

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on  
Thursday, 6 July 2017 at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Tony Orgee – Chairman  
Councillor Kevin Cuffley – Vice-Chairman

**Councillors:** David Bard Ruth Betson  
Graham Cone Philippa Hart  
Tumi Hawkins Val Barrett

Councillors Simon Edwards, Lynda Harford, Mark Howell and Peter Topping were in attendance by invitation.

**Officers:** Victoria Wallace Democratic Services Officer  
Mike Hill Health and Environmental Services Director  
Suzy Brandes Principal Accountant (General Fund & Projects)  
Richard May Policy and Performance Manager

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Grenville Chamberlain and Jose Hales. Councillor Val Barrett was present as a substitute for Councillor Chamberlain.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2017 were agreed subject to the following change being made:

- 10 – Councillor Hart advised that she had said that the ICT service had not gone back to where it had been regarding its level of service.

Matters arising:

- The committee was informed that a Member workshop to look at the risk register, had not yet been organised.

### **4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions.

### **5. UPDATE ON THE SHARED WASTE SERVICE**

The Health and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder provided an update on the Shared Waste Service and explained the background to the process of setting this service up:

- The committee was informed that there were 320 bin rounds undertaken over a two week period.
- The publicity campaign advertising the new bin rounds and new service ahead of its launch on 23 February 2017, had been successful.

- Following the launch of the new service, there had been issues with assisted bins. The reason for this had been an issue regarding the in-cab computer system. Any missed bins had been collected within the following 48 hours. Issues regarding flats in the city centre had occurred due to a lack of information regarding where bin keys were kept.
- The committee was informed that staffing issues had been the most significant issue with the new service with the merge of two services and two different cultures. An overview of the specific issues was given. This had been challenging and these issues were being addressed through Human Resources.

The local members for Sawston outlined problems that had been experienced with missed bins in their ward:

- Missed bins reported on the Tuesday before Easter had not been collected for a further week due to there being two consecutive bank holidays.
- Bins around Sawston had been regularly missed since the transfer to the new service with missed bins occurring on a weekly basis in some areas.
- Of particular concern was bin rounds not being completed at the end of shift, resulting in entire parts of streets being missed.

The Health and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder acknowledged the issues that had occurred in Sawston, informing the committee that on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017, five streets had been missed and on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017, one street had been missed. These had been the two most significant occurrences of missed bins. The committee was informed that full and frank discussions had occurred with bin crews following this.

The committee was informed that the current issue was with individual properties that were being missed repeatedly and this was being addressed. The committee was also informed that bin lorries had CCTV so it was possible to see if bins that had been reported as missed, had been left out by residents. Due to the CCTV footage, it was known that some missed bins had been reported where bins had not actually been left out by residents.

The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that there were still issues with the service which were being addressed, however pointed out collection rates were consistently in the high 90%. Despite this, the Portfolio Holder acknowledged that some residents, particularly in Sawston had not had the best level of service provided to them. The committee advised that the Council write to these residents.

The committee was informed that the cost resulting from the issues that had occurred following the merge of the waste services, had not outweighed the savings. It was hoped that the remaining issues with the service would be resolved within the next three to four months.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee requested a further update on the shared waste service at its meeting in September 2017. The Health and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder agreed to this and requested some guidance from the committee as to what it would like to be included in the update.

## **6. 3C SHARED SERVICES 2016/17 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Leader of the Council presented the 3C Shared Services Annual Report, which summarised the performance of the shared services during the 2016/17 financial year. The Leader made the following points as an introduction to the report:

- There was a shortage of people with appropriate skills in certain sectors, such as

Planning and Building Control. The main driver in developing shared services was to build staffing resilience and the opportunity for staff to develop their skills and careers.

- The aspirations for savings were ambitious. Whilst they had not been met in the first year, confidence remained that they would be made over a longer period of time. Lessons learnt were being applied to the establishment of other shared services.

