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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 FEBRUARY 2019

Present: Councillors Webb (Chair), Davies (Vice-Chair), Barnett, Batley, Cox, Evans, K Beaney, Foster, Rankin and Turner.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received for Councillor Charman.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Minute	Interest
Webb	45.	Personal – Member of East Sussex County Council

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28TH NOVEMBER 2018

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2018 be approved by the Chair as a true record.

4. Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Corporate Services and Governance submitted a report on the performance of the third quarter.

The council's 2018/19 corporate plan is divided into 3 areas; Inclusion, Growth and Futureproof. The report is divided into these 3 sections and identifies activity and progress during the quarter across the areas.

The Assistant Director, Financial Services & Revenues gave an overview of the financial monitoring report. There are some late changes due to be published tomorrow. The Council has just received settlements from the Bexhill link road compensation.

Councillor Webb stepped out of the Council Chamber at 6.07pm and Councillor Davies took over as Chair of the meeting.

The discussion moved on to the inclusion section of the report.

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As of the end of June Biffa will take over the waste collection contract and the Council will take street cleaning in-house. A site in Castleham is ready for the in-house street cleaning team. Vehicles have been procured and all staff ready to go.

The visitors centre is proceeding and the Council is reviewing its Anti-Social Behaviour Public Space Protection Order guidelines.

A question was raised in regards to the Council's ability to sanction the current waste contractor during the handover period. It was noted that through the Joint Waste Partnership the Council can make concerns known to contractors and the Council plans to manage the remainder of the existing contract as well as possible.

A query was raised concerning the better use of CCTV with other agencies and what can be learnt from existing work with the police. In response it was highlighted that CCTV cost is a major issue. The Council have written to Sussex Police as there is concern we may not be able to bear all the cost and may need other agencies to share costs in the short term. Longer term, if funding is secure, we can build on our current work.

The Chair asked, with new emphasis on community policing, is the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex coming forward with plans to support community policing in Hastings and St Leonards? The answer was that at the last police and crime panel meeting funding, through an increase in the police precept, for a further 240 police officers and 150 community officers across Sussex was agreed. It is not yet clear where those new officers will be located.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that Hastings Borough Council is the only local authority in East Sussex that monitors CCTV locally and this does increase cost.

It was noted that the Hastings District Commander, Chief Inspector Sarah Godley, said the precept, if agreed, would lead to an additional 5 officers in Hastings.

The group asked if it would be possible to organise a meeting with the new District Commander. The Leader responded that he will arrange such a meeting.

A question was raised regarding emergency services response times. Taxpayers want to see faster response times, particularly with 101, and it was asked if the Commissioner has explored this in terms of the precept increase.

In response it was highlighted that there is a cross party consensus on improving response times and there is a need to get 101 working effectively.

Discussion returned to the transfer of street cleaning services in-house and how the transition will be managed to avoid a lack of knowledge and experience. In response it was stated that a handover period has been agreed, staff will be TUPED across and discussion with unions is ongoing.

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Returning to local policing a question was raised regarding East Sussex County Council funding for early intervention. The answer was that Hastings has been successful at linking up with other agencies to access additional funding and will continue to do so.

It was noted that way the Council uses street wardens to compliment the police and this may be something the Committee will want to look at in the future.

Discussion moved onto the feedback on the contact centre. There is a 93% satisfaction rate and the Committee asked how this compared to the previous quarter. It was noted that the mystery shopper event was useful and the exact figures from the previous quarter can be made available for comparison.

The rollout of Universal Credit and its impact on the contact centre was discussed. In response the Committee was made aware that contact centre staff were undergoing training to deal with benefits, and whilst this is ongoing there will be some leeway on hitting call centre targets.

The Committee raised the issue of the duty to refer. Staff at hospitals may be unaware of their duty to refer. The Committee raised the suggestion of contacting all agencies to ensure they are aware of changes in legislation.

The Lead Member for Housing responded that it is the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which is leading to make sure people are out of hospital as fast as possible and return home or somewhere safe. The hospital need to be thinking about the patients best interests.

The Committee asked for further details on 5 projects progressing for the Connecting Hastings and Rother Together programme and whether funding received from the European Union will have to be returned post-Brexit. The response was that, as nothing has yet been approved the projects cannot be confirmed at this time. The funding is secure and won't be clawed back.

A question was raised in regards to investing in green vehicles. In response the Committee were informed that this was not an option for waste collection vehicles. The Council are looking at the whole fleet to ensure there is no investment in diesel and to consider options for electric. It may be a possibility for smaller street cleaning vehicles but not currently for bin collection lorries.

Discussion moved on to the review of the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Public Space Protection Order. The Committee noted that the report outlines a hope that an increase in the severity of sanctions will change behaviour and encourage engagement with support services. The Lead Member for Environment and Equalities answered that through community behaviour orders individuals can be mandated to attend treatment and engage with agencies such as local drug and alcohol services.

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The Chair asked if the Council was using its hardship fund to support residents transitioning to Universal Credit and what work the Council is doing to reach those that need support. In response it was stated that the hardship fund is being spent and there will be no carry forward.

It was confirmed that Universal Credit claimants will be able to claim on the hardship fund. Numbers should be declining but claims are becoming more complex.

The discussion moved on to the growth strand of the report.

The Committee asked for an update on the bid to the Cultural Development Fund in October 2018 to create an East Sussex Coastal Creative Enterprise Zone. It was confirmed this bid has been unsuccessful.

