

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 1 April 2019

Present: Councillor Tom Dawlings (Chair)

Councillors Hill, Huggett, Lidstone, Mackonochie (Vice-Chairman), Ms Palmer, Scott and Woodward

Officers in Attendance: David Candlin (Head of Economic Development and Property), Finbar Gibbons (Head of Policy and Governance), Denise Haylett (Head of Facilities and Community Hubs), Terry Hughes (Community Safety Manager), Paul Taylor (Director of Change and Communities) and Nick Peeters (Scrutiny and Engagement Officer)

Other Officers in Attendance: Andrew Loosemore (Head of Highway Asset Management, KCC), Chief Inspector Pete Steenhuis (Kent Police) and Carol Valentine (West Kent Highway Manager, KCC)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Weatherly

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

OSC60/18 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hannam and Mrs Soyke. Councillors Thomson and Uddin were not present.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

OSC61/18 There were no declarations of interest made, within the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Members.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

OSC62/18 No amendment were made.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 21 January 2019 be approved as a correct record.

ITEMS CALLED IN UNDER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 13

OSC63/18 There were no items which had been called-in under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 13.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

OSC64/18 The chairman confirmed the order of the agenda.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN

OSC65/18 Terry Hughes, Community Safety Manager introduced the report set out in the agenda. Chief Inspector Pete Steenhuis, Kent Police, was in attendance to address questions.

Discussion included the following issues:

- Nationally, there had been a less than satisfactory recording process within some police authorities. Kent Police had one of the best crime recording processes in the country and was recognised for the legitimacy of its process. The recording of crimes had

changed in the previous year, in that a number of crimes were now being recorded for one incident. The accuracy for recording crimes was now at 98 percent and crime was now being recorded on a like-for-like basis and the figures should stay as they were or reduce.

- The relocation of the Kent Police resources, previously based in Tunbridge Wells, to Tonbridge, had improved the ability to respond to incidents as the critical mass of officers was now in one place and it was easier to prioritise.
- Crime figures for wards showed absolute numbers not adjusted for population. Comparative figures were available.
- Significant work had gone into tackling County Lines. A number of successes had been achieved but it remained a national problem.
- The data for Sherwood ward had showed a spike in certain crime types. Kent Police was running a spring campaign to target a number of individuals and crime types. Sherwood had suffered slightly from a reduction in wardens but this was now being addressed.
- The closing of TN2 had not been taken into account with regards to the level of crime in Sherwood.

RESOLVED – That the report be approved.

COMMUNITY GRANTS - UPDATE

OSC66/18 This item had been incorrectly titled and should have read “Community Hubs - Update”.

Mr Bill Hills, a resident of Paddock Wood, addressed the Committee regarding Dowding House and local concerns that it was not achieving its stated objectives. It was intended to be a bridge between emergency accommodation and private rental.

Denise Haylett – Head of Facilities and Community Hubs, responded and provided a verbal update for members on other community hub projects, which included the following comments:

- The 25 accommodation units at Dowding House had been occupied by 38 different families since December 2018. Residents were provided assistance and were aware that it was not permanent accommodation.
- By all accounts the service at Dowding House was working well.
- Southborough Hub signed off by TWBC Planning. Southborough Town Council signed it off. Next stage was to get final price to undertake work. Approval to sign off development agreement and Section 2 NHS Funding at Southborough Hub Board.
- Final design changes for RIBA Stage 3 of Paddock Wood Hub was agreed. The architect was updating plans to reflect changes.
- In Cranbrook officers were hoping to exchange documents with Co-op shortly.
- TN2 – not much trouble in terms of crime, only open three nights. GP surgery did not provide good value for money.

