

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present: Councillors Webb (Chair), Howard, Bacon, Batsford, Cooke, Dowling, Rankin, Turner, Wincott and Atkins (as the duly appointed substitute from Councillor Patmore)

Apologies for absence were noted for Councillor Charman, Patmore and Poole.

Apologies for lateness were noted from Councillor Dowling.

## 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared an interest in the minutes:

| Councillor | Minute No.                                                 | Interest                                                              |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rankin     | 4 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Quarter 1 2016/17 | Personal – he owns and manages property in the town                   |
| Forward    | 4 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Quarter 1 2016/17 | Prejudicial – she has leased a property to the social lettings agency |
| Davies     | 4 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Quarter 1 2016/17 | Personal – he is member of the National Union of Teachers             |

## 2. MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 JUNE 2016 AND THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 JULY 2016

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 June 2016 and the Annual Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 July 2016 be approved as a correct

## 3. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 2016/17

The Director of Corporate Services and Governance presented a report which advised members of performance against the 2016/17 targets and performance indicators in the corporate plan for quarter 1. She noted that the format of the performance monitoring item had been reviewed over recent months, the feedback of the committee on potential areas to improve reporting.

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It was noted that the quarter 1 target to increase the percentage of council tax collected in year had not been met, however, it was anticipated that performance could be recovered later and the year-end target of a 96.3% collection rate remained achievable. The Director of Corporate Services and Governance added that the committee would need to consider the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit to Hastings, scheduled to take place in December 2016, later in the year.

The Director of Corporate Services and Governance advised that staff in the People, Customer and Business Support team continued to work closely with service managers within the council to reduce the proportion of working days / shifts lost due to sickness absence. Members were mindful that, as the size of the council's workforce had reduce over time, any period of long-term sickness absence had a more significant effect on capacity within the organisation.

The committee acknowledged additional tasks undertaken by the Electoral Services team during quarter 1, successfully co-ordinating the Local Government Elections, Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and a Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. It was noted that facilitating the elections involved staff from across the organisation.

The Director of Operational Services gave an update on performance in quarter 1. He advised the committee that the quarter 1 target to reduce the rate of missed waste and recycling collections had not been met. Particular emphasis would be given to reducing the number of repeatedly missed collections. However, the quarter 1 target for recycling and street cleansing had been achieved. The committee expressed some concern at the growth of weeds around the town, and requested that the contractor consider re-treating certain areas. It was suggested that the committee receive a separate briefing on waste and street cleansing.

The newly appointed Planning Services Manager had undertaken a review of the council's Planning Service. The review had recommended the recruitment of additional Planning Officers to join the team, and this was now being progressed. The new officers would create additional capacity within the team and support further improvements in performance.

The committee was advised that the selective licensing scheme had exceeded its quarter 1 target, receiving 3,000 new applications against a target of 2,000. The fees for the scheme had been charged at a reduced rate for landlords who signed up in the first six months of the scheme. The fee structure for the scheme would now be reviewed and enforcement action taken against landlords who had failed to sign up to the scheme. It was anticipated that the additional income generated from the scheme would offset the cost of administering enforcement action. The council continued to engage proactively with landlords in the private rented sector, through regular meetings of the landlord's forum.

The Director of Operational Services also updated the committee on the impact of the recent decision to leave the European Union on funding streams to the town. He explained that high levels of uncertainty remained as negotiations to leave the European Union were still at an early stage. The government had indicated that funding for European Structural Investment Framework (ESIF) projects that had

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previously been approved and signed would be guaranteed, this included CAN and SHINE. The council continued to pursue stage 2 bids for funding through FLAG and CLLD.

Consideration was given to the impact of the referendum decision on community cohesion. Both Hastings Voluntary Action Hate Crime Service and the Police had reported a limited increase in reported hate crime following the referendum. The Police have confirmed that they will take robust action to deal with any incidents of hate crime. The council and its partners would continue to monitor community cohesion issues and any potential future tensions as the negotiations with the European Union continued. The Hastings Youth Council had also been monitoring community cohesion issues amongst young people following the referendum decision, and the council would continue to support them in this. The Lead Member for Housing, Communications and Equalities agreed to ask for an update from East Sussex County Council as to what advice had been provided to local schools on supporting community cohesion. Members were keen that the image of Hastings as a welcoming and inclusive town should be maintained and developed.

Discussion took place regarding an ongoing project to develop a new visitor centre at Hastings Country Park. The council and its partner, Groundwork, continued to pursue funding opportunities to support the project through Interreg. In the meantime, a commitment remained to improving visitor facilities at the country park.

### **RESOLVED 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

### **4. UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

The Transformation Manager presented an update on the council's organisational transformation programme. He set out a number of key achievements over the past year, including the refurbishment of Aquila House, the beta launch of My Hastings and a new look and feel for the council's website and the adoption of the Customer First Strategy. He noted that through these activities a number of staff had gained additional skills, which may provide income generation opportunities in the future. Indeed, a key aspect of the transformation programme had been to support improvements to working practices across the organisation, and this would continue over the months to come.

The Transformation Manager noted that an ambitious programme of activities remained over the months to come, including a programme of service reviews, the implementation of the Customer First Strategy and a move towards the continuous improvement phase of the programme. The recommendations of the overview and

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scrutiny review of digital inclusion, which had been undertaken as part of the 2015/16 work programme, would also be implemented as part of the refinement of the website and the promotion of online services.

Overview and Scrutiny members would continue to play a key role in encouraging the take up of My Hastings and providing constructive feedback on transformation activities through their performance monitoring role.

The committee welcomed the updated and thanked the Transformation Manager and his team for their efforts.

### 5. UPDATE ON THE 2016/17 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager presented an update on the key activities members had identified for quarter 1 as part of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 7.43 pm)