The committee's perception was that members had been unhappy with the shared ICT and Legal services. The committee raised the following concerns:

- The Council had lost and was continuing to lose legal officers.
- Concern that rural and urban councils were combining in shared services.
- Shared services were not showing resilience.
- Issues with the ICT service were affecting the members' ability to function. Councillors did not have access to Insite and there were issues with the Good App, with some members able to use this and others unable. In response to this, the committee was informed that members would have access to Insite by October 2017 and that the Good App would end. The replacement of this would be the new system to access Insite.

Regarding the report, the following comments were made:

- The report contained too much management jargon and it needed to be kept in mind that members of the public needed to be able to understand this report.
- The use of the Council's reserves should be included in the report.

In response to queries, the committee was informed of the following:

- The Combined Authority was being billed for legal services.
- Interim staff had been used in the ICT service as it had been hard to recruit and retain staff due to competition in the area. Permanent staff were in post with only two interim staff members remaining. The Director of Health and Environmental Services informed the committee that there was confidence that the agency overspend would be eliminated this year.
- The three IT systems were operating with too many legacy systems and this was an opportunity to bring coherence. The Leader was confident that savings would be realised and that the service would be in a far better place by Autumn 2017.
- One of the important lessons learned was that leadership needed to be in place from the start and this was being applied to the Planning Shared Service.
- In response to concerns raised, the Leader pointed out that improvements had been made with the shared legal service having brought a level of transparency regarding standards of complaints, that had not previously been seen.

Councillor Hawkins recommended that a member survey on the shared legal service be undertaken in order to help inform any improvement that could be made. In response to this, the Director of Health and Environmental Services informed the committee that the legal service would be undertaking a customer satisfaction survey, which would include members. This would be part of this year's performance monitoring.

Members were invited to report directly to the Director of Health and Environmental Services, any specific instances of bad experience with the legal shared service.

The Leader of the Council expressed disappointment at the committee's negative reception of the work that had been put into the development of shared services.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the report.

## 7. 2016-17 YEAR END POSITION STATEMENT ON FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RISK

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder conveyed the Business and Customer Services Portfolio Holder's apologies for having been unable to attend the meeting in order to present the report with him. The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder presented the financial and risk elements of the report.

The committee was informed that the changes it had proposed to the recording of risk, had been considered by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and the Executive Management Team was currently reviewing the risk register.

The report was discussed and the following points made:

- More consistency was requested between the information presented in this report and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder explained that the underspend in development control was additional income in development control fees.
- It was felt that the inclusion of the £3 million developer contributions as a success may seem distasteful to local residents as some of this would have come from speculative planning applications. The Portfolio Holder pointed out the good work that had been done in securing these contributions, which had also come from non-speculative planning applications. Committee members felt that developer contributions was an under-exploited resource. In response to this the Portfolio Holder reminded the committee that a balance had to be struck between developer contributions and the viability of affordable housing provision, to ensure that the latter did not suffer. Committee members advised that parish councils needed more help in engaging and securing developer contributions.
- In response to a query, the committee was informed that unplanned income would be put into the Council's reserves.
- The red indicators regarding the percentage of undisputed invoices paid in 30 days was queried. In response to this the committee was informed that the new Financial Management System would help resolve this, as the current system did not allow for streamlining of the processing of invoices.
- Regarding the performance of sundry debts, the Portfolio Holder explained that these were hard to anticipate and these variations were often seen. The committee was advised that these were rarely a real cause for concern and the figures in the report were due to one large invoice. The committee was assured that this was under control.
- Regarding Ermine Street Housing, it was clarified that income was above target. The Portfolio Holder informed the committee that Ermine Street Housing targets were not in the public domain as this was a private company.
- The levels of staff sickness were queried. The Portfolio Holder informed the committee that a process had been implemented through his portfolio, regarding staff motivation and the avoidance of staff sickness.
- In response to a query regarding the hoarding protocol, the Director of Health and Environmental Services informed the committee that the Council through Environmental Health, had responsibility for private rental housing standards. The committee was informed that increasing numbers of hoarding issues were being identified. The Council was working with the fire service to reduce hoarding, with Environmental Health officers and Fire officers developing a standard approach to hoarding. It was advised that members should be made aware of this as they may be aware of other cases of hoarding in their wards.

