

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
3 JUNE 2019

Present: Councillors: Roy Cornell, Michael Croker, Leonard Crosbie, Brian Donnelly, Billy Greening, Frances Haigh, Nigel Jupp, Lynn Lambert, Richard Landeryou, Louise Potter, Josh Potts, Jack Saheid, David Skipp, Ian Stannard and Kate Rowbottom

Apologies: Councillors: Tim Lloyd

Also Present: Councillor Kate Rowbottom (part)
Councillor Ruth Fletcher

SO/1 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Council Chairman Rowbottom took the chair for the election of a new Chairman for Overview and Scrutiny. Councillor Crosbie was nominated by Councillor Skipp and seconded by Councillor Potter. There were no other nominations and Councillor Crosbie was duly elected as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2019-20. Councillor Rowbottom left and Councillor Crosbie took the Chair.

SO/2 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Donnelly was nominated as Vice Chairman by Councillor Lambert and seconded by Councillor Cornell. There were no other nominations and Councillor Donnelly was duly elected as Vice-Chairman.

SO/3 **TO APPROVE THE TIME OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE NEXT YEAR**

The Chairman asked Councillors whether they were happy with the 5.30pm start time for Overview and Scrutiny meetings and they unanimously confirmed that they were.

RESOLVED

Overview and Scrutiny meetings would continue to start at 5.30pm for the duration of the Council year.

SO/4 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting from 25th March were agreed to be an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

SO/5 **DECLARATIONS OF COUNCILLORS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Jupp declared that he was a West Sussex County Councillor for Southwater and Nuthurst and asked this be recorded for all meetings for the next year.

SO/6 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Donnelly thanked the Officers present for organising the Overview and Scrutiny training for Councillors which had taken place on 23rd May 2019.

SO/7 **CONFIRM MEMBERSHIP OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORKING GROUPS**

Councillor Donnelly questioned whether working groups were the most effective method of carrying out reviews of issues on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He cited the new Scrutiny Guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) which stated that task and finish groups were the most effective method of carrying out both short reviews and longer term reviews. It was agreed to revisit the issue at agenda item 12.

SO/8 **INFORMATION ABOUT PLANNING EXTENSIONS**

Councillors received a report from the Planning service about extensions to planning permission. The Director of Corporate Resources reminded Councillors that the Committee had requested this report at minute SO/74 of the minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 25th March 2019. Councillors said that they wanted to know more about the mechanisms for monitoring when extensions to planning permission were granted. Some Councillors stated they thought Overview and Scrutiny did not need to look at smaller developments because it was larger ones that caused more problems. Some Councillors said the main issue was whether Planning were delivering larger developments when they should be. Other Councillors thought that where the public or parish councils were concerned about developments such as the football pitch at Broadbridge Heath, they should be requesting this information. Councillors for Broadbridge Heath confirmed that this was already happening. The Vice Chairman suggested inviting the Director of Place to explain about when planning extensions were granted and how this was monitored.

RESOLVED

That:

- a) The Chairman of the Committee would detail the points from the planning extensions report where the Committee would like more detailed information.

- b) The Director of Place be asked to the next meeting to answer these matters in more detail.

SO/9 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Vice Chairman thought there were too many Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings scheduled.

Officers explained that last year's Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed they hold the Overview and Scrutiny meetings for 2019/20 on a Monday before Cabinet meetings on the Thursday. There was a discussion around whether it was better to schedule Overview and Scrutiny meetings shortly before Cabinet or shortly before Council meetings. Councillors were reminded they all had the opportunity to speak to an item at Council which was why last year's Overview and Scrutiny has focussed on getting early input to Cabinet business.

The Chairman encouraged Councillors to consider items to review in the forthcoming year and asked officers to circulate the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Suggestion form. Councillors were reminded that they could not scrutinise planning decisions.

RESOLVED

That Councillors consider their ideas for the Work Programme and put them onto the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Suggestion form ready for the July meeting.

SO/10 **CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

Councillors asked about progress on the Highwood Community Centre project and the athletics track that no longer appeared on the forward plan for Cabinet's June meeting. The Director of Corporate Resources informed Councillors that the Highwood Community Centre was now scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 25th July 2019 and the replacement of the athletics track had been removed from the Cabinet Forward Plan at the present time. The Director of Corporate Resources explained to Councillors that deadlines were flexible when there was a need to ensure that detailed work was completed accurately. The Chairman stated that the timing of Overview and Scrutiny's involvement in Cabinet business was important.

SO/11 **NEW SCRUTINY GUIDANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT**

The Chairman stated that it was fortuitous that the new Scrutiny guidance from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government had been issued so close to the start of the Council year.

The Vice Chairman proposed a motion that the Committee should use task and finish groups and remove the proposed standing working groups. He was seconded by Councillor Stannard.

In the ensuing debate the proposer of the motion stated that the Committee should follow the new Overview and Scrutiny guidance and focus on short reviews that gave value to the Council, rather than spending a lot of Councillor and officer time in looking at detail. Those against the motion said they needed more time to decide what work needed to be undertaken before a decision. One Councillor argued strongly that the Committee should look at what their predecessors had said and refer to the previous Committee minutes before making a decision. This Member thought that whether to have working groups or task and finish groups should be reviewed after a year. The Vice Chairman once again stated that the new guidance was suggesting that task and finish groups were the most effective method of reaching a rapid conclusion on issues. There was further discussion about how many groups could run simultaneously.

The Chairman countered the proposals of the Vice Chairman by confirming that the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee had approved working groups to engage in three areas of Council business: Finance and Performance; Business Improvement and Community Relations (the latter to include liaison with stakeholders) .

Councillors voted on the motion to get rid of working groups and have task and finish groups instead. The motion was passed by 8 votes to 6.

In the light of this decision, the Vice Chairman suggested a reduction in the number of Overview and Scrutiny meetings as some were currently scheduled to be very close together and five of the meetings had been planned to be working group meetings. A reduction was agreed.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

- a) use the Government guidance to District Councils as a template for business in the future.
- b) remove the working groups and continue with the practice of using task and finish groups to carry out detailed work outside the main meeting.
- c) remove the extra five Scrutiny meetings in the current Council year added for working group business. The new meeting schedule would be ready for Councillors to agree on at the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny.
- d) All councillors should review the new Overview and Scrutiny Guidance from MHCLG and bring suggestions to the next meeting of the Committee.

SO/12 **MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ON 25TH MARCH**

Councillors said that this agenda item was covered at agenda item 9. Apart from the report on planning extensions the other two matters arising – the report on the Highwood Community Centre and the redevelopment of the athletics track could not be considered because they did not go to Cabinet on the 6th June 2019 as planned.

SO/13 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.12 pm having commenced at 5.32 pm

CHAIRMAN