

**Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Leader,
Resources and Economic Growth held on 9 November 2016
from 7:00p.m. to 8:15 p.m.**

Present:

John Allen
Edward Belsey
Margaret Belsey
Kevin Burke*
Rod Clarke

Tony Dorey*
Jacqui Landriani
Andrew Lea
Bob Mainstone*
Gordon Marples

Peter Martin
Norman Mockford
Geoff Rawlinson*
Linda Stockwell
Colin Trumble

* Absent

Also Present (as nominated substitute): Councillor John Wilkinson.

Also Present: Councillor Garry Wall.

1. SUBSTITUTES AT MEETINGS OF COMMITTEE – COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 4

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor John Wilkinson had replaced Councillor Tony Dorey for the duration of the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Burke, Mainstone and Rawlinson.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September were agreed as correct record and signed by the Chairman:

5. URGENT BUSINESS

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Resources sought permission from the Chairman to reschedule the Capital Programme Monitoring report to the 18 January Committee, due to having a re-prioritised workload.

A Member queried whether this report could be heard by a Committee held before January. The Head of Corporate Resources stated he could send the report to Members for them to read before the Committee in January as the report would be ready by the end of the week.

The Chairman agreed the Capital Programme Report be moved to the 18 January Committee, and for the Committee Members to receive the report by the end of the week.

6. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN AND BUDGET 2017/18 – CONSULTATION PROCESS

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Resources introduced the report. He stated the report is very similar to the previous year's report and is proposing the same tried and tested methods. The Draft Corporate Plan and Budget 2017/18 goes to Cabinet first, and then enters a six week consultation period in which it can be scrutinised by Members.

A Member noted that this was the first Committee held in the new format with the different scrutiny responsibilities, and wished to know if the Portfolio Holder for the new Committee would provide an overview of their plan.

The Chairman stated that the economic growth portfolio will be discussed in the upcoming work programme.

In response to a question raised as to whether Members would be included in the budget consultation process, the Head of Corporate Resources clarified that it was up to Members to consult with the public and feed back to the Council.

A Member sought clarification that it was the Committee's role to comment on the consultation process, not the Corporate Plan and Budget itself. This was confirmed by the Chairman.

Councillor Garry Wall, Leader of the Council, stated that the Finance and Service Working Group was revisiting existing priorities and their recommendations will be fed back to this Committee. He emphasised it is the role of all Members to engage with the consultation process.

The Leader explained that the process is very much in line with previous years and in broad terms the Council has the same objectives to deliver the best possible service to the public with the best value for money. Ultimately, the Committee will have a full and valid input into this process.

The Chairman took the Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

The Committee resolved to agree the proposed approach as laid out in the report.

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2016/17

Tim Cusack, Business Unit Leader for Performance and Partnerships introduced the report. He summarised that 31 indicators were on or exceeded target (79%) compared to 27 (71%) the previous year.

He stated this was a positive development at a time where there is an increased demand for services. The target for new Housing Benefit claims and change in circumstances were being met. Environmental Health requests missed their target but have improved. Paragraph 15 outlines that the Council aims to learn from compliments as well as complaints.

A Member wished to know what the costings to the Council would be regarding the number of households accepted as homeless, those in temporary accommodation, and the cost of uncollected Non-Domestic Rates (NDR).

The Head of Corporate Resources stated that targets for Non-Domestic Rates collected referred to in year collection. He advised that payment of any uncollected rates continues into the next financial year, so the costs of any uncollected Rates are minimal.

A Member stated that the percentage of collection of Non-Domestic Rates at the end of the second quarter had reached 56.91% against the target of 57.65% and asked about the review to look at the reasons for reductions in collection rates.

The Head of Corporate Resources stated a review was undertaken to clarify why the collection rate was 0.7% under target. He stated that businesses are perhaps finding the rates a burden and paying more slowly than previously. There are also some instances where businesses go bust and then start up again with the same directors. He clarified that the overall percentage of collection has decreased even though the gross amount collected has increased.

