

SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
11TH JANUARY 2016

Present: Councillors: Leonard Crosbie (Chairman), Alan Britten, Roger Clarke, Matthew French, Tony Hogben, Nigel Jupp, Brian O'Connell, David Skipp, Ben Staines, Michael Willett

Apologies: Councillors: David Coldwell (Vice-Chairman) John Chidlow, Paul Clarke, Jonathan Dancer, Tim Lloyd

Officers: Katharine Eberhart, Director of Corporate Resources

Also present: Councillors: Christian Mitchell, Godfrey Newman, Tricia Youtan

SO/45 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9th November 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SO/46 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/47 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no announcements.

SO/48 **REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee received the reply from Council to the recommendation made by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to amend the Council's Constitution to include a revision of the planning determination process.

This revision arose following concerns and discussions raised by Members of both the Finance and Performance Working Group and the Business Improvement Working Group, so that in the event of a Development Control Committee proposing a decision that would be likely to have significant cost implications for the Council, the decision could be referred for determination by full Council.

The Committee was pleased to see that the recommendation had been accepted by Council and suggested that if a planning application did follow this process, then the Councillors from the other Development Control Committee should familiarise themselves with the site and application, in order to make their decision at the Council meeting.

SO/48 Replies from Cabinet/Council regarding Scrutiny and Overview recommendations (cont.)

If a case did arise in this situation, the planning application would be heard in its entirety at the Council meeting, exactly as it had happened at the Development Control meeting.

This process would be more democratic and the Council as a whole would be responsible for the decision.

There were some concerns raised by Members about how the process would work in practice, so it was suggested that six months after the new structure had been in place, the Committee would review the process and how it operated.

A procedure note was being drafted by the Director of Planning, Economic Development and Property and the Head of Legal Services, this document would then be presented to the Chairman of the two Development Control Committees for consideration, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee requested that this document be presented to the this Committee before it was approved, as it had originated from Scrutiny and Overview.

RESOLVED

That the reply from Council to the Committee's recommendation be received.

REASON

All replies from Council and Cabinet to recommendations of the Committee are to be received.

SO/49 **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP – NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 10TH NOVEMBER 2015**

The Chairman of the Business Improvement Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 10th November 2015.

The main focus of the Working Group was the review of the S106 process. The Working Group established how the S106 process worked and made three recommendations which would form part of the final report of the review. At the next meeting the Working Group would look at the West of Horsham as a sample case.

In addition, the Group was also looking at Business Transformation and the new programme.

The Committee referred to the agenda and questioned the second bullet point on page 12 of the agenda which set out a term of reference for the S106 review: "Commission an immediate comparison analysis of S106 agreements supported by...a specialist firm of suitably qualified external legal advisers",

SO/49 Business Improvement Working Group – Notes of the meeting held 10th November 2015 (cont.)

and how this would be taken forward, the Working Group would report back its next meeting.

The Working Group was anticipating completing this review and presenting its final report and recommendations in May 2016.

The Committee also asked the Chairman of the Working Group to establish the latest position on the recruitment of the new Planning Obligations Officer.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Business Improvement Working Group meeting held 10th November 2015, be received

REASON

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

SO/50 **CRIME AND DISORDER WORKING GROUP – NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 14TH DECEMBER 2015**

The Chairman of the Crime and Disorder Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held on 14th December 2015.

The Group had reviewed the Community Safety Partnership Plan and its three priorities: Alcohol and Drugs, Vulnerable Victims and Casualty Reduction. The Partnership was three quarters of the way through its delivery year and the updates were presented by the Community Safety Manager, Chief Inspector at Sussex Police and the Community Safety Officer, on behalf of Fire and Rescue.

The Committee noted that good progress had been made to this point and Members of the Working Group had been very impressed with the comprehensive presentation, the quality of work that all three groups had undertaken and the attention to detail.

The Working Group was due to meet again in April 2016 to receive an update at the end of the delivery year and looking forward to the forthcoming year.

The Committee noted the update and welcomed the suggestion that a similar presentation made by the officers and Police be given at a future meeting of the Council so that all Members could recognise the work of this Partnership. The Chairman of the Group would endeavour to organise this presentation.

SO/50 Crime and Disorder Working Group – Notes of the meeting held 14th December 2015 (cont.)

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Crime and Disorder Working Group meeting held 14th December 2015, be received

REASON

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

SO/51 **FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP – NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 18TH NOVEMBER 2015**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 18th November 2015. Since this meeting the Group had met twice informally to review the Council's Budget 2015/16 and the financial forecast.

In December the Members met informally with the finance officers and discussed the revenue and the capital budget. Overall the Council was forecasting a balanced budget for costs and Members noted that there were a number of capital projects in the pipeline.

Business cases for the medium term capital budget projects would be reviewed by the Working Group.

In January the Members met informally with the Cabinet and discussed the financial settlement from central Government, the potential deficit and it also gave Members the opportunity to ask questions of the Cabinet in terms of the Budget.

The Committee discussed briefly the option to increase Council Tax in the District and the New Homes Bonus.

At the informal meeting Members had also discussed in depth the emerging expense in relation to housing benefits as a result of errors in the department, which had led to the department exceeding its regulatory acceptable errors limit. The Committee noted that the Government could claim the money back which had been paid in error to residents and this amounted £180,000.

CenSus was a shared service and Horsham was partners with Mid-Sussex and Adur and Worthing Councils; however Mid-Sussex Council was the lead authority in housing benefits, but Members noted that the loss was across all three partners. This error rate had been ongoing since 2013/14 and the Working Group would continue to monitor this area. The Committee also noted that two Cabinet Members from Horsham sat on the CenSus Joint Committee.

SO/51 Finance and Performance Working Group – Notes of the meeting held 18th November 2015 (cont.)

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Finance and Performance Working Group meeting held 18th November 2015, be received

REASON

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

SO/52 **SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 30TH NOVEMBER 2015**

The Chairman of the Social Inclusion Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 30th November 2015.

The Working Group had received a report on Digital Inclusion which highlighted a problem on the Council's website in terms of accessibility. Members noted that had since been addressed and now there was a clear link from the Home page on the website to the accessibility pages.

The Working Group had identified and supported the importance of maintaining face to face contact for residents who required this when accessing services as the Council became more digitally advanced. The Committee strongly supported this and emphasised its importance.

The Working Group was concerned about the CenSus Revenues and Benefits performance data and the problems suffered by those who received benefits, there was concern over slow and overpayments and the Group would continue to monitor this, this was also supported by the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Social Inclusion Working Group meeting held on 30th November 2015, be received

REASON

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

SO/53 **HEALTH PROVISION WORKING GROUP –CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE**

The Committee noted that the Health Provision Working Group on 17th December 2015 had been cancelled and the next meeting would be held on Monday 25th January 2016.

RESOLVED

That an update from the Health Provision Working Group be received

REASON

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

SO/54 **TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME**

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

SO/55 **ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA BUT CONSIDERED URGENT**

None.

The meeting finished at 7.15 pm having commenced at 6.00 pm.

CHAIRMAN