

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES

10 NOVEMBER 2014

Present: Councillors Davies (Chair), Fitzgerald (Vice-Chair), Scott, Turner, Charman, Pragnell, Birch, Chowney, Forward and Poole

Apologies for absence were noted for Councillor Edwards and Cartwright

10. UPDATE ON RECORDING CRIME STATISTICS

At the request of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda.

The committee had invited Inspector Chris Veale of Hastings Police to attend the meeting, to provide an update on crime data integrity.

Following initial research by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent, HMIC had undertaken a programme of works across the country to assess whether crimes were being accurately recorded and correctly categorised. This work was ongoing, but an interim report published in 2014 identified that nationally there had been a significant under-recording of crime.

Maintaining accurate data was essential to gain an accurate representation of crime and anti-social behaviour in a particular area and for the police to plan their work to ensure the best outcome for victims and communities, including appropriate access to victim services.

Police forces across the country had developed a more comprehensive approach to recording crime, and this had resulted in an increase in the number of recorded crimes. However, it was considered that this increase in recorded crime was the result of improved monitoring practices, rather than an increase in the number of offences. Indeed, crime rates in Hastings continued to compare favourably against similar districts around the country. Discussion took place regarding a range of initiatives which had been launched by Hastings Police and its partner agencies, including the council, to tackle issues around community safety and anti-social behaviour.

The committee thanked Inspector Veale for his update.

11. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2014 be approved as a correct record.

12. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS FROM 1 NOVEMBER 2014 TO 28 FEBRUARY 2015

This item was moved up the agenda, at the request of the Chair.

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The committee considered the forward plan of Cabinet decisions from 1 November 2014 to 28 February 2015. Members had previously requested an update on the Community Partnership Funding Main Grants Programme and the Sex Establishment Policy – review of numbers and development of a policy.

The Head of Regeneration and Planning Policy provided a briefing note on Community Partnership Funding; she also gave Members an overview of the range of activities supported by the grants programme.

The Head of Environmental Services explained that the council's proposed Sex Establishment Policy was currently subject to a public consultation. The council had engaged with a variety of stakeholders as part of the consultation and Members were invited to submit any further comments on the draft policy by Friday, 2 January 2015.

13. QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

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

Members welcomed an update that the council had met its target to bring forward a further programme of compulsory purchase orders in respect of long term empty properties. At its meeting on 7 July 2014, Cabinet had approved a programme of compulsory purchase orders on 27 long term empty properties. Members acknowledged that the council's Empty Homes Officer continued to identify other long term empty properties in the town and explore options to bring them back into use.

The Lead Member for Housing and Community Services advised the committee that efforts were underway to develop a 5 year housing strategy. Although a housing strategy was no longer a statutory requirement, it was useful to assist the council in identifying and addressing housing needs in the area. The draft strategy would be subject to a public consultation.

Members noted that council was developing a revised target for the Townscape Heritage Initiative, which sought to conserve and repair buildings within the Central St Leonards area. It had been agreed with partners, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, to extend the timescale for the project to December 2015, to enable repair works to the Congregational Church to be completed.

Consideration was given to progress with the restoration of Pelham Arcade. The Lead Member Regeneration acknowledged that the project had been delayed by the complexities of ownership and lease arrangements for some of the units on the arcade, however, the council continued to encourage interest in the scheme from other owners. English Heritage had highlighted the scheme as a successful example of partnership working.

Discussion took place regarding efforts to improve public safety, particularly at events which take place across the year. The Director of Environmental Services explained that the council had formed a multi-agency safety advisory group, which assisted with

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the planning of large-scale public events. He commented that much of the alcohol consumed at events had not been purchased from licensed premises in the town, but brought in from outside the area. Efforts were underway with the British Transport Police to address incidents of irresponsible drinking. A de-brief was also held after each event, to consider possible safety improvements which may be made in future. This had included relocating the Jack in the Green Festival to the West Hill.

At the last meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Services in September, Members had met with Kier Services to discuss the new waste and street cleansing arrangements. Members noted that the number of missed collections continued to fall, and further initiatives were planned to reduce this further. The Joint Waste Committee continued to meet, to monitor performance under the contract. The committee were advised that efforts were underway to reduce the number of agency staff employed over the contract, which would help to retain experience within the teams.

The committee noted possible slippage on a target to implement flood protection measures throughout the town. The Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure explained that the slippage had been caused by delays to East Sussex County Council scheduling a meeting of the East Sussex Flood Partnership. However, the Resorts Services Manager continued to work closely with partners, including East Sussex County Council, to ensure that appropriate flood protection measures were in place across the Borough.

Discussion took place regarding the museum service. Members noted that attendance figures at the Old Town Hall Museum had fallen recently, the Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure explained that this had been caused in part by the reduced number of services provided by the information centre located within the museum, following the relocation of the Tourist Information Centre to Aquila House. The Museum Service was currently developing a forward plan of activities, in order to achieve re-accreditation by the Arts Council.

Members expressed concern at a recent theft from Hastings Cemetery, but were mindful that any security measures must be sensitive to the area.

The committee discussed the implementation of the new Play Hastings Strategy and action plan; Members acknowledged that this activity was heavily reliant on external grants. Members requested a breakdown of the play activities taking place around the town from the Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure.

Members noted that the Housing team was dealing with an increasing number of homelessness acceptances, and the council would continue to work with partners to develop preventative measures for homelessness.

RESOLVED that –

- 1) The committees comments on quarter 2 performance be addressed by the relevant Lead Member(s) with appropriate action and report back, and;**

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- 2) Staff in the Regeneration and Environmental Services Directorates be thanked for their hard work and achievements in this quarter.**

The reason for this decision was:

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

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

The Senior Corporate and Democratic Services Officer advised the committee that all three pieces of work that Members had identified as a high priority at their annual meeting were now underway.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 7.40 pm)