

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES

11 JUNE 2014

Present: Councillors Davies (Chair), Charman, Edwards, Fitzgerald, Howard (as the duly appointed substitute for Councillor Turner) and Pragnell

Apologies for absence were notes for Councillor Scott and Turner

## 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Chowney	3	Personal – he is the council's appointed Director of SeaChange Sussex and Hastings and Bexhill Renaissance Limited
Pragnell	3	Personal – he is the East Sussex County Council appointed member of the Safer Hastings Partnership
Webb	3	Personal – he sits on the Adult Social care Scrutiny Committee

## 2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2014

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2014 be approved as a true record.

## 3. CORPORATE PLAN PART III - YEAR END PERFORMANCE INFORMATION AND TARGET SETTING 2014/15

The Senior Corporate and Democratic Services Officer submitted a report to advise Members of year-end actual performance against targets and performance indicators in Part II of the Corporate Plan for 2013/14. The report also provided a summary of financial information. The committee's views were sought on the proposed performance indicator targets for 2014/15.

Consideration was given to areas of shortfall in performance and the actions that would be taken to address them in 2014/15. Following the results of the local place survey in August 2013, which had indicated that public satisfaction in street cleanliness in some areas of the town had reduced, efforts were underway to deliver improvements to this service. Senior officers held monthly management meetings with the council's street cleansing contractor, Kier, to discuss planned improvements.

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Kier had adapted their training and guidance programme for street cleansing staff, and had issued new equipment to tackle this issue. The committee may also wish to invite a representative of Kier to attend an Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting, as part of their 2014/15 work programme. The Head of Environmental Services noted that Hastings continued to perform well against national averages for street cleansing, the new waste management contract also made provision for an enhanced package of street cleansing and waste collection services.

Members noted that 93% of premises in the town were broadly compliant with the standards for food hygiene, 29% of premises also had an improving score. Although not all of the programmed food hygiene inspections had been carried out in 2013/14, all of the highest risk food businesses had been inspected.

The committee acknowledged that the transition to a new system for the council's CCTV monitoring had been a complex process, which had resulted in slippage in the projected timescale. The technical requirements for the wider CCTV replacement project had also been greater than originally anticipated. The Head of Environmental Services informed Members that specialist advice had been sought, which would assist with the completion of the project.

Members noted that visitor figures at the Johns Place museum were just below the updated target of 40,000. The Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure responded that, whilst there was little capacity to expand the programme of exhibitions, it was intended to further develop the use of the museum as a wedding venue. She also agreed to provide members with attendance figures for the National Science and Engineering Week and The Big Draw, which the museum had also participated in. Recent improvements to facilities at the Old Town Hall museum had resulted in it exceeding its target attendance figures for 2013/14.

The council continued to monitor attendance figures at the White Rock Theatre. Attendance figures had increased over recent years, although the target for 2013/14 had not been met. A new sound system was due to be installed in July 2014, which it was hoped would improve the flexibility of the theatre in attracting a broad range of acts, particularly touring shows. A new Theatre Director was also due to be appointed in the coming months.

Members noted that the planned refresh of the cultural strategy and action plan had been delayed in order to develop a more far reaching view, which would reflect learning from an earlier City of Culture bid. A senior Cultural Development specialist had been appointed to oversee the refresh, which would include an audit of current cultural provision in the area. Plans would also be put in place to maximise the impact of the celebrations for the 950<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, which were intended to further enhance the cultural profile of the town.

Discussion took place regarding delays to the adoption of the Planning Strategy, following the revocation of the South East Plan and the requirement by the Planning Inspectorate for a further round of consultation. Since the Planning Strategy had been adopted, a revised proposed submission version of the Development Management Plan had been subject to a six week public consultation, which concluded on 22 April 2014.

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Members were advised that Hastings and Bexhill Renaissance Limited had given approval to market phase 4 of the Ore Valley Development. The committee welcomed this update, and would continue to monitor progress towards developing the sites.