The Chairman asked what had been learnt from this review.

The Head of Corporate Resources stated that actions had been put in place to make more personal contact via telephone with smaller businesses to discuss payment plans and avoid arrears.

With regard to the costs associated with homelessness and the increased numbers in temporary accommodation, the Head of Corporate Services said that he would arrange for a written response to be provided.

One Member questioned the importance of some of the performance indicators that the Committee is monitoring, and suggested the Performance Indicator Review Working Group should consider this.

Tom Clark, Head of Regulatory Services advised that Members of the Committee can choose the performance indicators they wish to see, and that performance indicators are useful for management purposes.

The Leader of the Council clarified that each year Members can fine tune the indicators to reflect the current work-load of the Council. He stated that the Council will always have to monitor indicators such as homeless households and payment of benefit.

A Member stated that overall; the report reflects excellent progress and gave a positive personal experience of the Council's contact centre. Regarding performance indicators, he advised that some may not need to be included in the future such as payment of invoices, and asked whether the membership of the Working Group should be drawn from this Committee.

The Member also queried whether the Council's parking machines needed to be updated, as people are now paying for parking in different ways and the machines are now ageing.

The Committee discussed membership of the Performance Indicator Review Working Group and whether this should be extended to Members of the other Scrutiny

Committees. The Committee agreed to the Chairman's suggestion that the Working Group should comprise 6 Members, one of whom would be from another of the Scrutiny Committees.

The Head of Corporate Resources informed Members that if the parking machines are in need of replacement this can be initiated.

The Leader of the Council informed the Committee that parking services were previously part of his portfolio and the machines have a very low failure rate. The percentage of car parking machines repaired within two days currently stands at 97%.

Regarding any future replacement, the Leader stated this will be in consultation with the Business Unit Leader for Parking and the Head of Service to consider over time. To support growth in parking, the Council will look at the use of smart-phone apps and smart-technology.

He stated he will be looking at the cost of car-parking and how this supports the retail sector in the district. He advised Members that the current car-parking machines have a lifespan of approximately ten years, and that the current stock will be approaching this lifespan soon and that parking management are aware of this.

The Chairman indicated the value of performance indicators as the Committee can see that car parking has improved over the last year.

A Member requested to know what specific facilities are being used in leisure centres, for example tennis courts, and whether there could be targeted investment in specific areas.

The Head of Corporate Resources clarified that the Scrutiny Committee for Customer Service and Service Delivery scrutinise the leisure centre portfolio, but if needs be, the individual footfall report could be broken down and provided to this Committee.

The Chairman stated that this Committee monitors the performance of Council Leisure Centres and not necessarily the detail of their activity

A Member directed the Committee's attention to the homelessness performance indicators on page 28 of the report. He inquired whether it would be more beneficial to list the cost to the Council rather than the individual homelessness figures, and questioned whether the Council needed to have a target for the numbers accepted as homelessness.

Simon Hughes, the Head of Digital and Customer Services stated the Council monitors the numbers in temporary accommodation and the speed with which they are moved to permanent accommodation. The Council is also continuing to put an emphasis on homelessness prevention and avoiding the use of temporary accommodation.

The Member asked if a performance indicator could be included stating the number of people who were successfully housed and any prevented from being homeless.

The Chairman stated that the performance indicators will be looked at by the Working Group and this consideration will be taken into account.

Another Member mentioned the recent Member Training on the Health Service and winter resilience and acknowledged the contribution of the Council's wellbeing service to the health of the District. She asked about the age-profile of staff sickness and when the roll-out of green bins will be completed. A further question related to the rising number of service requests being received by the Environmental Health Team and whether there are resources in place to meet their targets.

The Head of Digital and Customer Services stated that there were not any particular trends with sickness absence and the age profile of staff. Concerning the roll-out of Garden waste bins, everyone on the waiting list has been signed up and the new bins will be despatched on the 11th November. He stated the Council is already looking at digitalising the sign-up process and contact centre staff are improving the process to sign up and are directing people to sign up online. There will be a marketing plan in place involving the Communications department and Waste Service Team.

