

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 13 August 2018

Present: Councillor Tom Dawlings (Chair)
Councillors Hill, Huggett, Lidstone, Mackonochie (Vice-Chairman), Uddin, Scott,
Mrs Soyke, Thomson and Woodward

Officers in Attendance: David Candlin (Head of Economic Development and Property), Denise Haylett (Head of Facilities and Community Hubs), Mathew Jefferys (Democratic Services and Elections Manager) and Paul Taylor (Director of Change and Communities)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Jukes, March, Podbury, Stewart and Weatherly

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

OSC10/18 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hannam and Palmer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

OSC11/18 There were no declarations of interest made, within the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Members.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

OSC12/18 The minutes of the meetings dated 11 June 2018 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Committee meeting dated 11 June 2018 be agreed.

ITEMS CALLED IN UNDER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 13

OSC13/18 There were no items which had been called-in under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 13.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

OSC14/18 The Chair confirmed the order of the agenda.

COMMUNITY HUBS - VERBAL UPDATE

OSC15/18 Prior to the update on the community hubs, the Head of Economic Development and Property, David Candlin, provided an update on the timetable for the Calverley Square development. During discussion the following matters were highlighted:

The notice of appropriation of land in Calverley Grounds covered a number of areas including a permanent area for the buildings, areas for a compound and spoil, and the area across which jibs/cranes would swing. There were no areas of the Grounds that would be closed off in advance of the work and the public would continue to have access.

More information regarding public access to the Grounds and facilities (toilets) would be provided once the contractor was in place. Clarification would be provided within the construction management plan.

The preferred option from a political view for the civic complex was for a more socially aware use such as a base for small start-up business or a university faculty. There was also the option of retaining the site and the rent providing a revenue. The fall-back position for the Council was for the site to be sold for residential use. The brief for the civic complex allowed these elements to be discussed and for the Council to make a decision on the preferred option.

There were a number of areas being looked at in terms of funding for the theatre. There was potential funding from a local enterprise partnership and a bid would be submitted to the local growth fund. The Public Works Loan Board was not the only option and discussions with other funding organisations were underway which could prove to be better options.

The Director of Change and Communities, Paul Taylor and the Head of Business Support, Denise Haylett, and the provided an update on the community hub projects in the Borough (including the Cultural and Learning Hub). During discussion the following matters were highlighted:

Dowding House had been converted into 25 flats with 95 percent of the on-site work completed. Eight of the units were fully furnished and Housing had identified occupants and the first occupancy would take place on 1 September 2018.

Cranbrook had set up a community centre partnership board and jointly funded survey work had been undertaken for resurfacing of the car park which would be funded by the Coop, the Parish Council and the Borough Council. The Coop, the Parish and the Borough Council had reached an agreement in principle to allow temporary and ongoing access to the site subject to a conditional land transfer and repair works to the car park.

Paddock Wood had appointed architects with RIBA stage one and two having been signed off by the Town Council (stage three was underway). The intention was for an online planning application to be submitted in January 2019. Construction costs for the project so far were £2 million but with a total of £2 million budget for the project overall, some value engineering would be needed. A petition with over 500 signatures to date had been raised by residents asking for the location to be re-evaluated and the Town Council would be responding in due course.

Southborough Hub was progressing. Some complaints regarding dust from work on the playing fields had been received but engagement with residents had taken place. Infrastructure for the utilities and hub development were underway. It was intended that the housing and hub developments would be completed in tandem in 2020. Positive negotiations were underway regarding the GP provision.

The Cultural and learning Hub was approaching RIBA stage four and a report would be presented to the Cabinet providing an update on the final anticipated cost of the scheme which was £13.2 million. Further value engineering work would be looked at. The report to the Cabinet would also set out the fund raising target which was originally set at £1 million. The preferred option for delivery of the interim service was two units in the RVP.

RESOLVED to note the update.

**PORTFOLIO HOLDERS PLANS AND PROGRESS - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND TOURISM**

OSC16/18 The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jukes, presented his portfolio holder update for 2018/19. During discussion the following matters were highlighted:

Work had been ongoing to remove the negative support grant and the Government had now reconsidered the scheme.

The Five Year Plan supported a new local plan sports facilities, support for local communities through the community hubs scheme, public realm works and economic development through the Calverley Square scheme.

The procurement of new property maintenance and servicing contracts related to building assets and planned maintenance, and although including the new parks and gardens maintenance contract had been looked at it, it was unlikely to be feasible.

The infrastructure of roads and flooding continued to be a concern for Members. The Borough Council's relationship with the County council was currently in a good position; however, there was no direct control over these issues by the Borough Council.

Councillor Jukes had joined the Strategic Transport Organisation in an effort to strengthen the Council's position with Kent County Council.

The retention of business rates growth as a replacement for the loss of the revenue support grant from Government needed to be more widely and clearly advertised and an emphasis on the need for investment in the town made.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Councillor March, presented her portfolio holder update for 2018/19. During discussion, the following areas were highlighted:

A new producer had been appointed to the Assembly Hall Theatre (AHT) with the aim of the theatre producing its own shows, developing audiences and bringing in bigger names to the shows. An improved website had been online for ten weeks and had improved ticketing opportunities.

A marketing team had been assembled to include staff from the AHT and the Museum and Art Gallery under one service and providing an improved cultural and educational offer.

An updated Cultural and Creative Industries Framework study was being produced and this would look at the barriers to growth in the creative industries sector. On 15 September a cultural development fund expression of interest was due for submission.

Improvements to the visitunbridgewells website were ongoing and it now included shopping pages and feature pages. Work was being done with Royal Tunbridge Wells Together to improve the town.

There were targets and figures to measure tourism in the Borough and these could be made available to Members following the meeting.

The sponsoring of round-a-bouts by local businesses was controlled by Kent County Council and there were health and safety restrictions. Looking at the condition of public areas more widely, such as public footpaths and the provision of local community facilities, it was for local communities to be more proactive in those areas. The redbrick pavements in the town were an important part of the town's heritage and needed maintenance.

The Playing Pitch Strategy highlighted the need for football and rugby at a junior level. Sport England expected local authorities to work with local schools and utilise facilities.

RESOLVED to note the update.

INTERIM REPORT - REDUCING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS IN THE TOWN HALL AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

OSC17/18 The Chairman of the Reducing Single-Use Plastics in the Town Hall and the Wider Community Task and Finish Group provided an update on the Group's work.

The work of the Group was ongoing and the members were looking at what was being done in other authorities. Several of those authorities had pledges or plastic strategies. There were opportunities in Tunbridge Wells for this to be explored. The larger supermarket chains were looking at reducing plastic bags further and the recycling of black plastic.

The Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) worked across the local authority sector and also with businesses to promote recycling and plastic reduction.

There was a local company in Tunbridge Wells that produced sustainable plastic and they should be approached for advice.

The use of unrecyclable plastic cups in the Town Hall remained an issue and staff in the Town Hall were keen to see a reductions in single-use plastic. It was important that the Council considered these issues as the project for the new offices progressed.

RESOLVED to note the update

EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO SELECT COMMITTEE) - VERBAL UPDATE

OSC18/18 The Scrutiny and Performance Officer, Nick Peeters, updated Members on the Government response to the select committee report on the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny in local authorities.

The inquiry was relaunched in September 2017 and the final report published on 11 December 2017 with 8 recommendations.

Not all the recommendations in the report had a direct impact on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council as they relate either to County Councils and Metropolitan authorities. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council already complies

with some of the recommendations.

The key recommendations to note and the ones that Government have acknowledged are that:

- The current guidance was issued in 2006 and this needs to be updated.
- The guidance will recommend that scrutiny committees report to Full Council rather than the Cabinet.
- The updated guidance will also clarify the importance of public participation and the value of the views of service users.

The report was debated in May 2018 and the key theme highlighted was about the culture in local government and the level of importance placed on Scrutiny and whether it adds value to the decision making process.

RESOLVED to note the update

WORK PROGRAMME

OSC19/18 Members noted the Committee's work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

RESOLVED to note the updated work programme.

URGENT BUSINESS

OSC20/18 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

OSC21/18 The next scheduled meeting of the Committee would take place on Monday 8 October 2018.

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 8.00 pm.