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## **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** **3 APRIL 2017**

Present: Councillors: Leonard Crosbie (Chairman), David Coldwell (Vice-Chairman), Toni Bradnum, Alan Britten, Paul Clarke, Matthew French, Nigel Jupp, Tim Lloyd, Brian O'Connell, David Skipp, Ben Staines, Michael Willett and Tricia Youtan

Apologies: Councillors: Roger Clarke and Jonathan Dancer

Also Present: Councillors: Brian Donnelly and Gordon Lindsay

### SO/55 **MINUTES**

The Committee agreed two addendums to the minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017 item SO/48 Review of the proposed Council Budget:

- a) The Budget's proposed expansion of the Council's real estate investment/non-operational portfolio by £3million per annum from 2017/18 to 2020/21 (detailed in the report to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017 Appendix E(i)) would be financed solely by the Council's sale of assets, yet to be identified, that provided minimal or nil financial return
- b) The Council's Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement (Report to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017 Appendix G) provides for the Council's 2016/17 current external borrowings of £4million, to be repaid by 2019/20 and that no additional external borrowing would take place before 2019/20

### SO/56 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

### SO/57 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

### SO/58 **CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW**

The Cabinet Member for Local Economy was invited to the meeting of the Committee to answer a number of questions prepared by Committee Members in relation to his portfolio, he was also asked to present his portfolio summary.

1. *Strategy for tourism: I note that there are several references to a strategy for tourism through HDC documents. Can the Cabinet Member advise just how such a strategy can be implemented and if there are*

*discussions with neighbouring councils and National Park to develop a coordinated approach tourism? Councillor Coldwell*

The Cabinet Member for Local Economy replied as follows:

*The work of Acorn Tourism will produce a Visitor Economy Strategy for the District. As part of the development of the strategy they will be talking to WSCC, Coast to Capital and the National Park to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach. Our neighbouring authorities have a mixture of leisure strategies, visitor guides, cultural strategies. There is also work progressing across Coastal West Sussex to promote the Visitor Economy. We are already liaising with CWS to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach. The work will also look at visitor accommodation.*

*The second part of Acorn's commission is to establish a new Partnership, which will need to involve our visitor economy businesses. The Partnership will be primarily responsible for implementing the new Strategy.*

2. *In the MTFS 2017-21 there appears to be no allocation of Resources for Economic Strategy objectives. This despite the following conclusions presented to Cabinet on 14th January in the Horsham District Economic Strategy- Employment Land: 1.4 "Resources need to be focused to identify new employment opportunities and secure economic growth" Resources Consequences 7.1 "A review of the Economic Development Team has taken place and the necessary resources will be in place to deliver the new strategy." Councillor Crosbie*

The Cabinet Member for Local Economy replied as follows:

*Clare Mangan was appointed Economic Development Manager in 2015 and we are in the process of hiring a research assistant to develop and maintain a business sites DB and to update the web site which at the moment looks more like a visitor's web site. We will also produce improved economic reports.*

3. *Currently the Cabinet is evaluating future investment opportunities for the Council including launching a housing company; increasing investment in a property portfolio, amongst others. Are Economic Strategy objectives also included as possible investment options by the Cabinet? Councillor Crosbie*

The Cabinet Member for Local Economy replied as follows:

*We are currently looking for a suitable site for a Basepoint facility. When we have done this we will prepare a business case.*

4. *The Economic Strategy states the following: ....our economic performance has been poor; we are the worst performing authority in West Sussex; we must create conditions that support the local economy;*

*the visitor economy generates economic and social activity; the market towns .....face significant challenges, in particular the retail sector. A priority must be to support the market town businesses and enhance the vitality of their High Streets."*

*The key objective of the Economic Strategy states: "To help retain existing businesses."*

*In the light of these clear statements can the Cabinet Member please explain how he believes that the introduction of car parking charges in the rural communities is going to: help retain existing businesses, enhance the vitality of the rural High Streets, create a condition that supports the local rural economies, value the rural towns within HD and support them in evolving as modern economic locations and to encourage visitors to spend their leisure time in the local area? Could the cabinet member also let the committee know what his proposals are to develop the rural economies further than the broad outline of the Economic Strategy, which is lacking in substance and ideas and, what plans he has should the introduction of car parking charges be found to reduce the number of visitors and consequently damages the rural local economies? Councillor Lloyd*

The Cabinet Member for Local Economy replied as follows:

*The introduction of rural car parking charges will generate income which will be used to improve monitoring of car parks and to improve car parks and make them a bit more welcoming for visitors. Given that the main users of the car parks are Horsham District residents and that the very low cost disc can be used in all district rural car parks this may incentivise people to visit other car parks in the district.*