The Head of Regulatory Services stated that the Environmental Health department are taking steps to increase resources to deal with the rising number of service requests. The growth in workload is in line with the increase in population of the District.

A Member asked what the levels of vandalism and theft are for the current parking machines, and queried whether an indicator could be included listing the number that had become homeless in Mid Sussex.

He directed Members' attention to the percentage of telephone calls answered in 40 seconds and enquired what metrics management use to assess calls. He stated that performance indicators already used by management would be easier and less costly for the Committee to use instead of measuring an entirely new indicator at Members' request.

The Head of Corporate Resources told Members that when the parking machines were first installed there were instances of the locks being drilled. CCTV was installed covering the machines and the instances of vandalism were reduced. He advised that at the next Performance Indicator Review Working Group meeting the entire range of performance indicators can be presented to Members.

The Chairman agreed the above and then suggested the Working Group seek more qualitative measures for the performance indicators.

The Head of Digital and Customer Services suggested that the new indicators would look to provide a balance across all customer service points, including the Council's online presence.

The Chairman wished to clarify with the Leader that an update on progress with the Economic Development Strategy will be added to the Work Programme for the February Committee. The Leader confirmed that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Growth would be keen to include this in the February Committee.

A Member highlighted that Council Tax collection was at 57.80% and asked whether it should be expressed as a percentage of what the Council should have collected by this stage of the year, instead of an overall percentage.

The Head of Corporate Resources advised that the Committee may have asked for it to be displayed in this way previously, and this could be changed.

The Vice-Chairman drew reference to paragraph 11 of the report and the emphasis on speed of processing of changes of circumstances and asked whether this was at the expense of new Benefit claims coming in. She also asked why the overall number of legal cases at the end of each month did not seem to relate to the number of cases opened and closed. . The Vice Chairman's final question concerned the Council's contact with the police in cases of anti-social behaviour.

The Head of Corporate Resources confirmed that the Council is balancing the processing of new benefit claims with processing change of circumstances. The Council could lose subsidy if there are delays in processing change of circumstances leading to local authority error.

The Solicitor to the Council and Head of Regulatory Services stated that he would look into the apparent discrepancy in the number of legal cases at the end of each month and provide a written response.

The Business Unit Leader for Performance and Partnerships clarified that the Council works closely with the police and there is always a rise of anti-social behaviour in the summer months. He noted that the Council's anti-social behaviour officer had been on leave for the final week of Quarter 1 which is why some cases may have been recorded as starting in Quarter 2.

In response to a question about the percentage of waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting, the Head of Digital and Customer Service stated that this will improve as the garden waste bins scheme is expanded. The Council is working on an ongoing programme to improve the quality of the recycling, by targeting repeat offenders with information packs and home visits. The Council is also concentrating on improving the recycling facilities available in communal buildings and flats.

The Chairman requested that Members who wish to express an interest in the Performance Indicator Review Working Group should e-mail their nomination to Policy and Performance Manager Neal Barton by Friday 18 November.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

The Committee resolved to:

- i. Note the Council's performance in the second Quarter of the year and identify any areas where further reporting or information is required;
- ii. Advise the Cabinet of any issues that the Committee considers should be given particular consideration at the Cabinet meeting on 28 November; and
- iii. Agree to convene a meeting of the Performance Indicator Review Working Group to make recommendations for new customer services indicators and any other changes to the bundle of performance indicators to be monitored by the Committee in 2017/18.

8. WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

Tom Clark, Solicitor to the Council and Head of Regulatory Services introduced the Work Programme and stated the Capital Programme Monitoring report will be moved to the January 2017 Meeting and an item on Economic Development will be included in the February meeting.

The Chairman then moved to the recommendation which was agreed.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme for 2016/17 be noted with the addition of the Capital Programme Monitoring in January 2017 and an Economic Development report in February 2017.

Chairman.