

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES
14 FEBRUARY 2013**

Present: Councillors Cartwright (in the Chair), Davies, Rogers,
Turner, Poole and Wilson

Lead Members in attendance: Councillors Birch, Chowney,
Forward, Kramer, Scott and Westley

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Waite.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Chowney	19	Personal – HBRL Director and Seachange Director

18. MINUTES

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2012 be approved as a true record.

19. 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 provide a summary of financial information.

Members requested further information on the provision of £100,000 for legal claims in Land Charges, which the Director of Regeneration would circulate to the committee by email.

Consideration was given to the potential effects of an employee pay freeze. Councillor Kramer advised that Hastings Borough Council remained part of a national scheme for pay negotiations; however, it was her intention to meet with the Head of Corporate Services and the Executive Manager of People

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of land had been exceeded, with a total of 46 projects completed. The committee had previously identified a number of long term empty properties in the Gillsmans Hill area, which were in a poor state of repair. It had been noted that some of these properties were in the possession of East Sussex County Council. Members requested a written report on these properties, and any enforcement action that the Council may be able to take, to be considered at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Services. The Head of Housing and Planning Services also agreed to write to the Chief Executive of East Sussex County Council regarding these properties.

Members were also advised of an upcoming event in March to further strengthen the relationship between the Council and local landlords. The committee noted that this was an important step, given the significant rise in homelessness presentation and applications as a result of increased demand for assistance.

The Committee considered the target for the Ore Valley development and discussion took place regarding ongoing efforts to ensure adequate provision of play space in the area.

The committee was advised that, since the government grant had been finalised, the revised budget proposals included plans to allocate an additional £25,000 to the marketing and tourism budget. The additional funds would help to support Hastings' different festivals and events. Members welcomed these proposals and underscored that the programme of events played a key role in supporting the local economy and attracting visitors to the town.

Members considered the ongoing use of Social Media as part of the Council's marketing strategy. The committee acknowledged that Twitter could be a useful tool to communicate urgent information. Discussion took place regarding efforts to ensure that enquiries received via Twitter are responded to promptly. The Head of Marketing and Communications advised that a 24/7 PR facility was in place to deal with emergency enquiries; however, day to day enquiries were dealt with during office hours. Members requested that a written description of the current Twitter service and the associated costs be forwarded to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Services.

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

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**20. FINAL REPORT ON THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HASTINGS
CASTLE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS**

Councillor Rogers presented a report to advise Members of the work of the review team set up to consider future management operations for Hastings Castle. The review acknowledged that the redrafted bid for Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) may not be successful and intended to produce a range of options that were both dependent and independent of HLF funding.

The review had included a site visit to the Castle and discussions with the existing contractor regarding ways to optimise visitor numbers. This included the introduction of a group attractions ticket covering the Blue Reef Aquarium, Smugglers Adventure, Hastings Castle and West Hill Lift.

Councillor Rogers thanked all those who had contributed to the review and noted the recommendation to re-convene the review team in October 2013 to review the 2013 season.

The Committee added an additional recommendation to refer the review team's findings to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. That the Heritage Lottery Fund bid be deferred until autumn 2013**
- 2. A group attractions ticket covering the Blue Reef Aquarium, Smugglers Adventure, Hastings Castle and the West Hill Lift be trialled for the 2013 summer season**
- 3. Should the Heritage Lottery Fund bid be unsuccessful, the Council reviews the long term options for operating the castle with a partner organisation, with the intention of delivering significant improvements to the site in time for the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings in October 2016**
- 4. The review team re-convene in October 2013 to review the 2013 season and the success of the combined attractions ticket**
- 5. The review team's findings and recommendations be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 4 March 2013.**

**21. SUGGESTIONS FOR FINANCIAL ECONOMIES AND NEW
SOURCES OF INCOME**

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

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22. FORWARD PLAN FEBRUARY TO MAY 2013

The Policy and Partnerships Officer submitted the Forward Plan from February to May 2013. Members were invited to highlight any areas for detailed consideration.

The Committee highlighted the Proposed Parking and Management Board which would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 4 March 2013. The proposed Management Board is intended to allow for Hastings Borough Council input into on-street parking management after this function is transferred to East Sussex County Council on 1 April 2013. Members were advised that similar schemes had been adopted by Eastbourne and Lewes. Alongside local Councillors, the board usually includes local business representatives and residents.

Members requested that Cabinet's discussion on this matter be reported back to the relevant Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Steering Group would also need to consider how the arrangements for on-street parking management can be effectively scrutinised after this function has been transferred to East Sussex County Council.

23. WORK PROGRAMME 2012-13 QUARTER THREE UPADATE

The Policy and Partnerships Officer delivered 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 7.40pm)