



Cabinet 9 July 2013

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 3 June 2013

1. Annual Report 2012/2013

- 1.1 The Constitution requires that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives reports from the Leader of the Council or representatives of Cabinet, either prior to the commencement of each financial year or at its first meeting after each Annual Council meeting on *'the state of the Borough'*, the Cabinet's priorities and its performance in the previous year.
- 1.2 The Leader of the Council attended this meeting of the Committee, and presented the Annual Report for 2012/2013. Many of the commitments set out in the Corporate Plan for 2012/2016 were ambitious and would take time to complete and the report set out how the Council is working towards achieving them.
- 1.3 Issues discussed included housing provision, continued engagement with Bid4bury, the timetable for completing the replacement works on the Bury St Edmunds Skatepark, free parking in Haverhill, progress made in investigating 'pay-on-exit' parking at the Parkway car park, the successes of community engagement in the Diamond Jubilee celebrations and how shared services with Forest Heath District Council is progressing.

2. Decisions Plan: June 2013 to May 2014

- 2.1 Members considered the latest Decisions Plan, covering the period June 2013 to May 2014 and did not request any further information or involvement in any of the current planned decisions.

3. Monitoring the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership

- 3.1 The Committee received its annual update on the progress of the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP) from 1 April 2012 to date. It is the duty of the Committee, as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee designated under the Police and Justice Act 2006, to scrutinise the work of the Partnership.

- 3.2 The report updated Members on the work of the CSP during 2012/2013, the informal inclusion of Babergh CSP into WSCSP, changes to future funding mechanisms during 2012/2013 and changes to Health membership of the Partnership from April 2013.
- 3.3 The Committee noted the excellent work carried out by the Partnership during 2012/2013, in particular the work of the Town Pastors.

4. Housing Reforms: Review of Tenancy Strategy

- 4.1 The Committee received an update on the St Edmundsbury Tenancy Strategy which was approved by Cabinet in March 2012 and adopted by full Council in June 2012.
- 4.2 The report provided an update on the initial impacts of the policies and progress in terms of implementing the Action Plan, as previously requested by the Committee. Appendix 1 of Report E12 set out the data currently available from the housing register across the whole of the Cambridge Housing Sub Region as at March 2013. The data formed part of the report currently being developed by the housing sub-region to provide monitoring information.
- 4.3 Issues discussed included the length of fixed term tenancies; tenancy renewals; the so-called 'bedroom tax' relating to under occupancy and the application process for affordable housing.

5. Report of the Educational Attainment Task and Finish Group

- 5.1 A Task and Finish Group was set up by the Committee on 5 September 2012 to consider data on Educational Attainment in St Edmundsbury along the lines of the data provided in Forest Heath District Council's (FHDC) review of Educational Attainment. It was asked to make any necessary recommendations to the Committee arising from consideration of that data.
- 5.2 The Group met on 9 May 2013 to consider the 'headline' data for St Edmundsbury which showed overall that educational attainment compared well to Suffolk averages, often exceeding them and in many schools compared well nationally. However, there were some clear pockets of underachievement.
- 5.3 The Group noted that a Families and Communities Strategy was currently being developed for both West Suffolk Councils. Following discussions the Group identified a number of issues relating to educational attainment which it wished to be put forward for consideration during the development of the Strategy. These were set out in the report, and the Committee resolved that they be forwarded for consideration by the Portfolio Holder for Communities and officers involved in drafting the Families and Communities Strategy.

6. Work Programme Update and Appointments to Task and Finish Groups and Suffolk Joint Scrutiny Panels/Committees

- 6.1 The Committee now has a rolling work programme, whereby suggestions for scrutiny reviews are brought to each meeting, and if accepted, are timetabled to report to a future meeting. The work programme also leaves space for Call-ins and Councillor Calls for Action. Members reviewed the current position of the work programme, and noted the items which were expected at the next meetings of the Committee.
- 6.2 As this was the first meeting of the civic year, the Committee reviewed the membership of its Task and Finish Groups and other groups.
- 6.3 The Committee nominated Councillor Beckwith to continue as the Council's representative on the Suffolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. No substitute Member was nominated, and the nomination of Councillor Beckwith was subsequently confirmed by full Council at its meeting on 18 June 2013.
- 6.4 Finally, the Committee reviewed the Task and Finish Group which was currently running. Following the establishment of a Task and Finish Group in March 2013 to review new housing development sites, it was suggested that the review could be extended to encompass housing developers in Forest Heath as a Joint Scrutiny Review.
- 6.5 The Committee considered the invitation to widen the review to a Joint Scrutiny Review and subject to FHDC's Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreeing to the joint review on 20 June 2013, agreed to reduce the current membership of the Group from seven to three from St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) and three from FHDC.

[Note: Forest Heath's Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 20 June 2013 and accepted the invitation to jointly review new housing development sites with SEBC and nominated three Members to the Task and Finish Group].

Contacts:

Ian Houlder, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, (01284-810074)
Diane Hind, Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, (01284-706542)
Adriana Stapleton, Democratic Services Manager, (01284-757613)
Christine Brain, Scrutiny Officer, (01638-719729)