*One of the most important actions to improve rural economies is to identify more rural sites for economic development. In addition we have to make our HDPF more business friendly. For example policy 10 on rural economic development requires developments to "result in substantial environmental improvement." This has resulted in planners over emphasising landscaping requirements thus making it very difficult for small businesses to expand.*

*In developing the rural car parking proposals significant consideration was given to how new proposals could support the rural economy. These included:*

- *Feedback from local businesses was that the current system was confusing, clunky and not user friendly and discouraged visitors.*
- *We have introduced pay and display machines which are straightforward and familiar to all car owners.*

- *We have considered users and customers that frequent our market towns regularly and given that nearly 90% of the users surveyed last summer were local people, we developed a disc systems which is easy to use, requires a small one off purchase and can be used in all the rural car parks. The one off charge also encourages loyalty and customers wanting to get value for money out of their parking disc. Whilst we could have gone down the use of pay and display machines for every visit, as many market town areas do, we considered that this did not encourage convenience and loyalty.*
  - *We have taken into consideration the needs of market town businesses understanding that they and their employees need places to park with convenience knowing they can get to work on time. We have considered local needs and demands of local employers to provide a sufficient number of long term season tickets in all of our market towns.*
  - *We have also set the maximum parking times to reflect and encourage 'churn' and freeing up of spaces. Some areas are limited to 2 hours to ensure cars are not occupying spaces all day or for long periods which prevents customers using them.*
5. *In the HDC Business Survey (2016) firms identified "Business Support" as their 3rd Priority.  
Surely the launch of Horsham as a WI FI Town would offer significant support to businesses all types.  
Also the project would be excellent PR for the Council and the Local Economy. Councillor Crosbie*

The Cabinet Member for Local Economy replied as follows:

*The Town Centres and Events Manager is currently working on this. Good Wi-Fi networks need to be managed and we have to ensure there is a sound business case. I don't think it necessarily should be assumed that a Wi-Fi network is beneficial to town traders so we have to determine whether they would support such a project.*

6. *There is much made of migration of young people out of the District. This is surely to be expected as many will go to university or colleges of higher education gain qualifications and obtain jobs worldwide.*

*There is however a shift in that many cannot afford or do not wish to move on after school or college.*

*Has a survey of young people been undertaken in the area as to what employment they are looking for, what sort of numbers make up this cohort? How many apprenticeships are available in the district?  
It is encouraging to see aspiration for more liaison with businesses and colleges could we be given a timeline as to when and where events will*

*be held? Who assesses the outcomes and where is the information published? Councillor Skipp*

The Cabinet Member for Local Economy replied as follows:

*The Economic Development Officer is developing some specific actions around apprenticeships. We partnered with WSCC in relation to an apprenticeship fair on 28th March and undertook a survey of attendees who might be interested in taking up an apprenticeship with HDC and the subject areas. Under the new levy, HDC will be developing 11 apprenticeship opportunities. The model we develop can then be used in our conversations with businesses to help them set up their own apprenticeships. Under the LEAP scheme we provided funding for 3 apprenticeships and have c4 other businesses interested in setting up new apprenticeships.*

*The Economic Development Officer is starting to work on this year's job fair.*

*In terms of results we have published outcomes in the ED bulletin as well as press releases following events.*

*The developing action plan is looking at whether we need to set up an Education Business Partnership and how we can help to co-ordinate careers fairs with our schools and colleges. I am currently updating the action plan in relation to outcomes and the timelines.*

7. *Budget 2016/17 shows the gross expenditure of Economic Development Departmental costs as: £472,365.*

*An additional sum of at least 25-50% should be set aside to support the ambitious objectives identified in the Strategy Report. Councillor Crosbie*

The Cabinet Member for Local Economy replied as follows:

*Additional resources can be bid for once there are specific business cases e.g acquisition of land to facilitate a business hub. A more critical area is regarding the need to find matched funding to secure external funding. Again, where there is a business case established re the outcomes, a bid can be made to existing HDC resources. One priority area for us is in drawing up such business cases and having the resources to submit bids.*

The Cabinet Member for Local Economy was asked to comment on his portfolio summary, also presented to the Committee. He addressed the Corporate Plan Priorities and the updates on the position at February 2017.

Members went on to question the Cabinet Member on rural car parking strategy which had been implemented and whether this had had an adverse effect on the villages. Steyning was in the process of producing its business review report which would provide feedback on how the businesses had been affected. Also the Cabinet Member would review the progress of the strategy in approximately six months.

In relation to the Billingshurst Village Centre SPD, Members suggested that another progress meeting be held following approval from Cabinet later in April. The Cabinet Member agreed to this.

The Committee discussed briefly some other aspects of the Cabinet Member's portfolio, such as a lack of expansion sites in the District for business parks and concern regarding the lack of affordable housing for young people in Horsham. The Cabinet Member was asked when the Council's apprenticeship scheme was due to progress and he agreed to report back on this.

