

SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

13TH JANUARY 2014

Present: Councillors: George Cockman (Chairman), Brian Donnelly (Vice Chairman) Philip Circus, Roger Clarke, Leonard Crosbie, Laurence Deakins, Duncan England, Brian O'Connell, Kate Rowbottom, David Sheldon, David Skipp, Diana van der Klugt

Apologies: Councillors: John Chidlow, Jim Goddard, Tricia Youtan

Also present: Councillor David Coldwell, Christian Mitchell

Officers: Katharine Eberhart, Director of Corporate Resouces

SO/46 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th November 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SO/47 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/48 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no announcements.

SO/49 **REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

The report of the Business Improvement Working Group on the Review of Development Management and Planning Services was presented to Cabinet on 21st November 2013. The Committee received the response from Cabinet to the recommendations made in the report. The Chairman of the Business Improvement Working Group talked the Committee through the response.

The Committee noted that the response from Cabinet recognised all the recommendations which had been made, but also provided information on other measures which were taking place as part of the process of reviewing and restructuring the Planning Services department.

The Committee discussed the response, queries were raised by the Committee, the Chairman of the Business Improvement Working Group would follow these up, these included, under recommendation four: clarifying what the normal contract period was for new staff.

In relation to recommendation five, Members questioned who would be running the new appraisal process; the Chairman of the Working Group explained that appraisals would be undertaken by the new Head of Planning, who would report to a Director.

Members noted that as part of the new role, the new Head of Planning would be responsible for management of the service rather than determining planning applications. Members of the Committee emphasised the importance of the appraisal process and wanted to know more about the system, dates for implementation and how it would be monitored. The Chairman of the Business Improvement Working Group would feedback to the Committee.

The Committee noted that there would be major structural changes across the Council, which included changes to the way the Planning Services department operated. The proposed structural review and changes would be considered for approval at the Council meeting on 22nd January 2014.

Recommendations seven and nine were due to be addressed further at future Business Improvement Working Group meetings.

The Committee noted that many of the Working Group's recommendations had been tied into the restructure of the Council, and the success of the recommendations would not be evident until all the changes had been implemented and the new structure was in place. The Chairman of the Working Group suggested a six month review of the recommendations take place, this would be added to the Group's work programme.

Overall the outcome and response was considered to be positive.

RESOLVED

That the response from Cabinet to the recommendations of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, following the review by the Business Improvement Working Group on Development Management and Planning Services, be received.

REASON

That all response from Cabinet to Scrutiny and Overview Recommendations be received.

SO/50 **REPORT FROM THE WEST SUSSEX JOINT SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON FLOODING**

A Task and Finish Group made up of a number of councillors from the West Sussex County Council and each of the seven district and borough councils in the County had recently undertaken a review of flooding. Councillor England represented Horsham District Council and presented the final report of the West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Flooding.

Discussions during the review identified that all agencies, such as the Fire and Rescue Service, Environment Agency and Southern Water, as well as all the councils involved all needed to work together in order to tackle flooding issues.

Funding was also identified as a critical issue and all the councils, including parish councils, as well as the agencies and developers would be asked to support the funding.

Areas of major flood and coastal risk areas were identified as priority areas for the works programme, Members noted that this was unlikely to include Horsham as it was not an area of major flood risk.

Councillor England felt that this was an ongoing matter and would like to see this review re-opened in 12 months time as much of the work was ongoing.

The Committee also noted that Councillor England was in the process of collecting information on flooded areas in the District following the recent events caused by the severe weather.

Some Members were concerned about the funding issues and that significant contributions would need to be forthcoming from all parties including the district councils. It was suggested that more responsibility should be placed on developers for every new development. The Members felt that the Council needed to be firmer in ensuring inappropriate development did not take place in areas of high flood risk.

More consideration of potential flooding should be highlighted in planning reports and applications.

Members were also concerned about the recent flooding in the District and felt that information needed to be pulled together on the severely flooded areas and any help which was or should have been received, in order to address future problems.

The Committee agreed that the knowledge of local residents was key as they were aware of what needed to be done in order to protect them from flooding in their area. This local knowledge was invaluable and should be collected and passed on to the local authorities.

SO/50 Report from the West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Flooding (cont.)

Members were concerned that it was not only costal areas which needed attention, as specified in the report, and the Committee urged the County Council to take local issues into consideration as well.

In the report there was reference to the resources and funding available to West Sussex County Council; the Councillors were keen to know what funding was available, how much was available and where and how the County Council was proposing to spend it, as identified in recommendation two of the report.

The enforcement of riparian rights would also help address problematic areas in terms of flooding, landowners should be asked to maintain their own land, i.e. by clearing culverts etc. and this should be enforceable.

Members discussed the fact that West Sussex County Council had recently allocated some funding to parish councils through Operation Watershed, in order to encourage communities to act against flooding. The Committee questioned how many parish councils had taken up the funding and whether more needed to be done to encourage the parishes to do so.

The Committee agreed that the Cabinet Member for a Safer and Healthier District should note the comments made by Members in response to the report before preparing the official response to the recommendations for West Sussex County Council.

An extra meeting would be scheduled, with the Cabinet Member, in order to present the Committee's comments and feedback.

