

SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

14TH JANUARY 2013

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

Apologies: Councillors: Laurence Deakins, Josh Murphy

Also present: Councillors: Roger Arthur, Andrew Baldwin, Roy Cornell, Gordon Lindsay, Christian Mitchell, Roger Paterson, Claire Vickers

Officers in attendance: Julian Carrington, Community Planning Manager
Katherine Eberhart, Director of Corporate Resources
Helen Peacock, Environmental Co-ordination Manager

SO/43 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5th November 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SO/44 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/45 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no announcements.

SO/46 **PROGRESS ON CLIMATE CHANGE – AN UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

The Cabinet Member for the Environment presented a report which provided an update on the work that had been undertaken in relation to climate change initiatives since the recommendations of the Progress on Climate Change Working Group had been received and approved by the Committee at its meeting on 16th January 2012.

The recommendations included efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions for the District and for the Council's buildings and transport. The Nottingham Declaration had been replaced by 'Climate Local' which was a voluntary statement that local authorities could make to show the actions that councils proposed to take to tackle climate change and prepare for potential future changes to the climate. A report would be presented to the Cabinet in 2013 to

SO/46 Progress on Climate Change – an update from the Cabinet Member for the Environment (continued)

ask it to consider whether the Council should sign the Climate Local commitment and suggest other actions that the Council could progress.

Some Members voiced scepticism about the level of climate change and the causes of it but did welcome some of the recommended initiatives and would support actions that the Council could achieve.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment stated that an Advisory Group would be established in 2013 to consider whether the Council should sign up to Climate Local and what actions the Council could take. The Environmental Co-ordination Manager explained that any proposed actions would be prioritised and would be progressed within the constraints of current funding and staff resources.

RESOLVED

To receive and note the update report on the progress made on the recommendations of the Progress on Climate Change Working Group

REASON

To ensure that all reviews are completed and assessed appropriately

SO/47 **TO RECEIVE ANY REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Cabinet Member for the Local Economy provided a response to the recommendations of the Supporting Local Businesses Working Group. He had discussed with Council officials the possibility of sliding scales for business rates; the Director of Corporate Resources would prepare some proposals. A Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership meeting with Vince Cable, the Business Secretary, was scheduled for 18 January 2013; the issue of sliding scales for business rates (according to turnover) would be raised at that meeting.

The recommendation about improving 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) had been noted. A procurement agreement with West Sussex district councils and the County Council was being developed.

A new strategy was being progressed to support networking groups and one working group would focus on the retail economy of towns in the District to facilitate the sharing of best practices and to provide access to business skills

SO/47 To receive any replies from Cabinet/Council regarding Scrutiny and Overview recommendations (continued)

and training. The Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership was assisting in that work. The Local Enterprise Partnership had received £22 million in Government funding which was now in the form of a loan rather than a grant; a remaining £11 million in loans was available.

The Chairman requested the Cabinet Member to prepare a written response. It was requested that it include a reference about who would be acting to apply for some of the £11 million.

SO/48 **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

There had been no further meetings of the Business Improvement Working Group and therefore there was no update from the Chairman. The Working Group would next meet on 22nd January 2013.

The Working Group would present a progress report on its work programme to the next meeting of the Committee, including a reference to its previously-stated wish to undertake a review of the Planning Department's processes and performance in relation to the determination of planning applications.

RESOLVED

That an update be given in respect of the Business Improvement Working Group

REASON

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

SO/49 **FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP - TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman of the Finance and Performance Working Group presented the notes of the meetings held on 8th and 14th November 2012, 10th December 2012 and 7th January 2013; the latter were tabled at the meeting.

The Working Group had identified additional subjects that it would consider: the discretionary services provided by the Council and their cost in comparison with other councils in South East England, and aspects of the Business Transformation Project.

SO/49 Finance and Performance Working Group - to receive an update from the Chairman (continued)

There had been an informal meeting between the Working Group and the Cabinet on 13th December 2012. Notes of those meetings were not produced. The Committee agreed to request notes of those meetings to be produced if the Leader of the Council was in agreement. The Chairman of the Committee would circulate information to Committee Members in relation to an issue about Council Tax that he raised at that informal meeting.

Arising from the notes of the Working Group meeting on 14th November 2012, a Member asked for an update on the indication that Government might revise the targets to extend the period for determining planning applications to 26 weeks; an update would be sought.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Finance and Performance Working Group meetings held on 8th and 14th November 2012, 10th December 2012 and 7th January 2013 be received, and to request receipt of notes of future informal meetings between that Working Group and the Cabinet

REASON

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

SO/50 **SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3RD DECEMBER 2012**

The Chairman of the Social Inclusion Working Group thanked the Chairman of the Committee for chairing the Working Group meeting on 3rd December 2012. At that meeting the Working Group had received a presentation by students of Tanbridge House School which provided an excellent analysis of Horsham Information Shop and suggestions for improvements and increasing awareness of its services. The Committee agreed with the Chairman's suggestion to progress this work by writing to West Sussex County Council and Central Sussex YMCA to say how impressed the Working Group had been by the students' work and presentation and to share that information, that it supported their recommendations, would welcome a discussion about how to implement those, suggest that awareness of its services could be increased by better use of social media and a dedicated and easily-accessed website, and that consideration be given to finding an alternative and more central location for the Information Shop.