The Chairman concluded that the Horsham District Economic Strategy was very ambitious, covering the whole of the District, there were many challenges in the Strategy and a large agenda for the Cabinet Member and officers to deliver. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would continue to observe progress made under the Strategy and how the objectives were met.

SO/59 **STORRINGTON AIR POLLUTION NOTE**

A report on Storrington Air Pollution was provided for the Committee by the Environmental and Licensing Manager after concerns were raised by Councillor Ben Staines at a previous meeting.

A recent monitoring exercise had recorded Storrington with having the highest levels of air pollution. The Council was working with West Sussex County Council to address this issue and reduce emissions from traffic, as the main cause of the pollution in Storrington was traffic related.

Members of the Committee questioned whether the traffic problems should be included in the upcoming review of the Horsham District Planning Framework, before further development in Storrington and the surrounding area.

However it was noted that this was a far larger problem which due to a lack of infrastructure to support the development and problems with the roads, it also related to housing and businesses.

SO/60 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SELF EVALUATION EXERCISE - REPORT TO DATE**

Councillor David Coldwell, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Self-Evaluation Project Group, presented a report on progress to date.

The Committee was asked to approve the recommendations presented in the report.

The Chairman of the Project Group talked the Committee through the report and the work which had been undertaken so far and the next steps.

The Group had concluded that the Overview and Scrutiny training sessions had been inadequate, more work needed to be done in relation to work programming, the Scrutiny Guide was a valuable document which should be recirculated to Members of the Committee.

Going forward, the Group would be considering the role of the sub-committees and whether task and finish groups would be more appropriate.

The Chairman of the Group asked for support for the Project Group to present their findings to a wider group of Members in a seminar style discussion later in April, this was supported by the Committee.

The Committee discussed the report and the functions of the Committee in terms of its “overview” role and its “scrutiny” role. Members felt that the Council was more transparent in terms of decision making, there was better access to information and therefore the scrutinising role was not required to the extent that it had been in the past.

The Members also discussed the Policy Development Advisory Groups and were keen to ensure that the Committee did not duplicate the work undertaken by these but were reminded that the role of these were different to that of the sub-committees.

The Committee was reminded that scrutiny was established when the Cabinet system was introduced by the Local Government Act in 2000 and decisions were no longer made at full Council.

The Committee approved the recommendations in the report and agreed that it was a timely and comprehensive report and supported the proposal to set up a seminar to discuss the final report in a wider forum.

The Scrutiny Guide would be circulated to all Councillors.

#### RECOMMENDED

That the Committee:

- (i) Endorse and support the progress of the self-evaluation project group
- (ii) Note the next steps identified in section 4 of the report and participate in a member seminar in April.

#### REASON

To enact Overview and Scrutiny Committee minute reference SO/53 by participating in the nationally recognised self-evaluation framework for overview and scrutiny, in order to prepare for the function for the forthcoming municipal year.

SO/61 **SUB-COMMITTEES - CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

- a) The Chairman of the Business Improvement Sub-Committee updated the Committee, the next meeting of the Sub-Committee was on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 when the Members would review the S106 funding report before presenting it to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- b) The Chairman of the Finance and Performance Sub-Committee explained that there had been an informal briefing with the Cabinet Members regarding CenSus Revenues and Benefits, and the reduction in subsidy for Horsham District Council in relation to housing benefits. The Chairman confirmed that a report would be presented to a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- c) The Chairman of the Health and Social Inclusion Sub-Committee explained that Members had met with the doctors from the CCG at the last meeting.
- d) The Chairman of the Crime and Disorder Sub-Committee was not present at the meeting, but the Chairman thanked him for his work over the course of the year as he was stepping down as to become Chairman of the Council for the forthcoming year.

SO/62 **TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

Two suggestions had been raised for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme:

1. To examine, with a view towards solving, traffic issues, access issues and other problems at primary schools in the District.

This arose at a meeting with the local member and Upper Beeding Parish Council, however it was considered a district wide problem. Traffic issues around the schools in the residential areas lead to antisocial parking and antisocial behaviour. It was suggested that a sub-committee be set up to look at the particular problems in the village then hopefully, by working with West Sussex County Council, find a solution which could be applied to all schools.

Members noted that some work had already being undertaken by the CLC, so it was suggested that this be looked at in conjunction with this review.

It was noted that this was a nation wide problem.

2. The second suggestion for the work programme was to review the position to date in terms of the Business Transformation Programme, for



example how it delivered, current staff levels and whether financial targets had been achieved.

It was suggested that task and finish groups could be set up to look at these suggestions.

The Committee approved the two suggestions for the work programme.

SO/63 **REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were no replies from Cabinet or Council.

SO/64 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

*The meeting closed at 7.32 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm*

CHAIRMAN

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