

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Thursday, 5 November 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Roger Hickford – Chairman
Councillor Kevin Cuffley – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: David Bard Henry Batchelor
Grenville Chamberlain Jose Hales
Philippa Hart Bunty Waters

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

Officers: Gemma Barron Sustainable Communities & Partnerships
Manager
John Garnham Principal Accountant (General Fund & Projects)
Jean Hunter Chief Executive
Mike Hill Health and Environmental Services Director
Richard May Policy and Performance Manager
Victoria Wallace Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Whiteman-Downes.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising were:

- Members were still to receive a breakdown of the savings in the Shared Legal Services Business case that was discussed at the 7 July 2015 meeting of the committee. In addition to this, information relating to the 2014/15 spend across the three Councils involved in the Legal Shared Service was also still to be provided to Members. The Chief Executive would ensure Members received this information following the meeting.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

5. QUARTERLY POSITION REPORT ON FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RISK

The Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder and Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder presented the Quarterly Position Report on Finance, Performance and Risk.

It was clarified that the Cambourne office rent was received from space rented out within

the building to other organisations. The Principal Accountant (General Fund and Projects) would provide further clarification to the committee following the meeting, regarding the rent figure in the report.

The Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder informed the committee that a soft launch of benefits e-forms had started on 5 October 2015. This was to live test the e-forms system so that any issues could be rectified before fully launching the system and publicising e-forms widely. User feedback of the system had been positive so far.

The Council's Key Performance Indicators were discussed:

- The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder informed the committee of the work being done to improve Planning performance and the reasons for poor performance. Members were informed that new Planning Officers had been recruited, which included graduate trainees.
- Missed bins were discussed. Members were assured that the report did not reflect a dip in performance but a change in how performance was measured. The committee was informed that the target would be changed to more accurately reflect performance.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the report and requested that a revised structure chart of the Planning Department be circulated to Members.

6. REVIEW OF THE CORPORATE PLAN

The Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented the Corporate Plan.

The Housing Portfolio Holder updated the committee on the significant negative implications for the Council, of the Government's budget announcements with regards to housing. The committee was informed that negotiations were ongoing with the Housing Minister. Members were informed that the Council wanted to build new council housing but due to the Government's budget announcements and the implications of the 1% drop in rents, the situation had changed drastically with regards to this. The Corporate Plan would be amended to reflect this.

The committee advised that it should not be involved in the Corporate Plan consultation as its role was to scrutinise this. The Corporate Plan would be presented to the committee again in February 2016.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the report and **RECOMMENDED** the following wording for sections of the Corporate Plan:

- At section (7) of the Corporate Plan, which referred to commercialisation, the committee recommended the wording to 'Move to a commercial approach to service delivery and to seek out and pursue new commercial opportunities'.
- Under 'Wellbeing', section (9) should refer to both physical and mental health.

7. DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) that would be presented to Cabinet at its November 2015 meeting. Members were informed that more detail would be built into the MTFS following the Government's Autumn budget statement.

The Portfolio Holder commended the Health and Environmental Services directorate for its savings achievements.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Medium Term Financial Strategy was discussed:

- The impact of Right to Buy on the Council was likely to be significant.
- The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder commended Ermine Street Housing and the way officers had diversified their approach to being more commercial.
- The committee was informed that the Council may put together a development team to look at developing housing.

The committee **NOTED** the report.

8. REVIEW OF LESSONS LEARNED FROM ORCHARD PARK

Councillor Lynda Harford presented the report which outlined the findings of the Working Group set up to review the lessons learned from Orchard Park.

Councillor Harford presented the 20 recommendations. Recommendation four was highlighted and the City Council's charging strategy for pre-application advice was explained.

The report and recommendations were discussed:

- Members and officers who had been involved in this work were thanked.
- The realism of recommendation 17 was queried as it concerned the involvement of and working relationships with the health sector. The committee was informed that the Council had a good working relationship with health partners.
- The need for a cost analysis of the recommendations was queried. Members were informed that the recommendations were based on things that were already being done and it was not felt that a cost analysis was necessary.
- The recommendation regarding road adoption was discussed. This continued to be a challenging area and it was felt that a review of what could be adopted from a technical point of view, was needed as there was no national criteria for road adoption.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **AGREED** the final recommendations of the Orchard Park Working Group and **RECOMMENDED** their endorsement in full to Cabinet.

9. WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

The committee's work programme was noted.

Housing was added to the work programme for January 2016.

10. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE

Councillor Henry Batchelor had attended the Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder meeting as Scrutiny Monitor, on behalf of Councillor Chamberlain.

11. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of future meetings were noted. The next meeting would take place on Thursday 7 January at 6pm.

The Meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.
