

Briefing Note

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

Submitted to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **9 February 2017**

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For Q3 I have identified both performance issues and positive news from each of the 3 service groups in the Directorate. I am pleased to be able to report that progress has been made to address both planning and waste collection performance in particular and would like to thank the planning and waste teams for their work – often in challenging circumstances. However, I hope members will note that colleagues are providing services effectively and well across the Council as well as supporting the successful delivery of our transformation programme.

Regeneration & Culture

Performance Issues

1. Hastings Museum

Hastings Museum has attracted 34,401 visitors so far, which is marginally less than the 35,000 target for the first three quarters of the year (a 1.7% variance). However, the number of theatre-goers to the White Rock Theatre exceeded the 9 month target by 10.45%, and the number of people using the Council's leisure centres exceeded the 9 month target by 2.3%.

2. Seafront Projects

Lack of staff capacity (exacerbated by ill health absence), as well as contractor delays have resulted in slippages to some projects. The most notable of these are planned improvements to Bottle Alley and the improvements to the Promenade near White Rock Baths (which are now complete). Phase 1 of the major works to mitigate flood risk which involved the construction and reinforcing of groynes has been successfully completed. Improvements to some of the Castle signage and visitor facilities have also been completed.

3. White Rock Area Action Plan

A wide range of representatives from community groups, organisations and other stakeholders attended a workshop held before Christmas to consider current and future opportunities for the White Rock Area. The outcome of this successful workshop will help inform plans that will be drawn up to improve the area as a destination for a variety of cultural, recreational and other activity. Discussions with ESCC transport colleagues have identified the desirability of some detailed analysis and modelling of potential changes/improvements to the road network, in order to identify preferred options for inclusion in the Area Action

Plan consultation document for the Town Centre and White Rock area. This will take some time, and warrants a slippage in the current proposed Qtr 4 timeframe for preparation of this document.

Updates

4. External Funding

The Council's submissions under the complex and multi-stage approval processes for a second Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) programme and Community Led Local Development (CLLD) continue to be successful, and the new FLAG programme is due to be launched in the final quarter of this year. Final approval of the CLLD programme is anticipated in early 2017-18.

5. BIDs

The ballot for the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) in Hastings Town Centre was successful, and the Council will be supporting the establishment of a new BID organisation over the coming months. This is a very positive development. The process was supported by staff from a number of teams including finance, electoral services and regeneration.

6. 950th Anniversary and ROOT 1066

The 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, and associated ROOT1066 programme, generated very considerable local, regional, national and international publicity for the town. A lot of staff were involved in these events, and I would like to acknowledge the contribution they made to their undoubtedly success as well as the input of many partners in Hastings, Bexhill and Battle.

Environment & Place

Performance Issues

7. Waste Contract

Earlier in the year Members raised concerns about poor waste contract performance particularly missed refuse and recycling collections. The Waste and Streetscene Manager has been working with Kier to improve this performance, and I am pleased to be able to report that the cumulative average for quarters one to three inclusive was 133/100,000 collections, which is very close to the target of no more than 130/100,000.

As requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee we also arranged a special meeting for all Members to brief them on the operation of the waste contract in relation to missed collections, including the application of the rectification and default provisions of the contract.

Housing & Built Environment

Performance Issues

8. Planning Performance

Planning performance saw a further improvement in Quarter 3 with performance returning to target levels. All target indicators were met or exceeded in Quarter 3 going some way to recovering the year-end target position including that for

performance on major applications which were affected by a performance shortfall in Q1. As outlined before it is unlikely that cumulative targets for the year will achieve annual performance. However, it does seem that the team led by Eleanor Evans have moved to first stabilise and then improve performance.

The full staffing complement should be in place by Q4 and is anticipated therefore that performance in the later part of 2016/217 will be consolidated in 2017/2018

Updates

9. Additional Licensing Scheme

The existing additional licensing scheme ended in September. A stock condition survey has also been carried out and a final report is anticipated shortly. The survey will form part of an exit review of the last scheme and help inform proposals for any replacement additional scheme to be considered by Cabinet early in 2017/18

10. Selective Licensing

Extremely good progress has been made with the implementation of the selective licensing scheme. In excess of 4000 license application have been received to date and the number of private sector dwellings brought into line with the statutory standard has already exceeded the annual target.

As reported previously the early bird discount offered at the start of the scheme will require the 5 Year Business Plan to be adjusted over the life of the project. Once the backlog of applications has been cleared officers will be redoubling their efforts to pursue enforcement against the owner's properties that remain unlicensed, to ensure that all properties are licensed and that the project is self-funded over the life of the scheme

11. Housing Company

Cabinet approval was given in principle for the establishment of a Local authority owned housing company in December. Officers will be developing a business plan for the first acquisitions in 2017/2189.

Income Generation

We welcome Marcus Lawler as our new Income Generation Manager who has worked in this type of role at Maidstone Council.

Marcus is getting to know his way around the Council but will bring forward an income generation strategy and action plan. This will be discussed at the Income Generation Board and then Cabinet in the near future. Additionally we have had the early support of the LGA efficiency advisor Robin Porter who is a Director of Luton Council. Robin will review our progress and structure with an outside eye to help us make sure we are clear and focused in how we balance risk and opportunity going forward. The adoption of more commercial ways of thinking will change us as much as the current transformation process is doing and both need to be viewed as essential for the Council to remain effective and relevant.

Simon Hubbard