

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES  
5 SEPTEMBER 2013**

Present: Councillors Poole (in the Chair), Cooke, Rogers, Scott and Webb (as the duly appointed substitute for Councillor Davies)

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Davies, Gurney and Turner

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**10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Rogers	12	Personal – Trustee of St Mary in the Castle

**11. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2013 and minutes of the Annual Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees held on 13 June 2013 be approved as a true record.**

**12. QUARTER ONE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

The Policy and Partnerships Officer presented a report to advise Members of performance against the 2013/14 targets and performance indicators in Part II of the Corporate Plan. The report also provided a summary of financial information.

Members noted the delay in adoption of a Development Management Plan (DMP). Since the government revoked the South East Plan, the council had been in the process of adopting a revised Planning Strategy and DMP. A revised DMP can not be adopted until the Planning Strategy was in place, as a result of the time delay and the need to respond to certain representations made through the consultation, a further consultation would be undertaken on the DMP.

The committee acknowledged the council's long standing commitment to community cohesion. The report advised that a refreshed Community Cohesion Framework would be considered by the Local Strategic Partnership

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES 5 SEPTEMBER 2013**

in October, efforts had been made to ensure the framework was integrated into all the council's policies and strategies. Discussion also took place regarding the work of the Disability Forum; Councillor Forward explained that there would be a national day of action later in the year, which aimed to correct the misuse of blue badges for disabled parking.

Members noted that the council continued to take a zero tolerance approach to long term empty properties. The council had used its compulsory purchase order powers to bring vacant properties back into use. Councillor Birch reiterated that budgetary considerations would not prevent the council from using its compulsory purchase order powers, as the process incurred few financial liabilities to the organisation. The work to bring empty properties back into use was complimented by the council's grotbusters scheme, which had become a high profile initiative in the town.

Consideration was given to the impact of the welfare changes on housing targets and homelessness prevention. The Head of Housing and Planning Services advised that the data included in the report was compiled from a number of sources, including smaller voluntary organisations. It was acknowledged that organisations in the voluntary sector often had fewer resources and were experiencing a significant increase in demand for their services; which would be taken into consideration when collating the data.

The committee were advised that a meeting of the Community Alcohol Partnership was due to be held in September. Members welcomed this progress and underscored that the work of this partnership must be adequately publicised.

The Head of Environmental Services gave an update on efforts to raise awareness amongst residents of the improvements to cleansing and recycling, which had been planned under the new waste and cleansing contract with KIER, and will be implemented in the autumn. The committee requested that the Head of Environmental Services circulate the data for the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting to Members by email.

Members noted that the report contained details of a number of very positive achievements in this quarter.

In particular, Members highlighted the success of a national recycling week, which took place in mid June. The Recycling Officer had taken recycling materials to several local shopping areas and supermarkets, to raise awareness of recycling issues amongst residents. The Recycling Officer had also introduced a number of initiatives to promote recycling, especially in areas where there had previously been a low take up.

Members also welcomed the success of the Food and Safety Enforcement team. Councillor Kramer said she had been impressed by the support the team offered to new businesses, providing high quality advice on how to

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES 5 SEPTEMBER 2013

comply with hygiene and safety laws. Where necessary, the team also take robust action when premises fail to meet the food safety laws.

The committee commended all those involved in the response to the recent fire at Marlborough House in Warrior Square. After the building had been evacuated, officers assisted over 30 very vulnerable tenants in finding temporary accommodation. Members noted that officers continued to provide support after the incident, including assisting with the relocation of a doctors surgery from Marlborough House.

The Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure and her team were thanked by Members for their efforts to retain the green flag standard at Alexandra Park, Hastings Country Park and St Leonards Gardens.

Members noted that refurbishment works, as part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative, to the congregational church in Central St Leonards were due for completion in July 2014 and highlighted that this was an important step in the regeneration of the area.

The committee passed their congratulations to the "Us Girls" programme, who had recently received a national award.

Members were pleased to note that the ownership of Hastings Pier had now passed to the Hastings Pier Charity, following the council's successful completion of a compulsory purchase order process. Members thanked all those involved in the process to date. It was noted that the restoration of the pier was in keeping with the council's wider plans for the regeneration of the seafront. The council would continue to monitor and support the charity in its efforts to refurbish the structure.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- 1. the committee's comments on Quarter One performance be addressed by the relevant Lead Member(s) with appropriate action and report back, and;**
- 2. staff in the Regeneration and Environmental Services Directorates be thanked for their hard work and achievements in this quarter.**

### **13. WHITE ROCK THEATRE**

The Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure presented a report which summarised the operation of the White Rock Theatre. Members of the committee had requested an update on the contractual arrangements for the management of the theatre and details of efforts to increase attendance.

The report noted that the contract had delivered savings on the running cost of the theatre, compared to operating the venue in-house. Whilst the contract had been in place, the number of performances had been reduced as the

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR SERVICES  
5 SEPTEMBER 2013**

theatre had sought to attract more popular acts; this has resulted in increased attendance figures. The building had also been the subject of some internal improvements and external redecoration.

It was important that the theatre remained in use, especially as it held a prominent location on the seafront.

Members reiterated the importance of community involvement in the theatre. The committee requested further information on how audience figures compared to other similar theatres in seaside towns. The Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure also agreed to circulate additional examples of Theatre Director's reports.

The committee thanked the Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure for her comprehensive report.

**RESOLVED that:**

1. the committee considered the report.

**14. FORWARD PLAN SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2013 AND  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14  
QUARTER ONE UPDATE**

The Policy and Partnerships Officer introduced this item. He advised that Members had commenced two of the three reviews they had selected at the Annual Joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in June. The third review was due to begin later in the autumn.

Member's views were sought on items contained within the Forward Plan, which would be considered by Cabinet over the coming months.

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

The Policy and Partnerships Officer sought member's suggestions for financial economies and new sources of income.

Councillor Cooke suggested reviewing the use of polystyrene cups in the Town Hall meeting rooms, as he believed this may be a more expensive option than crockery cups.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.26pm)