shortfall in performance and the actions that will be taken to improve performance during 2013/14. Member's views were sought on the proposed performance indicator targets for 2013/14, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Under the Environmental Services Directorate, Members were advised that 167 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued this year, compared to 108 in the previous year.

Consideration was given to the management of the transition of on street parking enforcement back to East Sussex County Council. Members noted that negotiations were ongoing with East Sussex County Council regarding the terms of reference for a proposed Parking Management Board. Once the board is operational, it will allow for the Council to have input into on-street

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES**

### **3 JUNE 2013**

parking management. The committee agreed to revisit this issue at a future meeting, and to examine how best to scrutinise the new service.

Members acknowledged that recycling rates had declined nationally, due to reduced spending power and changing consumer habits. However, the committee were advised that efforts were ongoing to promote recycling across the town.

Members welcomed the update on visitor numbers to the White Rock Theatre, total attendance at the theatre had increased by 19% on the previous year. The committee noted that this was particularly encouraging, given Hastings ongoing bid to become UK City of culture 2017. Members were advised that refurbishment works were planned at some Council Leisure Centres, it was hoped that these improvements would help to increase visitor numbers to 390,000 by March 2014.

The Committee expressed some disappointment at delays to a programme to support the fishing industry through the Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) business plan. However members noted that this programme was not controlled by the Council but through the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) which is the Accountable Body for the programme. The slippage had been substantially caused by the difficulties experienced with the MMO but it was hoped these would be resolved. The other significant challenge was the requirement for a 40% contribution to the programme from the private sector. Efforts were ongoing to create a robust programme of projects, which would ensure that the maximum possible amount of the allocation would be committed by the deadline in December 2013.

Members welcomed the reduction in recorded crime of 11.7% and highlighted the importance of tackling crime and anti social behaviour. Members were advised of the role of the Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP), which was led by Trading Standards, which aimed to combat anti social behaviour associated with alcohol. The partnership had been launched over a year ago, and it was hoped that it would compliment the Council's ongoing community safety work.

Discussion took place regarding efforts to facilitate a second phase of housing at Ore Valley, after Bellway Homes confirmed they would not be proceeding with this phase of the development. The Head of Housing and Planning Services advised that discussions were ongoing with SeaChange Sussex regarding the future of the site.

Members were advised that an in principal agreement had been reached for a lease of part of the White Rock Baths from the Foreshore Trust to Hastings Pier Charity, which should enable refurbishment works to proceed.

Councillor Birch highlighted the projections for the number of homelessness acceptances, which could reach 145 by March 2014. He underscored that this was a particularly worrying indicator, with significant social and financial

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES**

### **3 JUNE 2013**

implications for the authority, and recommended that the Scrutiny Committee continue to monitor this area at future meetings.

#### **RESOLVED that:**

- 1. Members consider the information that will form Part III of the Corporate Plan, and;**
- 2. That the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the proposed performance indicator targets for 2013/14 be referred to the Cabinet meeting on 10th of June 2013, and;**
- 3. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee thank staff for their hard work in achieving the targets set out in the Corporate Plan.**

#### **4. UPDATE ON LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN THE GILLSMANS HILL AREA**

The Head of Housing and Planning Services presented a report to advise Members of progress in bringing back into use the long term vacant properties at Gillsmans Hill and The Green, which had been requested at an earlier Overview & Scrutiny Committee for Services.

The report identified a number of long term empty properties which had recently been sold by East Sussex County Council (ESCC). The report explained that HBC would continue to monitor these properties, in line with its Empty Homes Strategy, to ensure the new owners bought them back into use. The report also identified a number of properties which were awaiting disposal by ESCC.

The report recommended that the Chair of the committee write to the Leader and Chief Executive of ESCC to request that they make use of appropriate covenants of sale to help ensure that the remaining properties in their ownership are brought back into use. It was suggested that the letter should also include an outline of the objectives of HBC's Empty Homes Strategy.

The Overview and Scrutiny welcomed the progress to date and the initiatives outlined in the report to help bring the remaining vacant properties back into use.

#### **RESOLVED that:**

- 1. Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Services Committee formally write to the Leader/ Chief Executive of ESCC requesting that they make use of appropriate covenants of sale to help ensure that the remaining properties in their ownership are brought back into use, and;**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES  
3 JUNE 2013**

- 2. That the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Services Committee, whilst writing, takes the opportunity to remind ESCC of the objectives of HBC's Empty Homes Strategy including our commitment to consider the use of enforcement powers where necessary.**

**5. OVERVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S TWITTER SERVICE**

The Head of Marketing and Communications presented a report which described current arrangements for the Council's twitter accounts. The report noted that the two most significant accounts were the main corporate account @hastingsbc and the tourism account @visit1066, both of which had played a key role in promoting the City of Culture bid. Some Council officers also maintained stand alone twitter accounts for specific activities, which were also overseen by the Marketing and Communications team.

The report outlined the current operation of these accounts, including the process for responding to incoming tweets.

**RESOLVED that:**

- 1. The report be noted**

**6. FINAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW: IS HASTINGS MAKING THE MOST OF BEING A UNIVERSITY TOWN?**

Councillor Howard presented the final report of the Scrutiny Review: Is Hastings making the most of being a University Town? The review had sought to develop a shared understanding among Members of the review team on the aims and objectives of the University of Brighton in Hastings. The review team had met with key stakeholders over the course of the review, including members of the University faculty, representatives of the Student's Union, students and representatives from the local business community. The findings at the evidence gathering stage of the review had been comprehensive; the review team had focused on understanding the size and scale of the University in Hastings and the history of the development of Higher Education provision in the town. The review team had also been interested to note how the University had helped to improve the life chances of local people, as well as attracting students from outside the area.

The final report also made a number of recommendations regarding how Hastings could optimise being a University Town. The recommendations included seeking further input from the local business community and to continue to promote communication between the Council, the University and key service providers.

**RESOLVED that:**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES**  
**3 JUNE 2013**

- 1. The recommendations of the Review Team are forwarded to the 8th July Cabinet for consideration.**

**7. SUGGESTIONS FOR FINANCIAL ECONOMIES AND NEW SOURCES OF INCOME**

The Policy and Partnerships Officer gave a spoken report for this item and sought Member's suggestions.

**8. FORWARD PLAN 1 JUNE TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2013**

The Policy and Partnerships Officer introduced this item and asked Member's to identify any areas for further consideration.

Members noted the report on the Hastings Local Plan – Planning Strategy Main Modifications and impact of South East Plan revocation, which would be considered by cabinet at its meeting on 5 August 2013. Members were advised that a consultation on the Draft Planning Strategy would be undertaken in May / June 2013. The report to Cabinet would advise of the outcome of this consultation and seek Cabinet approval for the final version of the Main Modifications to the Planning Strategy and advise of the impact of the South east Plan revocation.

**9. WORK PROGRAMME 2012-13 QUARTER FOUR UPDATE AND FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME IDEAS**

The Policy and Partnerships officer advised Members that all three reviews undertaken as part of the 2012/13 Work Programme had now been completed.

Members were invited to make suggestions for reviews to be undertaken as part of the 2013/14 Work Programme. A full list of Future Work Programme Ideas, including those suggestions which had not been taken up in previous years, would be considered at the Annual Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on 13 June 2013.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.45pm)