The Chair asked what steps the Council could take to improve its attractiveness to teachers. It was noted in response that not all schools in Hastings and St Leonards have a recruitment problem and this may be due to how the schools are run.

It was noted that the University of Brighton Academies Trust has invited Councillors to a meeting. In a previous meeting between the trust and Councillors it was highlighted that they have encountered difficulties attracting new teachers to Hastings.

Discussion moved on to the futureproofing section of the report. The Committee considered the days lost to sickness and absence. The Lead Member for Corporate Services said that the Council has improved its support mechanisms and praised the HR department for its work.

The Leader of the Council added that most of the increase in sickness absence is due to long-term sickness. There is no reason to be complacent, there are a lot of pressures on staff and the Council would like to bring this figure down.

A question was raised about the Council's spend on agency staff and whether this was to cover sickness absences. In response it was noted that the definition of agency staff covers both sickness absence cover and short-term consultancy. Agency staff have been used to fill gaps where the Council has had difficulty recruiting, such as in planning, and in revenue and benefits during the transition to Universal Credit.

In response to a question about the National Animal Licensing System it was confirmed that responsibility for this has been returned to the Council from East Sussex County Council. This means Hastings Borough Council will now be the licensing authority for pet shops and exhibitions of animals. A draft licensing policy will be published shortly.

Discussion moved on to building control and it was confirmed that the Council is still providing building control jointly with Rother and Wealden.

Councillors K Beaney, Rankin and Foster left the Council Chamber.

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RESOLVED that:

1. That the committees' comments on 2018/19 performance be addressed by the relevant Lead Member(s) with appropriate action and report back
2. That staff be thanked for their hard work and achievements

The reason for this decision was:

To assist the council to undertake performance management arrangements.

5. SINGLE USE PLASTICS REPORT

Councillor Evans and Chantal Lass, Sustainability Manager, presented a report to provide the Committee with an update on the review of the Council's work to phase out Single Use Plastics (SUPS).

As part of the review, the team explored the background to the issue of plastics pollution. The review team have developed a set of recommendations for further research and activity for consideration by the Council, which they consider will help to reduce the Council's use of single use plastics and more broadly reduce the Council's environmental impact.

The review team was setup following the single use plastics motion at Full Council. The team considered how to eradicate single use plastics across Hastings but realised it was more realistic to present Hastings Borough Council as a model for the community and work to remove single use plastics across the organisation.

Procurement policy is a big opportunity to reduce single use plastics and the Council could ask the procurement hub to score suppliers based on single use plastics and other environmental criteria.

The Chair thanked Councillor Evans and Chantal Lass for their work and for producing a very powerful report.

Discussion moved on to engaging local businesses to reduce plastic use and encouraging the manufacture of biodegradable plastics. It was agreed that this review should be embedded into the future work of the Committee.

The Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager acknowledged that the Committee can keep this review as part of its work programme if it wishes to do so. He also noted that should the committee agree the report it will then be submitted to Cabinet, accompanied by a management response to the review recommendations.

An amendment is suggested and agreed to recommendation 10, that Hastings Transition Town be added to show support for joint working.

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RESOLVED that the following recommendations be forwarded for Cabinet consideration:

1. To review the Council's sustainable procurement policy and actions to support reducing our purchase of SUP products.
2. Local events – explore how to reduce the use of plastic cutlery, food containers and cups for drinks e.g. re-usable stackable cups, at large scale events in the town. Investigate other local authorities sustainable events guide e.g. Brighton.
3. Carry out an audit of single use plastics in the Council's operational buildings identifying which items are our own purchases or part of our contractors services e.g. office cleaning and create a single use plastics policy for the Council.
4. The Business Improvement District – could initiatives be developed with the town centre BID to reduce the use of plastics in local businesses e.g. take away food containers such as polystyrene boxes & plastic straws.
5. Discussions were held around the viability of phasing out other single-use plastic inside Council offices, to meet the 2019 commitment as part of the motion to Council. Further analysis and consideration of alternative options should be undertaken, by consulting with services across the council to clearly identify where SUPS use is most significant, and how this might be achieved.
6. To review the Council's environmental Policy to make sure it addresses current environmental pollution issues such as the use of SUPs.
7. Find out what local businesses are doing and could do to support a plastics free Hastings and explore the potential to create a 'green rating' for local businesses like 'scores on the doors.'
8. To create a sustainable event guidance note for local events which provides advice on eliminating single use plastics at events.
9. To find out more information about Newport Waste Savers Trust and how it is operated to see if there is anything that can be replicated in Hastings?
10. To promote the local Hastings Transition Town refill project.
11. For Councillors to research about the 'Plastics Pact' promoted by WRAP.
12. Can the Council promote and expand the water fountains available in town? Can these be highlighted on a tourist map?
13. Community beach cleans and neighbourhood litter picks – how else can the Council support these events?
14. To organise a visit to the Newhaven Waste to Energy facility for councillors.

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The reason for this decision was:

As part of the review, the team explored the background to the issue of plastics pollution including where plastics waste in our oceans come from; understanding what happens to the plastic waste we collect in the borough; our actions to reduce single use plastics in the our offices; and grassroots community action.

The review team have developed a set of recommendations for further research and activity for consideration by the Council, which they consider will help to reduce the Council's use of single use plastics and more broadly reduce the Council's environmental impact.

6. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager updated the Committee on the revised Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

It was announced that the regeneration funding review is meeting witnesses now.

Another steering committee will meet before the next quarterly Committee meeting.

(Chair close the meeting at 7.42pm)

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