

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
23 JANUARY 2018

Present: Councillors: Leonard Crosbie (Chairman), Toni Bradnum, Peter Burgess, Paul Clarke, Matthew French, Billy Greening, Nigel Jupp, Tim Lloyd and Michael Willett

Apologies: Councillors: David Coldwell, Alan Britten, Mike Morgan and Brian O'Connell

Absent: Councillors: Jonathan Dancer and Ben Staines

Also Present: Tricia Youtan

SO/25 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Committee held 27th November 2017 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

SO/26 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/27 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

The Chairman wished to formally thank the Vice-Chairman Councillor David Coldwell, for acting as Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny in his absence.

SO/28 **CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW**

The Cabinet Member for Community and Wellbeing was invited to the meeting of the Committee to present and answer questions based on her portfolio.

No questions had been received in advance of the meeting. Therefore the Chairman was invited to present her portfolio summary.

The Committee noted the extensive nature of the portfolio, it covered a wide range of the Council's services including health, community and wellbeing.

Some of the current and recent initiatives included: social prescribing in the District and the expansion of the community warden scheme in villages such as Pulborough and Ashington. Also under this portfolio was the issuing of grants to voluntary organisations, for those who meet the criteria.

The Cabinet Member highlighted some of the successes in terms of crime and disorder, health, social wellbeing, equality and diversity. These were detailed in the summary paper along with some of the challenges.

The Council worked in partnership with a number of organisations for many of the initiatives covered. This also meant that power was often limited as the Council was not the final decision making body.

The Chairman invited the Committee to ask questions based on the portfolio.

Members expressed concerns over the health provision in Horsham, with the increasing population. The Cabinet Member recognised this problem and continued to work with the four CCGs in the area to try and improve the situation.

The Cabinet Member was asked for an update on ambulance response times, including first responders, this would be provided following the meeting.

Mental health was a very relevant topic and Members questioned what the Council did specifically in relation to the services it offered for those with mental health conditions. Members also questioned the mental health support for cancer sufferers and survivors. This was mainly within the remit of West Sussex County Council, although there were a number of voluntary organisations which the District Council supported.

The Members questioned whether the Council had the financial resources to achieve the outcomes sought within this portfolio. It was explained that officers continued to press for more funding from external sources and work within the budget.

The Committee discussed the suicide rates in the District, these remained a concern.

Members questioned whether the Council would work with the leisure centre operators in the District to withdraw the sale of high-sugary drinks. A response would be provided following the meeting.

The local health provision would be added to the agenda for the next meeting of the Committee to consider whether it should be added to the work programme for a potential task and finish group.

The Committee also noted that there had been a recent review of policing in the area which has led to an increase to 10 police officers stationed in Horsham and it was hoped that this would lead to better response times.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognised and supported the positive work under this portfolio and it was suggested that a presentation be made to all Councillors by the lead officers on the work they do with the voluntary associations in this area.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for attending the meeting.

SO/29 **TO CONSIDER THE PROPOSED 2018/19 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

The 2018/19 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2021/22 was available for the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the agenda for the Cabinet meeting on 25th January 2018.

No questions had been received in advance of the meeting.

The Director of Corporate Resources explained that the Medium Term Financial Strategy had been considered at the meeting of the Committee in November 2017, the Budget supported the Strategy.

It was noted that the Council was able to set a balanced budget for 2018/19 generating a small surplus to help cover the future deficit.

Highlights in the Budget included a suggested increase in Council Tax in 2018/19, an increase in green waste collection charges and an increase car parking charges.

Members questioned whether the New Homes Bonus (NHB) was an integral part of the Budget. The of Head of Finance explained that the Council was not reliant on the NHB, there was no certainty that it would continue into 2020 and it was not included in the revenue budget.

Members questioned the breakdown of the capital expenditure programme over the next few years. This information would be circulated following the meeting.

The officers confirmed that the NHB would not be used to fund the new refuse trucks, the purchase of these would be funded from reserves. However, it was noted that the NHB was not ring-fenced.

The Committee confirmed that it had no objections to the information provided in the 2018/19 Budget Report and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

SO/30 **CENSUS TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The Chairman of the CenSus Task and Finish Group updated the Committee, the next meeting of the Group had been organised for 6th February 2018 and the Group would be hearing from the Chief Internal Auditor.

SO/31 **TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES**

SO/32 **TO RECEIVE THE FINAL REPORT OF THE TRAFFIC AROUND PRIMARY SCHOOLS TASK AND FINISH GROUP AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee received the final report of the Traffic Around Primary Schools Task and Finish Group, along with the recommendations.

An additional recommendation had been submitted, since the report was finalised, by the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group.

The Committee recognised the merits of the report on this issue, which was common to many schools in the District.

The Committee congratulated the Group and noted the comprehensive report and approved the recommendations.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

- (i) To support the request that West Sussex County Council implement Regulation 10 of The Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions (England) General Regulations (appendix 3)
- (ii) That enforcement officer presence is increased during peak times around schools, with a suggested target of visiting each school once per each half term. It is also suggested that the strength of the enforcement team be examined with a view towards increasing numbers
- (iii) That the Waste, Street Scene and Fleet team keep road markings around schools clear and visible, especially schools in rural areas
- (iv) That the Communications team to draft a press release/newsletter/magazine article to increase awareness/educate those that drop off and pick up students and place same article on social media sites
- (v) That it is investigated, and if possible, to empower the neighbourhood wardens, where possible, to enforce traffic regulations.

SO/33 **RESPONSE FROM CABINET TO THE LETTER ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The Vice Chairman of the Committee had written to the Cabinet Members for Planning and Development and Housing and Public Protection following a suggestion made at the last meeting of the Committee, to look at the provision

of affordable housing and the option of the Council creating a housing company.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Protection responded to the letter and the response was noted by the Committee.

SO/34 **REPORT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES BY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE - FOR INFORMATION**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Report on the Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees, by the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, which had been circulated by a link on the agenda.

The Chairman suggested that Members read the report and it was agreed that this would be added to the agenda again for the next meeting.

It was also suggested that training for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be considered, the Chairman would consider the training needs of the Committee.

SO/35 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted the Work Programme. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets would be invited to the next meeting of the Committee.

SO/36 **URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

The meeting closed at 7.26 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN