

# Public Document Pack

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 SEPTEMBER 2017

Present: Councillors Webb (Chair), Bacon, Turner, Atkins, Cartwright and Dowling

Lead Members in attendance: Councillors Forward, Poole and Batsford

Apologies for absence were noted for Councillor Charman, Cooke and Rankin

#### 4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Councillors declared an interest in the minutes:

Councillor	Minute	Interest
Poole	7 – Update – Higher Education in Hastings	Personal – she is a student at the University of Brighton
Webb	7 – Update – Higher Education in Hastings	Personal - he is a member of East Sussex County Council, Better Together and Health and Wellbeing Board

#### 5. **MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2017 AND THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 JULY 2017**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15 June 2017 and the Annual Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 July 2017 be approved as a correct record of the meeting

#### 6. **UPDATE ON MY HASTINGS ONLINE**

The Customer First Communications Champion, Corporate Customer Services Manager and Programmer presented an update on My Hastings online.

The council has been making a number of transactions available online and overview and scrutiny members had been monitoring the take up of these services.

The most popular online transaction was report it, which comprised reporting litter, fog fouling, fly-tipping, fly-posting and graffiti. The team have been developing a new version of report it, based on feedback from users, which makes it easier and faster to carry out these transactions. The new service included improved mapping capabilities, users could also easily track incidents which have been reported to the council. Further work was also underway to improve communication between the council and its contractors once reports had been received. It was intended to launch the new version of report it in November 2017.

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 SEPTEMBER 2017

The Corporate Customer Services Manager advised that the number of cases being reported through My Hastings self-service has remained at a similar level (approximately 52%) each month. Therefore, there is a need to carry out wider marketing to raise awareness of the service and increase the number of residents, businesses, staff and visitors using self-service.

The marketing activities had been planned to take place between January and March 2018 and included both a range traditional and online promotion.

The committee welcomed the update and thanked the team for their efforts.

### 7. UPDATE - HIGHER EDUCATION IN HASTINGS

As part of their work programme for 2017/18 overview and scrutiny members had requested an update on higher education in Hastings.

The Director of Operational Services presented an update on the operation of the University of Brighton in the town, the development of a University Centre at Sussex Coast College and continuing contact with the University of Sussex.

Following a government-led review of further education provision in Sussex, Sussex Coast College were in the latter stages of considering a merger with Sussex Downs College. Members noted that proposals for higher education provision across the county were still under development, and this may be an area members wish to revisit as part of their work programme of activities later in the year.

A report by Biggar economics on the future of higher education in Hastings and Rother was appended to the report. The report had been commissioned by Hastings and Rother Task Force in October 2016, following the announcement by the University of Brighton that it intended to close its campus in Hastings. The report had recommended that the council support the development of a University Centre at Sussex Coast College, while remaining open to the possibility of other higher education providers relocating to the town.

Sussex University runs a medical school in conjunction with the University of Brighton and is seeking to expand this further. The council would support this opportunity; however, the University of Sussex would need to plan any expansion in line with its long term vision for its development. Members suggested seeking support from the local Clinical Commissioning Group for this proposal and to take this opportunity into account when considering proposals for the re-development of the White Rock area.

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 SEPTEMBER 2017

### 8. QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Operational Services and Director of Corporate and Governance presented a report to update members on performance against the targets set out in the corporate plan for 2017/18, and other key activities, during quarter 1. The report also provided a summary of financial information.

Following a recommendation of the earlier overview and scrutiny review of scrutiny functions, the format of the report had been revised. The new layout reflected the five key themes of the corporate plan; cleaner and safer, driving economic growth, support when its needed, providing great services and income generation growth. Each of these themes had a number of key performance indicators which would be monitored throughout the year and reported to the committee on a quarterly basis.

Discussion took place regarding the operation of the waste and street cleansing contract. The Director of Operational Services noted that the town had a successful summer overall, attracting a large number of visitors. However, it had been disappointing that the street cleansing arrangements put in place by the contractor during this busy period had not been sufficient. Since then, the council had been working closely with its contractor to develop a recovery plan. In the meantime, the council continued to enforce the requirements of the contract robustly. Consideration was also given to the standards of street cleaning outside the town centres, particularly opportunities for the council to work more closely with social housing providers.

The Director of Operational Services updated the committee on progress with the council's income generation programme. Cabinet had considered a draft income generation strategy, commercial property investment strategy and business plan for a council-owned housing company at its meeting on 11 September 2017. A number of new beach huts had also been installed on the seafront. A further report on energy generation proposals would be presented to Cabinet later in the year.

The committee discussed options to secure affordable housing within new developments in the town. The Lead Member for Housing and Leisure advised that the funding arrangements for homelessness prevention activities and temporary accommodation costs had been changed by the government. The council now received a flexible homelessness support grant. A portion of this grant would be used to fund an Affordable Housing Development Officer post, shared between the housing and planning teams. The post holder will liaise between the council and housing developers to enable the provision of affordable housing and ensure the number of units of accommodation are maximised.

Members noted that the quarter 1 performance indicator targets for the collection of council tax and non domestic rates had not been met. The Director of Corporate Services and Governance responded that the introduction of universal credit had impacted on the collection of council tax. Many customers also now opted to pay council tax and business rates over a 12 month period, rather than 10, which affected the quarterly profiles. Over recent years, the council had taken steps to reduce its use of bailiffs to recover debts and engage with customers who may be at risk of missing

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 SEPTEMBER 2017

payments at an early stage. The Revenues and Benefits Service Manager would brief members on this area of work later in the year.

**RESOLVED (unanimously) that:**

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

The reason for this decision was:

To assist the council undertake performance management arrangements.

### **9. UPDATE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18**

The Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager updated members on progress with the overview and scrutiny work programme 2017/18. The overview and scrutiny review of education was now underway, and the team were due to meet with Carole Dixon, Chief Executive of the Education Futures Trust, for an update on the local educational landscape.

Overview and scrutiny members had also submitted a response to the public consultation on the future arrangements for St Leonards Crown Post Office.

Following the update on higher education, members may wish to consider incorporating a piece of work on further education provision into their programme.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 7.30 pm)