

## **TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS, at 6.30 pm on Monday, 31 July 2023

**Present: Councillor Tom Dawlings (Chair)**  
**Councillors Knight (Vice-Chair), Bland, Lewis, Pope and Wilkinson**

**Officers in Attendance:** Caroline Britt (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

#### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

OSC13/23 Apologies were received from Councillors Curry, Ellis, Morton, Palmer and Rogers. Councillor Le Page was not present.

#### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

OSC14/23 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting. There were no declarations that any Member was subject to a party whip.

#### **NOTIFICATION OF PERSONS REGISTERED TO SPEAK**

OSC15/23 There were no members of the public or visiting Members registered to speak.

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 19 JUNE 2023**

OSC16/23 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting dated 19 June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

#### **ITEMS CALLED- IN**

OSC17/23 There were no items which had been called in.

#### **WORK PROGRAMME**

OSC18/23 Councillor Dawlings introduced the item and provided an initial summary of the proposed work programme for 2023/24 as follows:

- At the last meeting held on 16 June, Members agreed that they would like to invite Portfolio Holders to come and give presentations on issues within their areas of responsibility.
- Unfortunately, due to holiday commitments and invites being sent at short notice, it was not possible to include any Portfolio Holders on the agenda for this evening's meeting.
- At the meeting on 16 June there was a request for the Head of Planning to be invited to this meeting to discuss Planning Enforcement. Following a discussion with the Head of Planning it had now been agreed he would attend the next meeting on 25 September

2023.

- South East Water was another issue Members were keen to have a discussion about. Since the last meeting the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny had had a discussion with Steve Andrew from South East Water and it was agreed in principle that a representative would attend a future meeting.
- The appropriate procedure would be to write to the Chief Executive of South East Water which had now been done.
- Staffing issues were another issue that Members were keen to hear more about. Since the last meeting, an All Member Briefing on staffing had taken place. Members were assured that this matter was in hand and no further action was needed at this time.
- Co-working arrangements at the Town Hall and in particular an update from Town Square was another topic of discussion. There was quite a lot of work currently going on with Town Square, including arrangements to sign a lease with the Council. It was hoped there would be some positive news in the near future.
- It would be prudent to await the outcome of these discussions. Members could then decide whether they would like to invite Town Square to a future meeting. Alternatively, whether an All Members Briefing would be more appropriate.
- The JTB was also raised, but no action had yet been taken.
- In terms of scheduling Portfolio Holders to attend future meetings, there was a natural fit for the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance to attend the November meeting to discuss the budget.
- For September, the Head of Planning had already agreed to attend to discuss Planning Enforcement. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning, Councillor Hugo Pound would also be invited to attend.
- As the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning would be in attendance, it would be a good opportunity for Members to decide what other issues they might like to include in the discussion.
- Members were given the current list of responsibilities for each of the Portfolio Holders. Members were asked to consider which issues were of particular importance/concern. This would enable the relevant Portfolio Holder to prepare in advance and help focus discussions.
- It was suggested and agreed that Members give some thought as to their particular priorities and send their ideas to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and the Clerk. It was further agreed that the Clerk would email Members with further details following the meeting.
- Councillor Justine Rutland, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development had been invited to this meeting, but due to holiday commitments had been unable to attend.
- At the last meeting and given the current economic climate, Culture had been raised as an area of concern where budgetary constraints might make it a target for cuts.
- Councillor Rutland had already indicated that she was available for the meeting in September.
- There remained a number of Portfolio Holders as yet unallocated. Members now needed to decide when to invite them and what they would like discussions to focus on.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Members agreed that the approach as outlined by the Chair was acceptable and the Committee should proceed along these lines.

- Issues including the Waste Contract and Housing were of particular concern.
- Housing, particularly social and affordable housing was highlighted as of great concern. It was requested that this be included as part of the discussion in September when the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning would be present.
- How housing fitted into the Local Plan should also be included as part of the discussion.
- It was suggested that a second Portfolio Holder be included at the meeting in November.
- Members would need to balance the number of meetings with the number of Portfolio Holders and with other items that would be included on the agenda. As there were only 4 scheduled meetings, it may be necessary to increase the number of Portfolio Holders per meeting if Members wanted all of them to present during this municipal year.
- It was hoped that South East Water would be available to attend the November meeting so including another Portfolio Holder should be put on hold for the time being.
- The current waste contract wasn't due for reconsideration until 2027 so there was no immediate urgency to invite the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- There had been a recent change to the waste collection rounds, which had come with its own teething problems, but it was hoped this would only be short term.
- If Members decided to invite 3 Portfolio Holders to a particular meeting, it would be important to ensure that the topics for discussion were limited.
- As leisure activities had a close link with Culture, it was suggested that the Portfolio Holder for Sport, Leisure and Health be invited to the meeting on 25 September. The discussion could then include the current Fusion contract.
- There was a request for Parking to be included in the next meeting.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. The Clerk to put together a draft work programme, to be circulated to Members.
2. Members to highlight particular issues/areas of concern for each Portfolio Holder.
3. Once issues had been agreed, invitations to be sent to Portfolio Holders and relevant officers to attend one of the remaining 4 OSC meetings.

#### **URGENT BUSINESS**

OSC19/23 There was no urgent business.

#### **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

OSC20/23 The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 25 September 2023.

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 6.50 pm.