The committee was mindful that recent severe weather had caused delays to the completion of the Townscape Heritage Initiative, which sought to restore specific buildings in the Central St Leonards Renewal area.

The Director of Regeneration updated Members on plans to work up a stage 1 bid for Heritage Lottery Fund for improvements to Hastings Castle, following an unsuccessful bid in March 2014. The Heritage Lottery Fund had since made a number of encouraging comments regarding the content of the bid; work was now underway to demonstrate enhanced community involvement in the project.

The Head of Marketing and Communications updated the committee of plans to refresh the layout of the council's website. Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that information on the website was kept up to date.

The Lead Member for each service area gave the committee a comprehensive overview of progress to achieve the targets set out in the corporate plan over 2013/14. Members noted that the report contained a number of very positive outcomes of work across the Environmental Services and Regeneration Directorates over the past year. Members were also advised of the priorities for each service to achieve during 2014/15.

Discussion took place regarding the performance indicators for 2014/15. Members welcomed the introduction of a new measure for street cleanliness, which combined a variety of indicators including litter, dog fouling, detritus, graffiti and fly posting. The committee suggested further efforts to identify and address problem areas around the town for dog fouling and litter.

Members noted the 2014/15 target of 70.7 for the overall crime rate per 1,000 of the population. Efforts by the council and its partners over recent years had resulted in achieving a better than expected reduction in crime over 2013/14. Additional indicators regarding crimes in council car parks, public place violence and criminal damage had been removed for 2014/15, as these targets had consistently been met. The Safer Hastings Partnership would also continue to closely monitor the crime rate in the area.

The committee suggested the introduction of an indicator to measure the subjective benefits of the town's parks and open spaces. The Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure advised that efforts were underway to develop a similar measure, and it was hoped that this could be introduced in the coming months. Members also requested a copy of the requirements for green flag accreditation.

Consideration was given to the performance indicator around earnings (resident analysis), as a percentage of the UK median average gross weekly pay. This measure had been included to give an indication of the overall economic climate within the town. Members also noted the indicator for the percentage of households

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living in poverty; the committee acknowledged that the council continued to develop a range of initiatives, including the anti-poverty strategy, to tackle this issue directly.

The committee were pleased to note that the council had exceed its target for the number of long term empty properties returned to use, the committee were advised that a report on a further programme of compulsory purchase of empty homes was due to be submitted to Cabinet in July. The committee considered this target alongside the target to build 200 new homes in 2015. Members were mindful of the recent changes to legislation regarding the provision of affordable housing and considered the possible impact this may have on the target to build affordable homes in the town. The committee requested a breakdown of planning permission which had been granted, but not then implemented.

Members discussed target to reduce the number of homelessness acceptances. The target for 2015 had been set at 145, the same as the target for March 2014, as it was considered that the full impact of the changes to the welfare system may not yet be apparent. The Head of Housing and Planning Services advised that his team continued to take a proactive approach to preventing homelessness. He advised that housing migration into Hastings had been stable since the welfare reforms were introduced, Members suggested that this trend continue to be monitored.

The committee suggested developing further performance indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the website, including a short customer satisfaction survey.

### **RESOLVED – (unanimously) - that:**

- 1) Members have considered the information that will form Part III of the Corporate Plan, and;**
- 2) the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny committee on the proposed performance indicator targets for 2014/15 be referred to the Cabinet meeting on 7 July 2014, and;**
- 3) the Overview and scrutiny committee thank staff for their hard work in achieving targets set out in the Corporate Plan.**

### **4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14 YEAR END UPDATE**

The Senior Corporate and Democratic Services Officer presented an update on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. Members had completed two of the three reviews they had selected at the Annual Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Scrutiny review of changes to the welfare system was due to report to quarter 4 Overview and Scrutiny committee for Resources.

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(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 8.05 pm)