

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on  
Thursday, 21 June 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Grenville Chamberlain – Chairman  
Councillor Brian Milnes – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Ruth Betson  
Sarah Cheung Johnson  
Graham Cone  
Dr. Douglas de Lacey  
Peter McDonald  
Eileen Wilson

Dr. Martin Cahn  
Gavin Clayton  
Dr. Claire Daunton  
Bill Handley  
Dawn Percival  
Steve Hunt

Officers: Victoria Wallace  
Mike Hill  
Caroline Hunt  
Richard May  
Kathrin John

Democratic Services Officer  
Health and Environmental Services Director  
Planning Policy Manager  
Policy and Performance Manager  
Democratic Services Team Leader

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Anna Bradnam. Councillor Steve Hunt was present as a substitute for Councillor Bradnam.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

### **4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received.

### **5. CHANGING APPROACH TO SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW**

The committee would be moving to pre-decision scrutiny. The Chairman referred to the training the committee had undertaken earlier that day, which had given some insight into this. The committee needed to identify a work plan going forward and areas for scrutiny would need to be prioritised. The Chairman was keen for the committee to remain non-political. The Chairman suggested the committee look at the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to look at how this related to South Cambridgeshire and its services. The committee was informed that the Council was looking at recruitment of a Scrutiny Officer.

A group working agreement would be developed, which would be added to the agenda for the next meeting for discussion.

## 6. 2017-18 YEAR END POSITION STATEMENT ON FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RISK

The Policy and Performance Manager presented the report which provided an update on the Council's financial position and performance for the 2017-2018 year end. He explained that the Strategic Risk Register was under review.

The Deputy Leader of the Council was present and informed the committee that the new administration would be reviewing the Corporate Plan and the measures against which the Council's performance was measured.

The Committee discussed the report:

- Concern was raised regarding the tone of the report which focussed on successes rather than problems. More in depth analysis of areas of concern was requested, focussing on actions to improve performance.
- Information was requested regarding whether the new housing and homelessness officers referred to in the report had been appointed and what the Council had been doing to help ensure a smooth implementation of Universal Credit. Information about the skill mix of these staff was also requested. The committee was informed that the Council was very aware of the risk of the implementation of Universal Credit, which was due to be implemented in October 2018.
- With reference to the number of unfilled vacancies and sickness levels, concern was raised that economic savings were being made by the Council at the expense of staff, staffing levels and the performance of the Council. In response to this the committee was informed that the Council had struggled to recruit to a number of service areas, such as Planning. Despite this the Council had continued to deliver a service. The skills shortage in Planning was a nationwide issue. The committee was assured that the Council did not have a policy to not fill vacancies in order to make financial savings and that staff sickness levels were not worsening.
- In response to a query regarding the reasons for being unable to recruit planning officers, the committee was informed that the high cost of living in South Cambridgeshire was a contributing factor, as was the general shortage of planning officers across the country. The Council was continuing to find ways to recruit planning officers.
- The committee was informed that all staff leaving the organisation were given the opportunity for an exit interview.
- It was suggested that the committee could look at recruitment challenges as part of its work programme.
- The scoring of risks in the Strategic Risk Register was discussed. Concern was raised that the net score of risks could be masking significant problems, with some risks rated as amber when there was clearly a problem. In response to this the committee was informed that the net score took into account the actions taken to mitigate the risk. The committee was assured that the amber rating reflected that the risk was significant.
- Regarding mitigations in relation to recruitment and retention, the committee was informed that all mitigating factors had either been implemented or were in the process of being implemented, but the Council was still struggling to recruit.
- The committee was informed that staff turnover was at a healthy level; around 10%. Turnover did not relate directly to underspends arising from ongoing staff vacancies, as in most cases the Council was able to successfully recruit to positions.
- The committee was informed that the £8.7 million allocated to improving public transport links between Cambourne, Cambridge and nearby villages as referred to in the Corporate Plan, was from Section 106 contributions.
- Regarding reference made in the Corporate Plan to the A14 and A428, committee

members raised concern regarding the Girton Interchange remaining a single lane. The Deputy Leader informed the committee that this was part of the wider discussions with Highways England on the A428, which the Leader of the Council had been working on.