RESOLVED

That the final report of the West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Flooding be received.

REASON

That all reports from the Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group be received by the Committee for comment.

SO/51 **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP - TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 26TH NOVEMBER 2013**

The Chairman of the Business Improvement Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 26th November 2013.

At the last meeting the Working Group had began reviewing planning obligation money which had been allocated but not spent. The Working Group

SO/51 Business Improvement Working Group - To receive an update from the Chairman and notes of the meeting held 26th November 2013 (cont.)

had tried to ascertain the value of money unallocated and were awaiting more information.

The Working Group was also reviewing the outstanding terms of reference from the recent review of Development Management and Planning Services.

Section106 agreements were also under review as Members were unhappy with the system, this work was ongoing.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Business Improvement Working Group meeting, held 26th November 2013, be received

REASON

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

SO/52 CRIME AND DISORDER WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

There had been no further meetings of the Crime and Disorder Working Group, the next meeting would be held on 7th May 2014.

RESOLVED

That an update in respect of the Crime and Disorder Working Group be received.

REASON

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

SO/53 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN, NOTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD 13TH AND 20TH NOVEMBER, 4TH DECEMBER 2013 AND 6TH JANUARY 2014

The Chairman of the Finance and Performance Working Group presented the notes of the meetings held 13th and 20th November, 4th December 2013 and 6th January 2014.

The Chairman talked Members through the notes from the meetings.

SO/53 Finance and Performance Working Group – To receive an update from the Chairman, notes of the meetings held 13th and 20th November, 4th December 2013 and 6th January 2014 (cont.)

The Committee noted that the Bridge House development had been completed. The Group would monitor the number of households in temporary accommodation, but Members were not overly concerned at this stage.

The Committee supported the Working Group's concerns in relation to the car parks in Horsham town centre, especially Piries car park.

Members were concerned that close to 8000 planning permissions were outstanding, this would be addressed up by the Chairman of the Business Improvement Working Group.

RESOLVED

That the notes from from the Finance and Performance Working Group meetings held 13th and 20th November, 4th December 2013 and 6th January 2014 be received.

REASON

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

SO/54 **SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

There had been no further meetings of the Social Inclusion Working Group.

RESOLVED

That an update in respect of the Social Inclusion Working Group be received.

REASON

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

SO/55 **HEALTH PROVISION WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 14TH NOVEMBER 2013**

The Chairman of the Health Provision Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 14th November 2013.

SO/55 Health Provision Working Group – To receive an update from the Chairman and notes of the meeting held 14th November 2013 (cont.)

At the last meeting the Working Group Members had heard from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on its vision for the future of Horsham Hospital in relation to adding extra services. Members found the CCG's report positive.

At the next meeting Members would consider the Group's final report and this would be presented to the Committee at its meeting on 3rd March 2014.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Health Provision Working Group meeting, held 14th November 2013, be received

REASON

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

SO/56 **TRADE WASTE WORKING GROUP - TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 18TH DECEMBER 2013**

The Chairman of the Trade Waste Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 18th December 2013.

The Committee noted that trade waste revenue was higher than budgeted and the customer base had increased by 3%.

The Members of the Working Group would be looking further into trade waste customers who had left the Council for a more competitive service, and had then returned.

A trade waste recycling service was also being explored by the Working Group.

At the next meeting Members were hoping to hear from some of the Council's service users.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Trade Waste Working Group meeting held 18th December 2013, be received

REASON

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

SO/57 **SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

There had been no further meetings of the Supporting Local Businesses Working Group.

RESOLVED

That an update in respect of the Supporting Local Businesses Working Group be received.

REASON

All Working Group updates are to be received by the Committee

SO/58 **TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman of the Committee explained that the suggestions for the Scrutiny work programme, made Councillor Sheldon at the last Committee meeting, were still outstanding. Therefore the Chairman would meet with Councillor Sheldon and the Director of Corporate Resources, outside of this meeting to discuss the two suggestions which included reviews of the effectiveness of CenSus Revenues and Benefits (as managed by Mid Sussex District Council) and Discretionary Housing Payments which CenSus awarded.

It was also suggested that the Health Provision Working Group continue meeting following the presentation of its final report at the next Scrutiny and Overview Committee, ahead of the changes which were planned to come to Horsham Hospital.

Councillor Skipp raised his concern regarding the planned development in North Horsham. Members discussed whether it was appropriate to carry out such a review and also questioned its timing. It was agreed that Councillor Skipp complete a suggestion form and also draft some suggested terms of reference for the potential review. These would be considered in accordance with the scrutiny suggestion process and presented to the Committee. It would also be considered against the Council's Constitution to ensure it is a valid matter for review by the Committee.

SO/59 **ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA BUT CONSIDERED URGENT**

There were no urgent items.

The Chairman suggested that Members of the Committee consider the details recently received in relation to Scrutiny and Overview training sessions in London. It was suggested that it may be beneficial for Members to attend in

SO/59 Items not on the agenda but considered urgent (cont.)

order to improve efficiency on how we carried out the Scrutiny and Overview function at Horsham.

The meeting finished at 7.50 p.m. having commenced at 5.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN