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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30 NOVEMBER 2016

Present: Councillors Webb (Chair), Howard, Bacon, Batsford, Charman, Cooke, Rankin, Turner, Cartwright, Chowney, Davies, Forward and Atkins

Apologies for absence were noted for Councillor Dowling, Wincott and Poole

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared an interest at the meeting:

Councillor	Minute Number	Interest
Forward	9 – Quarter 2 2016/17 Performance and Financial Monitoring	Personal – she leases a property to the social lettings agency, which is within the selective licensing area.
Rankin	9 – Quarter 2 2016/17 Performance and Financial Monitoring	Personal – he owns a property within the selective licensing area
Chowney	9 – Quarter 2 2016/17 Performance and Financial Monitoring	Personal – he owns a property within the selective licensing area

8. MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 September 2016 be approved as correct record

9. QUARTER 2 2016/17 PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Director of Corporate Services and Governance presented a report which advised members of the performance against the 2016/17 targets and performance indicators in the corporate plan for quarter 2. The report also updated on other key areas of activity over the last quarter and provided a summary of financial information.

The Director of Corporate Services and Governance advised that the quarter 2 target to increase the percentage of council tax and non-domestic rates collected in year had not been met. She explained that this was partly because more customers were now choosing to pay over 12 months rather than 10 months. The profiles for each quarter would be revised for next year.

Discussion took place regarding the implementation of welfare reforms locally, including the benefits cap and the roll out of Universal Credit, which was due to take place on 14 December 2016. The Director of Corporate Services and Governance

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said that the council had been working closely with people affected by the benefits cap to help them review their spending habits. Members noted that there had been delays in payments of up to eight weeks for claimants when they move onto Universal Credit in other areas, and this would need to be monitored closely in Hastings. Because of the additional workload for the Revenues and Benefits team in implementing the welfare reforms, projects to develop online landlord portal and bailiff portal had been delayed.

The committee were advised that the Assistant Director, Financial Services and Revenues, continued to monitor progress with the internal audit. Capacity within the Internal Audit, Investigation and Procurement service had been affected by the long term sickness of a member of the team, however, additional resources may be provided to ensure the internal audit was completed on time.

At their quarter 1 meeting, the committee had received a detailed update on the council's ongoing organisational transformation programme. A further update was planned for later in the year on the channel shift from traditional telephone and face to face interactions as an increasing number of council services were made available online.

Following an earlier boundary review, the Electoral Services team were carrying out a review of polling places in the Borough. The team were also administering the annual canvass period ahead of the publication of a revised Register of Electors in December. The Director of Corporate Services and Governance commented that, given the lack of funding to support promotional activities during annual canvass, members would need to play a role in highlighting the importance of voter registration to their residents.

The Director of Corporate Services and Governance agreed to circulate additional information regarding the cost of work to the Town Hall to the committee.

Consideration was given to the council's selective licensing scheme. The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment, advised that take up of the early bird offer, which offered reduced rates to landlords who registered their properties in the first year of the scheme, had been higher than expected. The selective licensing team was now being restructured to enable them to pursue the required enforcement activities against properties which were not yet part of the scheme. Members were advised that learning from the exit review of the additional Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing scheme and the findings of a private sector house condition survey would help to inform the development of the scheme. The committee was mindful that rents in both the private and social sector had increased.

The committee welcomed improvements in performance across the Planning Services team. The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment, acknowledged the challenges that had been experienced in recruiting new members of the team. He added that the additional staff would help to ensure the improvements in performance could be sustained into the future.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Place, noted a correction to the reported figure in quarter 1 for missed bin collections. He commented that the council's Waste

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and Recycling team held weekly meetings with the contractor, and this was having a positive effect in reducing the number of missed collections. The contractor had also re-organised their staffing and supervisory arrangements to ensure these improvements continued. Members had previously considered a report on the longer term contractual arrangements for the waste and street cleansing service.

The committee welcomed an update that the first Syrian refugee family had been resettled in Hastings. It was noted that the council had played a key role in delivering a government- funded scheme on behalf of all the authorities in East Sussex. Members highlighted the importance of ensuring sufficient access to appropriate support networks to ensure the families could be fully integrated into the local community.

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Culture, agreed to circulate the latest performance update on the work of the Locate East Sussex initiative. The committee also recommended developing the profile of Hastings as a place for new businesses to invest on the Famously Hastings website.

Members requested an updated from the Assistant Director, Regeneration and Culture, on the playground facilities refurbishment at Hare Way, which formed part of a broader piece of work arising from the new play facilities strategy and action plan.

The committee noted 44 units of accommodation had been secured by the Social lettings Agency by the end of quarter 2, against a target of 35 leases. The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment, advised that no additional leases would be accepted by the scheme until the government had clarified the funding position in respect of this work.

Members thanked all those who had been involved in supporting events to mark the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings. The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Culture, noted that a strong strategic partnership, the Cultural Leaders Group, had been formed to co-ordinate these activities and efforts would be made to develop this approach further. The group would also carry out monitoring of feedback from the events.

Discussion took place regarding the longer term plans for the regeneration of the White Rock area. Councillor Chowney advised that a stakeholder meeting had taken place with a variety of organisations from the private and voluntary sector, about potential ways to develop the site. The feedback from the meeting had been broadly supportive of an approach which combined commercial, leisure and residential uses for the site, whilst maintaining areas of open space.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The committees comments on quarter 2 performance be addressed with appropriate action and report back to the committee where necessary, 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.

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10. BRIEFING FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO REVIEW THE COUNCIL'S NEW WEBSITE

The Corporate and Democratic Services Officer updated the committee on the work of a task and finish group of overview and scrutiny members who had been reviewing the council's new website.

At their annual meeting in July, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had noted that a key aspect of the council's organisational transformation programme was to make a number of council services available online. The Customer First Communications Champion and his team had work with services across the council to review the content and overhaul the layout of the website.

The members of the task and finish group were Councillors Howard, Rankin and Dowling. The group had tested the customer journey on the new website carrying out a range of transactions. The group's recommendations had then been followed up by the Customer First Communications Champion and his team. Members requested further information about the monitoring of the new website that would be undertaken over the coming months.

The committee welcomed the work of the task and finish group. It was noted that the use of practical exercises could have applications to other overview and scrutiny work.

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

The Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager updated the committee on progress on the key work programme activities they had agreed at their annual meeting. He noted that a number of the updates they requested had now been scheduled.

Councillors Howard, Webb, Cooke and Rankin agreed to form a review team to consider the effectiveness of the council's new structure for overview and scrutiny.

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Members requested an updated on the implementation of the recommendations of an earlier review of educational attainment in the town.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 7.53 pm)

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