The Working Group's next review would consider 'Poverty Amongst an Ageing Population'.

SO/50 Social Inclusion Working Group – To receive an update from the Chairman and notes of the meeting held on 3rd December 2012 (continued)

RESOLVED

- (1) That the notes of the Social Inclusion Working Group meeting held on 3rd December 2012 be received
- (2) To progress the recommendations in relation to the Information Shop and report back to the Social Inclusion Working Group

REASON

- (1) All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee.
- (2) To ensure that all reviews are completed and assessed appropriately.

SO/51 HORSHAM DISTRICT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP – PROGRESS REPORT

The Community Planning Manager provided a progress report on the recommendations relating to the review of the Horsham District Community Partnership (HDCP) which had been presented to the Committee meeting on 7th November 2011 and considered by the HDCP Board on 29th February 2012.

The Committee had recommended that HDCP focus on fewer but sharper objectives. The HDCP Board had responded by making significant changes to the Partnership's structure which also took account of financial constraints that hinder HDCP from funding new work. To make the best use of its diminishing resources HDCP Board had decided to finish with the 'goal groups' (four operational bodies that each produced an annual action plan) and to focus on a much smaller number of priorities managed directly by the Board. The current priorities are: 'Think Family' which was an initiative led by West Sussex County Council to help the most troubled families in the county, and 'Youth Worklessness' which would continue the work started by one of the disbanded goal groups to develop a strategy for tackling the growing number of young people in the District who are not in employment, education or training.

The Chairman of the Social Inclusion Working Group thanked the Community Planning Manager for his work, reminded Members to encourage representatives of their local parish councils to attend the HDCP annual conferences, and suggested that the Committee revert to reviewing the progress of the HDCP's work on an annual basis.

SO/51 Horsham District Community Partnership – progress report (continued)

RESOLVED

To note the progress of the work of the HDCP and request details showing the relationships between the various groups involved in the associated projects

REASON

The review of the work of the Horsham District Community Partnership is to be received by the Committee

SO/52 **SOUTHERN RAIL'S PERFORMANCE IN SEVERE WEATHER WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE THE FINAL REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP AND THE NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31ST OCTOBER 2012**

The Chairman of the Southern Rail's Performance in Severe Weather Working Group presented its Final Report which considered, in light of the significant disruption to rail services in Winter 2010/11, what safeguards had been put in place to deal with similar disruption and what action had been taken to reduce potential disruption in the future.

The Working Group had heard from representatives from Southern Rail and Network Rail and the West Sussex Rail Users Association. There had been a disappointing lack of response on the review from the public. It became apparent to the Working Group that the criticism resulting from the disruption in 2010 had galvanised the train and rail companies to review their procedures and take action to institute improvements. The Working Group had welcomed the willingness of Network Rail and Southern Rail to participate in the review, to share detailed information and reveal improvements made to their processes and infrastructure.

The Working Group had emphasised the need to for rail operators to communicate better with passengers; their improvements in communication had been noted but the Working Group hoped that would continue to be a priority issue for Southern Rail.

The Chairman of the Committee suggested amending the report recommendations to seek to encourage the continued co-operation of Southern Rail and Network Rail. Members agreed that the Chairman and the Members of the Working Group should liaise to finalise the recommendations and include an additional recommendation to ask for confirmation that on-duty railway station staff will be equipped to receive direct communication from the rail control centre during periods of disruption to rail services.

The Chairman thanked the Working Group for its valuable work and report.

SO/52 Southern Rail's Performance in Severe Weather Working Group – to receive the Final Report of the Working Group and the notes of the meeting held on 31st October 2012 (continued)

RESOLVED

- (1) That the notes of the Southern Rail's Performance in Severe Weather Working Group meeting held on 31st October 2012 be received
- (2) To revise the report recommendations as suggested

REASON

- (1) All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee
- (2) To strengthen the report recommendations

SO/53 HEALTH PROVISION WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND THE NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10TH DECEMBER 2012

The Chairman of the Health Provision Working Group reported on its first meeting and that its next meeting would be in February 2013.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Health Provision Working Group meeting held on 10th December 2012 be received

REASON

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

SO/54 CRIME AND DISORDER WORKING GROUP

The Committee noted that the Crime and Disorder Working Group's inaugural meeting would be held on 30th January 2013.

SO/55 WEST SUSSEX JOINT SCRUTINY STEERING GROUP – TO RECEIVE A REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman reported on his attendance at the West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Steering Group meeting on 3rd December 2012. Committee Members had received via email the summary notes of that meeting at which a number of

SO/55 West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Steering Group – to receive a report by the Chairman (continued)

councils in West Sussex had discussed working together on a number of specific scrutiny projects.

Committee Members supported the Chairman's suggestion, made at that Steering Group meeting, for a future discussion on how the Highways Authority deals with planning applications.

SO/56 **TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME**

There were no suggestions for the Scrutiny & Overview work programme.

The previous suggestion in relation to a public footpath at a level crossing in Horsham had been referred to Network Rail and West Sussex County Council because it was a public right of way maintenance issue rather than a topic for the Committee.

SO/57 **ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA BUT CONSIDERED URGENT**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting finished at 7.20 p.m. having commenced at 5.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN