

SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

9TH SEPTEMBER 2013

Present: Councillors: George Cockman (Chairman), Roger Clarke, Laurence Deakins, Duncan England, Jim Goddard, Brian O'Connell, David Skipp

Apologies: Councillors: John Chidlow, Philip Circus, Leonard Crosbie, Brian Donnelly, Kate Rowbottom, David Sheldon, Diana van der Klugt, Tricia Youtan

Also present: Councillor Roger Arthur

Officers: Trevor Beadle, Head of Housing and Community Development
Katharine Eberhart, Director of Corporate Resources

SO/18 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th July 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SO/19 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Duncan England declared an interest in trade waste matters as a proposed Member of the Trade Waste Working Group and because of his close working with the Cabinet Member for the Environment whose portfolio included waste collection and recycling.

SO/20 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no announcements.

SO/21 **REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee noted that the Cabinet, at its meeting on 25th July 2013, had discussed the revised list of the Council's representation on outside bodies. The Cabinet had suggested that, in reviewing the current schedule, regard should be had to the interests and skills of all Members. It was also agreed that additional information was required in relation to each of the outside bodies on the schedule, such as the frequency of the meetings, and that the list should be kept under review to ensure that it was relevant and up to date.

SO/21 Replies from Cabinet/Council regarding Scrutiny and Overview recommendations (continued)

The Cabinet had resolved that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Minority Group, should determine whether any changes should be made to any of the representatives currently appointed until May 2015, and also should seek interest from all Members to fill existing vacancies.

SO/22 **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP - TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman of the Business Improvement Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held on 9th July 2013.

The Working Group had excluded the press and public to discuss its review of the performance of Development Management. It had agreed that Working Group Members would interview further planning department staff members during July and August 2013.

The Chairman of the Working Group reported on the meeting with planning professionals, agents and architects which had been held on 5th September 2013 to ask for their experiences of the Council's planning application process.

The Working Group would discuss the review at its meeting on 12th September and then commence preparation of a report to present to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting on 11th November 2013.

The Chairman of the Working Group reported that there had recently been a significant improvement in the level of the Council's determination of planning applications.

The Working Group would, at its meeting on 12th September 2013, commence its review of the implementation of the Council's revised policy on the use of consultants, and discuss the Planning Obligations Panel and receive details of the monies that the Panel allocated towards community projects.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Business Improvement Working Group meeting, held on 9th July 2013, be received

REASON

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

SO/23 **CRIME AND DISORDER WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE WORKING GROUP’S SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

There had been no further meetings of the Crime and Disorder Working Group and therefore there was no update from the Chairman.

The Head of Housing and Community Development outlined proposals to change the Working Group’s schedule of meetings which would focus its work more effectively. Discussions had been taken place with the Chairman of the Committee and the Chairman of the Working Group and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Horsham Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The relevant legislation required each local authority to have a committee with the power to review and scrutinise the local CSP and the responsible authority partners at least once a year.

It was proposed that the Working Group would be most effective if it met twice a year rather than quarterly, once in preparation to review the annual achievements of the CSP and a second meeting at which representatives of the CSP’s responsible authority partners would be invited to attend and report on their actions towards meeting their objectives.

RESOLVED

To agree that the Crime and Disorder Working Group focus its activity at two meetings a year.

SO/24 **FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE WORKING GROUP’S SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

The Chairman of the Finance and Performance Working Group could not attend the meeting. Councillor Goddard, as a Member of the Working Group, presented the notes of the meeting held on 7th August 2013.

The Interim Head of CenSus IT had attended the Working Group meeting to report on the CenSus Joint Committee meeting held on 21st June 2013. Working Group Members had suggested that a higher target than 85% be set for the monthly rate of call closures in relation to answering public telephone calls to CenSus.

The Working Group had requested details of the number of employees by department who were employed on temporary or part-time contracts. The Director of Corporate Resources stated that the information was available and was to have been presented at the Personnel Committee meeting on 11th September but that meeting had been cancelled. The Chairman of the Working Group would be asked if he wanted the information circulated immediately or to wait until nearer the time of the Finance and Performance Working Group meeting in November 2013.