The committee raised the following issues regarding planning performance:

- Concern was raised that the Council's planning department was under resourced and a consequence of this was that residents were not getting a good service with untimely processing of planning applications. In response to this the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder advised that planning applications were now being processed in a timely way and directed the committee to the relevant key performance information at page 59 of the agenda pack.
- Although planning applications were being processed in time, it was pointed out that conditions then took time.
- S106 money was notional as the houses were not yet built. It was advised that parish councils needed to be encouraged to engage with regards to S106 contributions, even when they were against proposed schemes.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the report.

## **8. UPDATE ON BUILDING CLADDING AND FIRE RELATED ISSUES**

The Housing Portfolio Holder provided an update on building cladding and fire related issues. The following points were made:

- Materials used in Council properties and the installation of these, met British standards.
- The Council had already commissioned a fire risk assessment on its residential blocks and communal areas. Completion of this was due on 20 July 2017.
- The Council had no tower blocks. The tallest of the Council's residential properties were three storeys and none of these were clad.
- The Council's wider cladding programme was to one and two storey buildings.
- The Council had no cedar-clad properties however an eye may need to be kept on properties bought by the Council in future.

Committee members raised the following issues:

- Concern was raised regarding potential issues with evacuation of Council tenants with mobility issues. In response to this the committee was informed that the Council was undertaking a tenancy audit.
- The committee was informed that a test had been conducted on the cladding material used by the Council, during which the material had not caught fire. The committee was assured the material was as safe as it could be.
- The committee queried the robustness of the Council's emergency procedures. In response to this the committee was informed that:
  - Housing officers were reviewing the Council's crisis response.
  - The Local Resilience Forum was undertaking a review of emergency response capability and planning.
  - The Council had exercises planned with partners in October and November 2017, which involved parishes.
  - A number of parishes had emergency plans, which the Council and partners could access.
- Councillor Cone advised that Fulbourn residents had asked about the safety of wall insulation, and requested that information on this be put in the South Cambs magazine in order to allay residents' concerns.
- The committee was informed that fire updates on the Grenfell Towers incident and emerging intelligence from this were on the agenda of monthly safety meetings.
- The Housing Portfolio Holder would circulate further information regarding safety

compliance.

- The Chairman queried whether there was cladding on the Council's office building in Cambourne. The Director of Health and Environmental Services advised that there was some cladding on the building but that it was assessed as a low-risk non-residential building.

The committee thanked the Housing Portfolio Holder for this update.

## 9. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered its work programme. The following items were requested for the September 2017 meeting of the committee:

- An update on performance of the Customer Contact Centre.
- An update on the Shared Waste Service focussing on missed bins, to include assisted bins, and staffing issues.

An update on Shared Services was requested for the committee's November 2017 meeting.

The Director of Health and Environmental Services would look into when an update could be provided to the committee on the work of the task and finish groups looking at mental health.

Councillor Orgee informed the committee that following the last Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting, he had attended three taxi licensing workshops. The committee was informed that policies were old and gender specific and needed to be rewritten. Consultation was being undertaken with members of the Licensing Committee on this and as such it was felt that there was nothing further for the Scrutiny Committee to do regarding this.

Regarding the Ermine Street Housing Task and Finish Group, the Chairman apologised for issues that had occurred in convening a meeting of the group. A meeting would be convened before the end of July 2017 to set the group's terms of reference.

## 10. APPOINTMENT OF SCRUTINY MONITORS AND MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee appointed the following Scrutiny Monitors to portfolios:

<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Scrutiny Monitor</b>
Leader	Tony Orgee
Finance and Staffing	Philippa Hart
Business and Customer Services	Tumi Hawkins
Environmental Services	David Bard
Health and Wellbeing	Tony Orgee
Greater Cambridge Partnership	David Bard
Housing	Kevin Cuffley Jose Hales
Planning	Graham Cone Philippa Hart
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure	Philippa Hart

**11. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The committee noted the dates of future meetings:

- Thursday 7 September 2017 at 6pm
- Thursday 9 November 2017 at 6pm
- Tuesday 6 February 2018 at 6pm
- Thursday 12 April 2018 at 6pm

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**The Meeting ended at 8.11 p.m.**

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