

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES

4 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present: Councillors Davies (Chair), Fitzgerald, Scott, Charman, Edwards, Pragnell, Birch, Chowney, Poole, Roberts and Westley

Apologies for absence were noted for Councillor Forward and Turner

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Pragnell	7	Personal – he was Chair of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee at East Sussex County Council
	8	Personal – he had reported an issue to Kier in a neighbouring authority.

6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2014 AND THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL JOINT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES HELD ON 19 JUNE 2014 (ATTACHED)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2014 and the minutes of the Annual Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees held on 19 June 2014 be approved as a correct record.

7. QUARTER ONE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Senior Corporate and Democratic Services Officer presented a report to advise Members of the performance against the 2014/15 targets and performance indicators in part II of the Corporate Plan. The report also provided a summary of financial information.

Discussion took place regarding effort to develop further proposals for the repair and regeneration of Bottle Alley. Members raised concerns that there had been an incident earlier in the summer when the cleanliness of Bottle Alley had not met the required standard. Officers had addressed this issue with the council's street cleansing contractor and measures had been put in place to prevent a reoccurrence of the lapse. Members noted that a draft of the refreshed seafront strategy was currently out to consultation. The results of the consultation would be submitted to Cabinet for consideration, to help inform the development of a new seafront strategy and action plan. Discussions were ongoing with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to improve

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES

4 SEPTEMBER 2014

parking provision in the area, which would be particularly important once the refurbished pier re-opened.

Members noted an underspend in quarter one, against the revenue budget. Similarly, the council's expenditure in quarter 1 was below the projections outlined in capital programme. Councillor Birch agreed to provide the committee with information on the makeup of this underspend, however, he commented that this would not necessarily reflect the council's position at the end of the financial year. Any underspends identified at the end of the financial year would be carried forward as reserves, to support the budget setting process for future years.

The committee considered options to develop the HMO licensing scheme. The Head of Housing and Planning Services advised that any slippage in this target was usually recouped later in the year. Efforts had been underway to collate data to inform draft proposals for introducing selective licensing in some parts of the town. The draft proposals would be subject to public consultation, before being considered by Cabinet later in the year. The Head of Housing and Planning Services acknowledged that the present system for licensing HMOs was bureaucratic and it would therefore be necessary to consider options to streamline the processes, if the scheme were to be extended.

The Head of Housing and Planning Services advised that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had agreed an extension of time in respect of works to 108 Marina and the Congregational Church, works continued on site at 49 Marina and he agreed to provide the committee with the likely date of completion.

Members considered the council's efforts to bring long term empty properties back into use; this included the use of the council's compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers. The council also continued to tackle neglected and derelict buildings using the grotbusters scheme. Members noted that the annual targets for properties improved by the grotbusters scheme were reducing, which reflected the decreasing number of derelict buildings in the town. However, the council would continue to respond to reports of dilapidated and unsafe buildings. The Head of Housing and Planning Services added that the council also had to take a proactive role in encouraging the early development of building sites, to avoid these becoming neglected.

Consideration was given to the changes in the recording of crimes, which had resulted in the reported increase in violent crime between March and June 2014. The Director of Environmental Services circulated a briefing note which described the changes to the way crimes are recorded in more detail. Councillor Westley explained that other authorities across East Sussex had experienced similar increases in their statistics, as requirements for the Police to record incidents became more stringent. The council continued to work closely with a variety of agencies through the Safer Hastings Partnership, to monitor and reduce the crime rate in the town. The committee recommended continuing this approach, to strengthen communication between the council, its partners and the local community. Councillor Westley said that the crime rate in Hastings continued to compare favourably with that of similar towns around the country.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES

4 SEPTEMBER 2014

The committee thanked officers, working in partnership with the council's contractors, in achieving improvements to street and environmental cleanliness, with litter, dog fouling, detritus, graffiti and flyposting falling to their lowest levels since 2009.

The Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure commented that attendance figures at Hastings Museum had significantly increased following the launch of the Hastings Remembers exhibition, which commemorated the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War.

The committee congratulated also those involved in retaining green flag accreditation for the town's parks and open spaces.

Members noted that the East Sussex Flood Partnership (ESFP) had not met for some time. The Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure responded that ESCC, which was the lead agency for co-ordinating actions as part of the Strategic Flood Assessment (SFRA), intended to reconvene the partnership, following recent changes to legislation. In the meantime, the council continued to participate in County-led flood protection activity.

Consideration was given to ways to raise awareness of the green dog walker's scheme, which encouraged responsible behaviour by dog owners. The Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure said that the majority of the promotion for the initiative was delivered through the Ranger service and existing members of the scheme, she agreed to circulate further information to Members by email.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that –

- 1) The committees comments on quarter 1 performance be addressed by the relevant Leader Member(s) with appropriate action and report back, and;**
- 2) Staff in the Regeneration and Environmental Services Directorates be thanked for their hard work and achievements in this quarter.**

The reason for these recommendations was:

To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake their performance management function.

8. MEETING WITH KIER ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES TO DISCUSS WASTE MANAGEMENT

Following a request made by Members at the Annual Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in June 2014, the Regional Director and Business Manager for Kier Environmental Services had been invited to attend the meeting to provide an update on the new waste management and street cleansing arrangements.

Councillor Howard joined the committee for the duration of this item.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES

4 SEPTEMBER 2014

Members of both Overview and Scrutiny Committees had prepared a comprehensive list of questions regarding the new waste management and street cleansing arrangements and a written outline response had been provided in advance of the meeting.

At the meeting, further consideration was given to the staffing arrangements to deliver the contract. The Business Manager explained that the large scale of the TUPE transfer of staff had created initial challenges. However, Kier had now begun a programme of recruitment, which it was hoped would reduce reliance on agency staff to deliver services. Approximately 50 members of staff were employed to work on the waste and street cleansing service in Hastings. Kier had also developed its training programme for staff, which would bring forward learning from the initial implementation of the contract.

Members expressed concern that the number of missed bins was above target. The Regional Director commented that the large volume of garden waste produced over the summer months had put added pressure on the waste service and contributed to the increased number of missed collections. The number of missed collections had decreased recently, and efforts would continue to further reduce this in line with the targets set out in the contract by developing training for staff and investment in new technology. When a missed collection was reported, Kier aimed to correct this either the same day or the following day.

Discussion took place regarding the mechanisms for reporting complaints and queries to Kier. The Head of Environmental Services explained that residents could contact the council about the waste service in person, online or by telephone; the comments received were then collated and forwarded directly to Kier using the KierWay system. Procedures were also in place for council staff to escalate more serious or repeat complaints with Kier.

When asked by Members how performance in Hastings compared with the other 3 authorities serviced by the Joint East Sussex Waste Contract, the Regional Director commented that the waste and street cleansing service in Hastings was broadly comparable with Eastbourne, and currently better than in Rother and Wealden where missed collection rates were higher. However, Kier would continue to develop good practice and pursue opportunities for service improvements to meet the contractual targets.

Members thanked the Regional Director and Business Manager for attending the meeting.

9. UPDATE ON THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15

The Senior Corporate and Democratic Services Officer gave an update on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2014-15. Members had begun two of the three pieces of work they had identified as a high priority at the Annual Joint Meeting

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES

4 SEPTEMBER 2014

of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Scrutiny review of engaging with academies was due to begin later in the year.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 8.00 pm)