SO/24 Finance and Performance Working Group – to receive an update from the Chairman and proposed changes to the Working Group’s schedule of meetings (continued)

The Working Group had queried the following CMT-tracked projects: the apparent slowness in the implementation of improvements to or replacement of car parking machines as part of the Horsham Town car parking strategy, and had requested details of what was included in the £166,000 expenditure in relation to the green waste collection scheme.

The Working Group was requesting approval to retain its current quarterly meetings but add a further meeting in each consecutive week to provide sufficient time to discuss finance and budget matters at one meeting and performance information and issues at the other.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the notes of the Finance and Performance Working Group meeting, held on 7th August 2013, be received; and
- (2) To approve the additional Working Group meetings

REASON

- (1) All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee; and
- (2) To facilitate meetings to provide sufficient time for the scrutiny of finance and performance

SO/25 **SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

There had been no further meetings of the Social Inclusion Working Group and therefore there was no update from the Chairman.

The Chairman of the Committee and Councillor Clarke reported back on the visit held on 11th July 2013 to the Information Shop at the Y Centre, Horsham which had been rebranded as the Horsham FindItOut Centre. They had been encouraged by WSCC’s plans and the positive response of the students from Tanbridge House School who had recommended changes to the centre and how its services were delivered to young people.

The location of the service within Horsham town was discussed and it was recognised that the service may not be readily accessible to young people who lived in other areas. Information and advice, however, was available via the Your Space West Sussex website.

SO/26 **HEALTH PROVISION WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman of the Health Provision Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held on 6th June 2013. Representatives of the Horsham and Mid Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had attended the Working Group meeting, including an external consultant who was preparing a strategic blueprint report for the CCG. That report was being presented to the CCG Governing Body. The Working Group would invite CCG representatives to a meeting in October/ November 2013, when the CCG report would be publicly available, to discuss the implications for Horsham Hospital.

The Working Group would invite a representative of the Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust to its meeting on 19th September 2013 to discuss the services provided at Horsham Hospital by that NHS Trust.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Health Provision Working Group meeting, held on 6th June 2013, be received

REASON

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

SO/27 **PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A TRADE WASTE WORKING GROUP**

The Committee had identified a review of trade waste as a task to be added to its work programme. The Cabinet Member for the Environment had requested the Committee to be mindful of the confidential nature of some of the commercial information that would be presented to it.

RESOLVED

- (1) To approve the establishment of a Trade Waste Working Group to review the Council's trade waste collection and recycling service; and
- (2) That the proposed membership and terms of reference of the Working Group be approved

SO/28 **WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14**

The Committee noted the Scrutiny and Overview work programme for 2013/14. The Committee had agreed to defer the planned review of the Council's Communications Policy; that was now scheduled to commence in May 2014.

SO/29 **TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW
WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman reported that Councillor Sheldon had requested the Committee to consider the effectiveness of CenSus Revenues and Benefits (as managed by Mid Sussex District Council) in processing requests for changes to an individual's circumstances and the quality of its communications. He also wished the Committee to consider Discretionary Housing Payments which CenSus awarded three months at a time and the potential for any surplus to be returned to central government.

The Director of Corporate Resources explained that the processing by CenSus of changes to an individual's circumstances had significantly improved in the past year. CenSus was addressing the issue of answering public telephone calls; an upgrade of the telephone system was required before CenSus could better track telephone call waiting times. The quality and clarity of its written communication was being addressed by the Head of CenSus Revenues and Benefits. The Director of Corporate Resources stated that the Council had undertaken a three months approval process for Discretionary Housing Payments and that the number of claims and the amount spent were being closely monitored.

The Committee agreed to provisionally add these issues to its work programme for review in Winter 2013/14 but suggested that Councillor Sheldon and officers discuss these matters and report back to the next Committee meeting.

SO/30 **ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA BUT CONSIDERED URGENT**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting finished at 6.32 p.m. having commenced at 5.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN