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## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

**Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2010 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.**

**Present:** Councillor Robert W Bayford (Chairman); Councillors Campbell, Goodwin, Harrison, Jarvis, Mrs Johnston, King, Lawson, Nottingham, Mrs Roberts, Mrs Rogers, Scobie, Taylor and Watkins

### **66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were apologies from Cllrs Bruce and Hayton. Cllr Hayton was substituted by Cllr Goodwin.

### **67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Bayford declared a personal interest relating to Coach House. However this was done just before agenda item 12. Refer to minute 77.

### **68. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2010**

Members indicated that they had received hard copies of the crime statistics reports. In response to concerns expressed by Members about the unpleasant odour in Margate Harbour, Mark Seed said that he was going to present a report at the next Panel meeting on 11 May 2010.

Members **Agreed** that future agendas should have "outstanding matters" as a standing item.

Minutes were **Agreed**.

### **69. MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 4 FEBRUARY 2010**

Minutes were **Agreed**.

### **70. MINUTES FROM EAST KENT JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (EKJSC) OR ITS SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Minutes were noted.

### **71. PRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR SIMON MOORES, CABINET MEMBER FOR CUSTOMER SERVICES AND BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION**

Cllr Moores said that the performance of the service was commendable. The Service had carried out a successful server virtualisation exercise which had led to an improvement in service and system resilience. There was also an improved efficiency in handling queries from the public. There was now a smaller carbon footprint. Cllr Moores said that webcasting had also increased accessibility for the public to Council meetings. However there was a need to improve the quality of microphones in the Chamber as well as increase the number of services that can be accessed through internet service. Members noted that the major difficulty to this was the financial constraints.

The revenue and benefits service area had witnessed an increased caseload of about 18%. As a result of the successful virtualisation programme which had been rolled out, some staff had taken up home-working which has led to improved efficiency by 10%. There had been a saving of £400,000. Cllr Moores indicated that collection targets for

business rates were on track and council tax collections would exceed last year's. This was because the Council had negotiated payment plans with individual customers.

It was reported that the customer service area was performing well. Events that were themed around customer needs were organised at the Gateway Plus. Shift working patterns had been changed to improve efficiency, which led to waiting times going down from 4.95 minutes to 4.9 minutes on average. A survey undertaken by Customer Services reflected a 90% satisfaction level.

Performance Indicators were generally reflecting a good trend of performance. However Members requested that where actual performance was below targeted performance the reasons for the discrepancy be provided as a comment.

Members suggested that the Council looks at the possibility of providing a "mini-Gateway Plus" in Ramsgate. This was because residents from Ramsgate have to come to Margate to access facilities provided by the Gateway Plus. Donna Reed reported that Customer Services staff were looking at the feasibility of setting up such a facility in Ramsgate. She also informed the meeting that one of the toilets at the Gateway Plus had been converted into a disabled toilet/shower room under the Changing Spaces Scheme. This new facility which would be launched in April 2010 would enable individuals with disabilities to use it as a changing room.

Members expressed concern regarding the processing of complaints by the Council because individuals who phoned the council help-desk several times to register a complaint were each time issued with a different reference number. This was despite the fact that in some cases the complaint raised was the same during the episode of these phone calls and all the other subsequent phone calls are follow up calls for the same issue.

## **72. RESPONSES OF CABINET / COUNCIL TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL - SHARED SERVICES**

The Members were pleased to note that out of the Panel's fifteen recommendations to Cabinet and or Council, fourteen were adopted. Members paid tribute to the Democratic Services team for the support they provided to clerking relevant meetings and presenting the Panel's recommendations to Cabinet and Council.

Members observed that there was a need to familiarise themselves with the statutory processes and procedures for engaging in Shared Landlord Services with particular reference to the Housing ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation) application for consent. Members sought clarification regarding the proposed Tenants Services Authority (TSA) which would be responsible for processing the Housing ALMOs applications. A new Shared Services Working Party would be set-up in the next municipal year. It would be divided into a further three sub-groups to focus on the following areas:

- Shared Services
- Shared Landlord Services
- Waste and Recycling

Members **Agreed** that the current membership of the sub-groups would be retained in the next municipal year as far as is possible. The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager was tasked with addressing this in the next municipal year.

Members also **Agreed** that in the next municipal year, the working parties would be able to co-opt members with particular expertise.

### 73. **CRIME & DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP (CDRP) - PLAN**

The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Plan would be an annual standing agenda item for the Panel. This is because there would be regular reports on the projects outlined in the Plan. There are a number of crime reduction targets that have been outlined in the Plan which the Partnership would like to achieve in the coming municipal year.

