

SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

5TH NOVEMBER 2012

Present: Councillors: George Cockman (Chairman), Brian Donnelly (Vice-Chairman), Philip Circus, Leonard Crosbie, Duncan England, Jim Goddard, Brian O'Connell, Jim Rae, Kate Rowbottom, David Sheldon, David Skipp, Tricia Youtan

Apologies: Councillors: John Chidlow, Laurence Deakins, Josh Murphy

Also present: Councillors: Roy Cornell, Claire Vickers

Officers in attendance: Tom Crowley, Chief Executive, Barbara Childs, Head of Economic Development and Leisure, Katherine Eberhart, Director of Corporate Resources

SO/30 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6th September 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SO/31 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/32 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chairman of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee announced that Daniela Miedzianowska, Scrutiny and Committee Support Officer, had given birth to a son. The Chairman agreed to send a card on behalf of the Committee to congratulate Daniela and to express the best wishes of Committee Members.

SO/33 **TO RECEIVE ANY REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were no replies to report.

SO/34 **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND NOTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 17TH SEPTEMBER AND 23RD OCTOBER 2012**

The Chairman of the Business Improvement Working Group presented the notes of the meetings held on 17th September and 23rd October 2012; the latter notes were tabled at the meeting.

SO/34 Business Improvement Working Group – To receive an update from the Chairman and notes of the meetings held on 17th September and 23rd October 2012 (cont.)

The Working Group had discussed the Council's vehicle procurement and maintenance policy, and had received an updated list of the Council's fleet. The Working Group had been impressed by Operational Services' work in this area but had requested further information about the expected timescales for the refurbishment or replacement of vehicles, and about the life expectancy of the vehicles. When that information was provided, recommendations would be considered.

The Working Group had noted a report on changes to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA); the powers had not been used by the Council for a number of years. It had approved the revisions to the Council's draft Corporate Policy and Procedures Document on RIPA. The Council would continue to update and amend its Corporate Policy in order to comply with legislative changes to RIPA.

The Working Group had received and welcomed the revised draft Contract Standing Orders in relation to the Council's use of consultants. Members had suggested some further additions to the Council's procedure which would be incorporated.

The Working Group had noted the Chief Executive's report about lessons learnt in relation to the processing and determination of planning applications following his review of the planning application process for the proposed residential development in Henfield, and subsequent Public Inquiry into the non determination appeal. Committee Members welcomed some of the proposed actions but expressed concern about the proposal to ask Council to consider making further and regular training for Members on planning law a requirement of membership of the Development Control committees.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the notes of the Business Improvement Working Group meetings held on 17th September and 23rd October 2012 be received; and
- (ii) To note that the Chief Executive would prepare a report to Council to propose the incorporation into the Constitution of a Probity in Planning Guide and to propose further and regular training for Members on planning law.

REASON

All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee.

SO/35 **FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP - TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

There had been no further meetings of the Finance and Performance Working Group and therefore there was no update. The Working Group would next meet on 8 and 14 November 2012.

RESOLVED

That an update be given in respect of the Finance and Performance Working Group

REASON

All Working Group updates are to be received by the Committee.

SO/36 **SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10TH SEPTEMBER 2012**

The Chairman of the Social Inclusion Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held on 10th September 2012.

At the meeting the Working Group had received a report detailing the Council's representation on outside bodies. All Councillors had subsequently received those details and had been invited to confirm the details or comment. The Committee noted the revised list of current Council representation on outside bodies (which were deemed to be valid representations) and where the Council's representation was no longer required or where the outside body no longer existed. Feedback was awaited on the representations on the Local Government Association Rural Commission; the Leader of the Council was considering the Council's continued membership of the LGA and the Chairman agreed to raise this matter at the Advisory Panel meeting and to ask the Chief Executive about the value or otherwise of continued membership. Feedback was also awaited on the representations on the Association of Councillors' General Management Committee. The list would be corrected in relation to the Police and Crime Panel, to delete the word 'deputy' and replace it with 'substitute member'. The Council had not been represented on the Central Sussex College's Governing Body for a number of years; the Chairman of the Working Group agreed to enquire whether they wished the Council to provide a representative.

At the next meeting the Working Group would be considering a report on the Information Shop for Young People and receiving a presentation on that by students of the Tanbridge House School.

SO/36 Social Inclusion Working Group – To receive an update from the Chairman and notes of the meeting held on 10th September 2012 (cont.)

A Health Provision Working Group had been proposed and the Committee was being asked to approve its establishment (see Minute SO/39 below).

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Social Inclusion Working Group meeting held on 10th September 2012 be received

REASON

All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee.

SO/37 SOUTHERN RAIL'S PERFORMANCE IN SEVERE WEATHER WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2ND OCTOBER 2012

The Chairman of the Southern Rail's Performance in Severe Weather Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held on 2nd October and also referred to its meeting on 31st October 2012.

