

Briefing Note



Subject: **Briefing by Director of Operational Services**

Submitted to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2016

Prepared by: Simon Hubbard, Director of Operational Services

Performance Issues

1. Planning Performance

Planning performance saw a distinct improvement in Quarter 2.

- a. 100% of major applications in the quarter were met. The average for the first 2 quarters is 71% against an average annual target of 90%. Minor applications continue to improve with 82% of applications dealt with in 8 weeks against a target of 85%. The first quarter was 67% bringing the overall annual rate for the two quarters to 76%.
- b. Householder performance met the target of 65% in the quarter and is at 62% against the overall target for the first two quarters

The quarter 2 performance was a significant improvement from Q1 and mainly attributed to the additional staff within the team, namely the appointment of one additional temporary planner. The Senior Planning Officer has been appointed internally but will not start work until a replacement is found for her post, The Senior Officer post will replace the contracted Planning Officer, who will leave in end of November 2016. Therefore we are currently at staffing levels suggested within the Planning Review. Once the contracted Planning Officer leaves, there will be a short period of vacancy to back fill the existing post. Interviews are being held today for the back fill post.

As has been previously outlined the performance targets for next year will need to be reviewed in line with final targets established by government following the new Housing & Planning Act.

2. Waste Contract

Members will now be fully aware of the intention for the Waste Partnership to end the contact Kier in March 2019. However, it will not be confirmed if this will happen until each of the Partnership's Full Council meeting has ratified the

report. Rother Council is the final authority to make a decision, which will not be finalised until December 12th. This Council has now agreed this and attention will focus on the town issues of making the contract work for its remaining life and the shape of the provision of this service in the future. On this latter matter Eunomia Research & Consulting have been engaged by the Partnership to advise the Waste Directors and members can expect to hear more about this in the New Year. This will be pressing business as the timescales and the views of existing partners may differ about the best way forward. The Partnership has agreed to engage consultants to examine the benefits and risks from tendering an in house arrangement or a Council owned company and aims to have this done by Christmas.

3. Missed Bins P.I.

Last quarter I reported that missed bin performance was still higher than the target of 130/100,000 collections. This stimulated discussion with Members at Performance Review and at Overview and Scrutiny. Unfortunately I have now been advised that there was a typing error in the report. We reported 176/100,000 collections, but in fact it was worse being 210.

Throughout quarter 2 we have been working closely with Kier and their performance has improved. It has improved from 210 in Q1 to 180 in Q2. We are continuing to highlight our concerns to Kier and expect further improvement. I also understand that performance in relation to multiple missed collections, and missed collections for residents who receive an assisted collection for health reasons, have improved, which is very encouraging.

4. Long Term Strategy for significant improvements to Hastings Castle developed and agreed

Options are still being explored as to how best to proceed. Given its significance and importance, but with two failed Heritage Lottery Fund ('HLF') bids, it is vital that we get this right. We are keen to build on the 'invasion, identity and migration' themes identified by the University of Brighton in their work on the castle, either on or off the castle site.

One possibility is for Blue Reef, the current operator, to invest in the castle site in return for a much longer tenancy/operating agreement, but this is taking much longer than expected to progress. If this can be achieved, we are hoping to progress the wider interpretation of the castle, and the significance of the Norman invasion, off-site. If we cannot get agreement, we are likely to focus what resources we have, and can draw down from HLF, on the castle site itself, but this is likely to be a more modest project.

5. Professional Development within Environmental Health Team

In April 2015 we restructured our environmental health service into a more generic team. We reduced the number of managers by amalgamating 3 small teams into a single generic team under the management of Ian Wheeler, who became our new Environmental Health Manager. By June 2015 Ian had successfully recruited 3 new officers to fill long standing Environmental Health

Officer (EHO) vacancies. However, 2 of the 3 new staff were relatively inexperienced and Ian developed and managed a training programme for them, the aim being to help them to become fully qualified EHOs as quickly as possible.

The more fully qualified EHOs we have in Ian's team, the more flexible and resilient the team will be. However, it is notoriously difficult for environmental health graduates to satisfy the various requirements of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, which include demonstrating wide ranging practical experience evidenced through a log book, professional exams, etc. The training programme Ian developed for these new staff and their hard work is bearing fruit, and one of them (Scott Thirkettle) has recently qualified, whilst Renu Sherchan is on the verge of qualification. Both have already taken successful prosecutions in the local Magistrates Court in relation to noise nuisance offences, and are proving to be very useful members of the team. Ian and his staff are to be congratulated on the way they have supported our new inexperienced staff, and helped them with their professional development.

6. External Funding

Recent funding application successes are as follows:

- Connecting Hastings and Rother Together Community Led-Local Development (CHART-CLLD) – we have been notified of in principle approval of the Local Development Strategy. However, final approval is subject to satisfactory resolution of 2 queries from the managing authorities.
- Hastings Fisheries Local Action Group (HFLAG) – Funding is confirmed subject to satisfactory resolution of minor relative queries.

7. Housing – Syrian Refugees

In response to the Government's commitment to assist with the resettlement of 20,000 Syrian refugees, the Council has successfully resettled its first family in Hastings. This is part of the HBC commitment to resettle up to 100 refugees over the next five years. The family were collected from Gatwick airport and everything went smoothly and without incident.

8. 950th Anniversary

The 950th anniversary celebrations in October went very well, despite the appalling weather on bonfire night! Our celebrations attracted national publicity, and provided an undoubted boost to the town's visitor economy; every hotel and guest house in Hastings was reported as being full over the anniversary weekend, visitors being accommodated in Eastbourne and Tunbridge Wells.

9. White Rock Area

The White Rock area master planning work progressed well this quarter, with White Arkitekter having been appointed to lead on the work in July. Their work is now well underway, with a stakeholder workshop taking place on 23rd November.