The key action areas include:

- a) Introduction of the SOS Bus for the night time economy
- b) Introduction of specialist domestic abuse courts sessions
- c) Naming and shaming perpetrators of crime
- d) Introduction of a victims and witnesses (of anti-social behaviour) service
- e) Increase tools and powers to deal with anti-social behaviour (and replicate the Newington Project)

Mark Richardson said that Tiffany Hall had been appointed to the national team of 12 advisors to provide advice on managing anti-social behaviour. He also said that crime levels had gone down in the last two years by 30%. However Members were of the view that the statistics regarding crime levels were only reflecting reported crime but also acknowledged that in some cases crime levels had gone down. Members requested that the Plan should provide more detail to include definitions of percentage targets. They also said that the council should look at ways of changing perceptions communities harbour regarding crime levels.

Mark Richardson advised Members that his department was looking at ways of setting-up an out of hour service to deal with issues relating to noise. He indicated that the Plan was still in draft form and could therefore be amended.

Members **Agreed** that they would forward their comments regarding the Plan to the Members' Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) Working Party who in turn would submit the comments to Mark Richardson.

Members also **Agreed** to invite the Cabinet Member responsible for Community Services to attend future Panel meetings were crime and disorder issues were on the agenda.

### 74. **DEVELOPMENT OF MOTORCYCLE SCRAMBLING CENTRE**

Consideration was given to Mark Seed's report. Mark Seed said that there were a number of environmental concerns associated with setting up a motorcycle scrambling centre which would be located close to residential properties. He said that the affected communities would complain of unbearable noise levels. There was thus need to rethink the future of the site as a possible facility for alternative activities. Some Members suggested a BMX Riding Centre. Since there is a skating park nearby, this would create synergy that would make the facility financially viable.

Members **Agreed** to recommendations 5.1 and 5.2

### 75. **FORWARD PLAN**

Mark Seed reported that the Community Toilet Scheme was no longer being actively pursued.

Members noted the report.

## 76. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

The new performance management system (Performance Plus) provides for the more detailed and focused performance information to be presented. It also provides for the reporting of the Council's top ten projects. It alerts on variation of performance levels.

The dashboard report was tabled at the meeting by the Corporate Resources Manager. Members were given five minutes to consider the document.

Members then observed that there were contradictory figures in the same statistical information presented by the Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Business Transformation and the dashboard report by Corporate Resources Manager. Members were given five minutes to consider the document. The service staff were tasked with investigating the matter and taking corrective action.

Members **Agreed** that the agenda item be deferred to 11 May 2010 at which meeting alternative approaches to scrutinising performance of service areas were going to be presented by staff from Finance and Corporate Service and considered by the Panel. The performance report would be part of the agenda pack to be distributed to Members by despatch. The Panel would then make an appropriate recommendation to Cabinet about how the Panel would be involved in performance monitoring in future.

## 77. **REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10**

Cllr Bayford declared a personal interest on the item regarding Coach House.

### **Corporate Improvement & Budget Working Party**

Most of the group's work was focused on shared services.

### **Asset Management Working Party**

The Vice-Chairman, Cllr Harrison chaired the meeting for this item.

Members **Agreed** to set up a Coach House Working Party with a membership of three, made up of one Member from each political group. The terms of reference for the group would need to be agreed. Its composition would be as detailed below:

- a) Conservative Group – Cllr Mrs Rogers
- b) Labour Group– Cllr Harrison
- c) Independent Group– Cllr King

### **Airport Working Party**

Cllr Bayford resumed the chairmanship of the meeting.

The working party is going on a visit to Luton Airport on 8 April 2010. The Night Time Flying Policy would be based on quota count. However Infratil are still to present the quota count numbers to the working party. The public consultation process is still on hold due to the pending general election.

### **Recycling Working Party**

Cllr Nottingham had resigned from the working party and was still to be replaced.

### **Tivoli Brook Working Party**

There were no developments to report on. It was suggested that the working party approaches the Planning Department to discuss how best to alert prospective developers to the possible impact of Tivoli Brook to development proposals.

### **Ramsgate Port & Marina Working Party**

The working party is still to meet. There was need for officer involvement in setting-up the working party.

**Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership Working Party**

The working party is still to meet. The group would choose a topic to scrutinise in 2010/11 and report to the Panel.

There were planning sessions held on 23 March 2010 involving the Panel Chairman, Vice-Chairman and members of the following working parties:

- Local Development Framework
- Thanet Works
- Allotments
- Corporate Improvement and Budget
- Museums

Each considered their achievements during 2009/10 and whether the groups should continue their work during 2010/11.

Members **Agreed** that following on the planning meetings, the five working parties (including the Asset Management Working Party) were to present written annual reports with recommendations at the next Panel meeting to be held on 11 May 2010.

The verbal reports were noted.

**78. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

11 May 2010

20 July 2010 (provisional)

Meeting concluded : 9.21 pm

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