- In response to a suggestion that a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) be added regarding enforcement in relation to Travellers, the committee was informed that KPI ES406 measured the percentage of major non-compliances resolved.
- Concern was raised that the provision of electric vehicle charging points was not a requirement for new homes. In response to this the Deputy Leader advised that there was no mechanism to oblige developers to provide electric vehicle charging points, but the next Local Plan would start to be developed next year and the inclusion of issues such as this could be considered.
- The vacancy figures across the whole of the Planning Shared Service were requested. The committee was informed that some vacancies in the Planning service were filled by consultants.
- The demand on bailiff and legal services in dealing with illegal Traveller encampments was suggested as a potential future area of work for the committee.
- Regarding the underspend in ICT Development detailed in Appendix C of the report, members queried whether spending more on improved ICT could have helped with the staffing issues if staff had been struggling to do carry out their jobs due to ICT issues. An update on the short term plans for improvements to ICT was suggested as an item for the next committee meeting. Regarding underspend, the Deputy Leader clarified that any rollovers were due to projects that were ongoing so any underspend was likely to be spent as the project progressed.

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

## **7. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH MINERALS AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN - PRELIMINARY DRAFT CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

The Deputy Leader of the Council presented the report which sought agreement to submit a response to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Preliminary Draft Consultation, in accordance with the points set out in the report. This would be a joint consultation response with Cambridge City Council, the deadline for which was 26 June 2018. The Planning Policy Manager presented the key issues.

In response to a query, the Director of Health and Environmental Services clarified that South Cambridgeshire District Council collected waste and the County Council disposed of this. Based on what the District Council collected, the recycling rate was 49%. The committee was informed that there were ambitions to have significant development including commercial, employment and residential, on the Cambridge water recycling centre site at Milton, which was allocated as a major brownfield site. A site for the relocation of the water recycling plant would need to be identified. Once this was done, the relocation of the site also presented development opportunities for the surrounding area, which would no longer be impacted by odour issues from the water recycling centre.

A concern was raised that the site assessment did not raise the issue of sustainability and it was suggested that more information needed to be included to make sure plans were ecologically sustainable as well as economically sustainable. In response to this the Planning Policy Manager clarified that Draft Policy 1 as referred to in the report, addressed sustainability. The committee requested that this Policy be sent to Councillor de Lacey to read.

Subject to discussions between Councillor de Lacey and the Planning Policy Manager, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee **ENDORSED** the report.

## 8. TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chairman informed the committee that the Leader of the Council had requested a task and finish group be set up to consider how the Council could facilitate SME businesses to procure work on its behalf in a cost effective, reasonable and proportional manner and what the barriers were to SMEs procuring Council contracts. The Democratic Services Team Leader referring to the Council's Constitution informed the committee that members of the Executive could only participate on a Scrutiny task and finish group in an advisory capacity. Councillors Grenville Chamberlain, Sarah Cheung Johnson and Brian Milnes would form this group. It was anticipated that one or two meetings taking place in September, would be sufficient to investigate this issue.

## 9. APPOINTMENT OF SCRUTINY MONITORS

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee appointed the following Scrutiny Monitors to Portfolios:

Portfolio	Scrutiny Monitor
Leader	Grenville Chamberlain
Deputy Leader	Cllr Graham Cone
Housing	Cllr Claire Daunton
Environmental Services & Licensing	Cllr Sarah Cheung Johnson
Planning	Cllr Brian Milnes
Customer Service & Business Improvement	Cllr Peter McDonald
Finance	Cllr Bill Handley (provisional, to be confirmed)

Guidance on the role of Scrutiny Monitors was requested. The Chairman suggested this be discussed at the committee's next meeting alongside the work programme. The Chairman asked members to consider topics they would like the committee to consider so that these could be prioritised.

It was queried how opposition spokespeople for a Portfolio could find out what was happening and what decisions were to be taken. The Deputy Leader explained that it was anticipated that the majority of decision making would be through the Executive via the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, however the Executive was in the process of finalising the decision making process. The Chairman welcomed decisions being presented to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee before they were taken by the Executive. The committee's attention was drawn to the Council's Notice of Key and Non-Key Decisions, which was published on the Council's website each month. He suggested the committee keep informed of upcoming decisions through this and by talking to officers and the Portfolio Holders.

## 10. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman referred the committee to the Council's Notice of Key and Non Key Decisions. The Chairman and Vice Chairman would draft a work programme which would be brought to the committee's July 2018 meeting. Members indicated their agreement with this approach.

The issue of rural crime was raised, which members would welcome the Police and

Crime Commissioner attending to discuss this with the committee.

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

The committee agreed the next meeting would take place on Thursday 12 July 2018 at 6pm. Subsequent meeting dates and times would be discussed at this meeting.

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**The Meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.**

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