

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Wednesday 10 January 2018** at **4.00 pm** at the **Conference Chamber West, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Diane Hind

Simon Brown
John Burns
Mike Chester
Patrick Chung
Paula Fox
Paul Hopfensperger

Margaret Marks
Richard Rout
Clive Springett
Sarah Stamp
Jim Thorndyke
Anthony Williams

Substitutes attending:

David Roach

By Invitation:

Joanna Rayner, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture

195. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor David Roach for Councillor Susan Glossop.

196. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Susan Glossop, Andrew Speed and Frank Warby.

197. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 October 2017 and 8 November 2017, were confirmed as accurate records and signed by the Chairman.

198. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from members of the public.

199. **Announcements from the Chairman regarding responses of the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Chairman advised that she attended Cabinet on 5 December 2017 and presented the Committee's report on items it considered on 8 November 2017, which as noted.

The Chairman informed the Committee that following the Extraordinary meeting held on 25 October 2017, a letter was sent to Suffolk County Council (SCC) on 1 November 2017, setting out in writing the recommendations made by the Committee. The letter requested a written response be provided to the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny with regards to the recommendations. To date no written response had been received from SCC, which was disappointing. However, the Chairman advised following an intervention made by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) on 9 January 2018 with Councillor Louis Busuttill (Forest Heath Councillor and SCC Member with Special Responsibility for Highways Operational Performance) a response was expected shortly from SCC. In the meantime, the Chairman would also pursue other avenues of communication to include requesting the Leader of the Council speaks with Councillor Jane Storey and Councillor James Finch to remind SCC of the recommendations arising from the meeting; speaking with Councillor Mary Evans who was a Borough Councillor and the Chairman of SCC Scrutiny Committee to try and put pressure on the Highways team to attend to our recommendations.

Finally, the Chairman reminded the Committee on the Scrutiny Work Programme Setting Workshop being held on 7 February 2018. An email setting out further details would be sent to Committee and Sub-Committee members shortly.

200. **Annual Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture**

The Committee was reminded that on 11 January 2017, it had received a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture, setting out responsibilities covered under her portfolio.

At this meeting, the Cabinet Member had been invited back to provide her annual update, and Report No: OAS/SE/18/001 set out the focus of the update.

The Cabinet Member was also provided in advance of the meeting with some key questions identified by Scrutiny Members on areas they wished to be appraised on during the annual update, which were included in the report along with responses, specifically:

- 1) **West Stow Country Park:** West Stow has become very popular with school visits and visitor numbers are up, however the Council still needs to create an income. Therefore, what events are being planned for 2018, for example more events like musical festivals?
- 2) **West Stow Country Park:** West Stow has recently developed a new website, so why not encourage businesses to advertise for a fee on their website?

- 3) **Bury Literature Festival 2017:** Bury St Edmunds held its first Literature Festival in 2017, which was a great success. There are plans for a similar event to be held in 2018, and questioned whether the Portfolio Holder will be involved in the planning of the event?

Councillor Joanna Rayner opened her presentation by thanking the Committee for the invitation to update them on matters concerning her Portfolio since January 2017, and welcomed the new format in providing questions in advance. She was also pleased that the Committee was interested in the subject of income generation in the leisure and culture portfolio, and advised that she was looking at developing a 10 year plan for The Apex, which would be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course as a key consultee.

The Committee asked follow-up questions relating to the West Stow Country Park, to which comprehensive responses were provided. Other areas discussed were the spending of S106 monies on leisure and culture; the refurbishment of Strasbourg Square and nearby play area in Haverhill; the lack of public transport from Haverhill to The Apex in Bury St Edmunds and the recent change of catering concessionaire at Nowton Park.

In particular discussions were held on the following:

- 1) **West Stow Country Park:** Discussions were held on the possible merits of Abbeycroft Leisure becoming involved at a strategic level in the future management of the site.

In response the Cabinet Member informed the Committee that she was keen to explore alternative income generating ideas in the Country Park, and agreed to investigate the opportunities and provide a fuller response in due course.

- 2) **West Stow Country Park:** Councillor Mike Chester enquired about the income and expenditure associated with managing West Stow.

In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the budgetary details were freely accessible for all Council services and agreed to provide a written response to the specific request.

- 3) **Bury St Edmunds and Beyond:** Members discussed the "Bury St Edmunds and Beyond", which was launched in September 2017 to promote tourism to the town and surrounding area, and questioned what the take-up had been to date by businesses.

In response the Cabinet Member advised that the website went live in September 2017 and a Board Meeting was scheduled for 18 January 2018, and agreed to provide a written response to the Committee on business take-up following that meeting.

The Chairman on behalf of Members wished to thank the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture and officers for their attendance and **noted** the update subject to written responses being provided on the above in due course.

201. **Cabinet Decisions Plan: January 2018 to May 2018**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/18/002, which requested that members peruse the Cabinet Decisions Plan for the period January 2018 to May 2018, for which it would like further information on or might benefit from the Committee's involvement.

The Committee considered the latest version of the Decisions Plan in detail and requested further information/reassurances on the following:

- 1) 17-18 Cornhill, Bury St Edmunds: The Committee sought reassurance that all councillors, including the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan Advisory Group would have a major influence on the preferred options prior to being presented to Cabinet and Council.

As a general point, it was felt that any committee's recommendations which might be varied prior to being considered by Cabinet and/or Council, that the chairman of that committee should be made aware of any amendments being made prior to being published.

- 2) Suffolk Business Park- Loan to Churchmanor: The Committee discussed the proposal of a loan to Churchmanor and sought information on what the benefits would be to the Council in granting the loan?

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the January to May 2018 Decisions Plan, subject to written responses being provided on the above two points.

202. **Work Programme Update**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/18/003, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2018 (Appendix 1).

The report also requested the Members identify questions they would like the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance to cover in his annual update to the Committee on 7 March 2018.

The Committee considered the report and came up with the following questions to be put to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance at its March 2018 meeting:

- Procurement of contracts: After a contract had been awarded to a company/business, how does the Council then ensure fair treatment and good practice was being adhered too in treating the public and employees ethically?
- Procurement of contracts: What penalties were there when contracts were not delivered on time? (example: play equipment contracts)
- Procurement of contracts: Who reviews the performance of contracts awarded by the Council?

There being no decisions required, the Committee **noted** the current status of its work programme and had identified questions to be put to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance.

The Meeting concluded at 5.00pm

Signed by:

Chairman
