

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES
21 FEBRUARY 2013**

Present: Councillors Davies (as the duly appointed substitute for Councillor Clark), Howard, Martin, Pragnell, Sabetian, Sinden, and Webb (in the Chair)

Lead Members in attendance: Councillors Birch and Kramer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Clark

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Howard	17	Personal – Member of Unison
Webb	17	Personal – Member of East Sussex County Council and Sussex Police and Crime Panel

16. MINUTES

Members deferred approving the Minutes of the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Budget meeting on 31st January 2013 until their Annual Joint meeting in June.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2012 be approved as a true record.

17. QUARTER THREE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Policy and Partnerships Officer presented a report to advise Members of the performance against the 2012/13 targets and performance indicators in Part II of the Corporate Plan and to provide a summary of financial information. Member's views were sought to enable the Committee to undertake its performance management function.

Members noted the provision of £247,000 for clawback from Municipal Mutual Insurance Ltd (MMI). Under a Scheme of Arrangement, (triggered in November 2012) the Council may be required to repay part of all claims which

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES 21 FEBRUARY 2013

MMI has settled on its behalf since 1992. A provision is being considered within the 2012/13 accounts to allow for clawbacks of up to 50% of the settlements paid. The council's external auditors are aware of the level of provision that is being proposed and have confirmed that it was in line with what other authorities were considering. A final decision on the level of provision will be determined as part of the final accounts closedown process.

The Committee acknowledged the £154,000 savings on the recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments and noted the Council's ongoing efforts to combat fraud. Members requested that the Head of Finance circulate details of the causes of these overpayments and the percentage of overpayments being recovered (to be circulated by email).

Members highlighted that the wider changes of welfare reform were likely to have a significant impact on the town. The Committee unanimously agreed that a Scrutiny Review of the Welfare Changes should be included in the Future Work Programme Ideas, for consideration at the Annual Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in June. Members noted that, if the review is taken up as part of the 2013/14 Work Programme, it could examine the impact of the welfare changes on residents, the Council and the local economy. The review could also draw on the findings of a report by Nick Hopkins on the welfare changes, which the Council had commissioned as part of its anti poverty strategy, and an earlier Scrutiny Review of the Payment of Housing Benefits.

Further to an action point raised at the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Services, Councillor Kramer updated the committee on her meeting with the Head of Corporate Services and the Executive Manager of People and Organisational Development regarding an employee pay freeze. Councillor Kramer advised that Hastings Borough Council remained part of a national scheme for pay negotiations, and that discussions regarding a possible pay increase of 1% for the 2013/14 financial year were still ongoing.

Consideration was given to the arrangements for Budget Council; Members noted that there was scope to include the business of this meeting within the regular schedule of Council meetings. The Committee also suggested a review of the items which are forwarded to Council for consideration. Members were mindful that any proposed changes must still allow for all Member participation in the decision making process. The Committee referred these suggestions to the Working Arrangements Group for consideration.

Under the Council's Corporate Equalities objectives, Members welcomed the introduction of an asylum group, to discuss key issues affecting asylum seekers living in the town. Members noted that the group brought together a large number of relevant partners and key stakeholders, including the Council's Head of Housing and Councillor Forward, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services. Members requested an update on this

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES 21 FEBRUARY 2013

group, from the Head of Housing and Councillor Forward, be included in a future edition of the Members Bulletin.

The Committee acknowledged the ongoing budget setting process and efforts to transform the Council to a leaner, more resilient organisation and thanked those involved for their efforts.

RESOLVED that

- 1. the Committee's comments on Quarter 3 performance be addressed by the relevant Lead Member(s) with appropriate action and report back, and;**
- 2. staff in the Corporate Resources Directorate be thanked for their hard work and achievements in this quarter**

18. FINAL REPORT ON THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Councillor Webb presented the final report on the Scrutiny Review of Partnership Working. The review acknowledged the increasing importance of partnership working, given the current economic climate, and focused on how to improve understanding of local partnership working and how best to hold local partners to account. Members of the review team had refined this methodology to analyse the Quality Bus Partnership and Economic Partnerships, including SeaChange, in more detail. Councillor Webb underscored that meetings with representatives from these partnerships had been particularly useful as part of the evidence gathering for this review. The review had also drawn on the findings of an earlier Scrutiny Review of Social Return on Investment (SROI) to enable Members to scrutinise the outcomes of partnership working effectively.

The Committee welcomed the report, in particular the recommendations to increase communication between key partners and the Council. Members highlighted that the review had served to raise awareness of the positive outcomes of partnership working in the town. Going forward, the Committee noted that the methodology which the review team had applied to the case studies in this review could be applied to other partners.

Members thanked all those involved in the review for their efforts.

RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Review Team are forwarded to the 2nd April Cabinet for consideration.

19. SUGGESTIONS FOR FINANCIAL ECONOMIES AND NEW SOURCES OF INCOME

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES
21 FEBRUARY 2013**

The Policy and Partnerships Officer presented this item and sought Members comments and suggestions.

20. FORWARD PLAN FEBRUARY TO MAY 2013

The Policy and Partnerships Officer delivered this report and asked Members to highlight any items for more detailed consideration at quarterly committee meetings.

21. WORK PROGRAMME 2012 – 13 QUARTER THREE UPDATE

The Policy and Partnerships Officer presented a report to update Members on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2012-13 which had been agreed at the Annual Meeting on 18 June.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.15pm)