The Working Group had met four times and had heard from representatives from Southern Rail and Network Rail and the West Sussex Rail Users Association. Its review was now complete and the Chairman of the Working Group would prepare a Final Report for presentation at the next Committee meeting.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Southern Rail's Performance in Severe Weather Working Group meeting held on 2nd October 2012 be received.

REASON

All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee

SO/38 SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES WORKING GROUP – FINAL REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP, AND NOTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 19TH SEPTEMBER AND 15TH OCTOBER 2012

The Chairman of the Supporting Local Businesses Working Group presented the Final Report and the notes of the meetings held on 19th September and 15th October 2012.

SO/38 Supporting Local Businesses Working Group – Chairman’s update, Final Report and notes of the meetings held on 19th September and 15th October 2012 (cont.)

The Working Group made a number of recommendations in the report which the Committee approved.

It was hoped that the report findings would be of help to other villages and market towns across the District.

The Head of Economic Development and Leisure welcomed the Working Group’s review and recommendations. The Council would consider measures to encourage local businesses to bid for Council contracts of £50,000 and less. The Council’s procurement team could arrange workshop sessions to help small businesses to understand the procurement process. The possibility of sliding scales for business rates would be considered, and the recommendation about free Council advice for small businesses would be referred to the planning department.

The Committee suggested that the local MPs might be contacted by the Council on the issue of business rates (which were set by central government) and which were viewed as being prohibitive for many small businesses.

The Committee welcomed the sharing of information and increased liaison, and viewed this as a fine example of how to encourage engagement with the Council and between communities. The Committee hoped that the Cabinet Member for the Local Economy would keep the recommendations in mind during his market town walkabouts and could encourage the sharing of best practice.

The Committee thanked the Working Group for its successful review.

RESOLVED

That the final report, and the notes of the Supporting Local Businesses Working Group meetings held on 19th September and 15th October 2012, be received

REASON

All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee.

SO/38 Supporting Local Businesses Working Group – Chairman’s update, Final Report and notes of the meetings held on 19th September and 15th October 2012 (cont.)

RECOMMENDED TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR
THE LOCAL ECONOMY:

Arising from the report on Supporting Local Businesses, that the Cabinet Member undertake or ensure the following:

1. That the Head of Economic Development and Leisure contact the owners of the vacant commercial units in Ashington, Billingshurst, Pulborough and Rudgwick, enquiring about whether the Council could offer them any assistance.
2. Advise Rudgwick Parish Council in setting up a business directory for each business to use, so that they are aware of what is available locally.
3. Improve the procurement process to increase opportunities for small businesses to bid for Horsham District Council contracts (under £50,000) and support where possible (i.e. procurement workshops).
4. Investigate the possibility of sliding scales for business rates, making them more accommodating for smaller and start up businesses.
5. Review the parking situation in the villages and whether this has a detrimental effect on the small/local businesses by discouraging potential shoppers.
6. Consider whether there could be a reduction in waste collection costs for smaller businesses.
7. Enhance the promotion of information in parish magazines/the Council’s website etc. and general promotion for the advice/help available for small and start-up businesses and consider email information.
8. Consider free Horsham District Council Planning advice for small businesses.
9. Consider the negative impact that increasing parking charges would have on the villages.
10. That the Cabinet Member for the Local Economy considers existing market town walkabouts include a template of these recommendations. That with the approval of all market towns, notification of these visits is shared with the intention of improving co-operation within these market towns.

SO/39 **TO APPROVE THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A HEALTH PROVISION WORKING GROUP**

The Health Matters sub-group had met on 26 September 2012. It was proposed to establish a formal working group to review matters relating to Horsham Hospital.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the suggestion to establish a Health Provision Working Group to review the present health provision at, and the future role of, Horsham Hospital be approved
- (ii) That the proposed membership of the Working Group be approved

SO/40 **REPORT ON CRIME AND SAFETY PARTNERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A NEW WORKING GROUP**

The Committee noted a report which outlined how legislation required every local authority to have a committee with the power to review and scrutinise, and make reports or recommendations, regarding the functioning of the local Community Safety Partnership. In Horsham District, the Committee had been designated the role of scrutinising crime and disorder matters.

RESOLVED

That the suggestion to establish a Crime and Disorder Working Group, and its terms of reference, be approved

SO/41 **TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME**

A member of the public had submitted a suggestion for the Scrutiny and Overview work programme to include an improved public footpath at the level crossing between Amberley Close and Bartholomew Way, Horsham. The submission had been received on 5 November 2012. This matter would be deferred to the next Committee meeting.

SO/42 **ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA BUT CONSIDERED URGENT**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting finished at 6.35 pm having commenced at 5.30pm.

CHAIRMAN