Paul Taylor, Director of Change and Communities, provided a verbal update for members on the Cultural and Learning Hub, which included the following comments:

- Work had started on setting up a fundraising Trust.
- Museum decant has recently finished.
- Design process was being refined, there was a need to ensure the Business Plan was sustainable. Activity Plan was under way to ensure heritage, museum and collection was maintained while museum itself was closed.
- Branding and naming work had concluded, mid way through process of awarding tender for the build contractor. Received 3 tenders, evaluated 30% cost and 70% quality. Willmott Dixon were selected to go to final stage to produce fixed bill cost. All three tenders came in with timetable shorter than we expected.
- New branding would be rolled out once the hoardings went up later in July/August.
- The £200k fundraising cost was based partly on fixed cost but also on reward in terms of how much money was raised, but this was within the £200k.
- Target for fundraising was £1.2m.
- Discussion took place at Town Forum last week regarding the name of the Centre – decision has been made by the Cultural and Learning Hub Steering Board, which was made up of officers and councillors.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

PORTFOLIO HOLDER PLANS AND PROGRESS - COMMUNITIES AND WELLBEING

OSC67/18 Councillor Weatherly, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Wellbeing, introduced the report set out on the agenda and updated Members on the progress made in her portfolio.

Discussion included the following issues:

- In Nov 2017 there were 20 rough sleepers, this year there were 7. Want to halve it by 2022 via Rough Sleepers Initiative Funding.
- Work underway to give 10 'Housing First' tenancies for rough sleepers, and an outreach worker for rough sleepers.
- No public space protection orders had been served.
- 72 Affordable homes built in 2017/18, 42 in 2018/19. A lot of homes had been granted planning permission with approximately 500 of which to be affordable and to be built over next 5 years.
- Town and Country Housing Group was in the process of merging with Peabody. Despite Peabody being a London based firm it was not expected that London residents would be relocated to Tunbridge Wells.
- Healthy Lifestyles teams helped 193 people out of 450 referrals in last 6 months. Clients with obesity and smoking issues needed holistic support – often issues were wrapped up in other issues, such as quality of housing etc.
- CCTV contract being reviewed, consideration about where it will operate from needs to be given, with the expectation that the Town Hall will no longer be open.
- There needed to be differentiation between affordable and social housing.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

POTHoles AND OVERALL CONDITION OF THE BOROUGH'S ROADS

OSC68/18 Andrew Loosemore, Head of Highway Asset Management, Kent County Council (KCC), provided a verbal update for members.

Discussion included the following issues:

- The Department for Transport (DfT) changed the way it allocated the roads maintenance grant in 2015 – Highways Authorities were no longer entitled to all of it as they introduced an incentive element.
- Three levels of incentive fund from band 1, the lowest, to band 3, the highest. Financial penalties for failure to achieve band 3 rating. KCC stood to lose £12.9m if it hadn't achieved band 3.
- Also a change of legislation in how highways were maintained – 'Code of Practice for Maintained Highways' had been replaced as of October 2018. Key difference goes from well maintained to well managed. Intervention levels had been changed from previously a specific 50mm and 20mm depths to the investigatory aspect being based on risk.
- Roughly 7,000 roads in Kent which need resurfacing and surface treatment, but can only do 200 every year.
- In 2017/18, £1m had been spent in Tunbridge Wells split roughly 50/50 between surface treatment and resurfacing. In 2019/20 roughly £2m will be allocated to Tunbridge Wells for surface treatment and resurfacing (not including repairing potholes).
- 2017 – KCC repaired 3,908 potholes in Tunbridge Wells, 27,529 sqm of 'patching', larger areas which encompass more than one pothole.
- 2018 – KCC repaired 4,724 potholes in Tunbridge Wells, 64,293 sqm of 'patching' – more funding from KCC to support pothole and patch funding and additional grant funding from DfT.
- There was a defect and audit process in place – where KCC find issues with quality of repairs, the contractor have to fix them at their own expense. KCC Issued 3,500 jobs in last month, only 24 'defects' arose.
- A record of all repairs is kept, in order to manage the longevity of repairs.
- Method of repair depends on the situation – black bitumen in the main, but not always appropriate.
- KCC still value innovation, such as thermal patching. New methods will always be tested but have to be cost-effective and appropriate.
- Use of plastics in bitumen is being looked at across the road surfacing industry – not something that can just be introduced without proper testing.
- Repairs have to be prioritised in terms of footfall, numbers of cars/vehicles using it, speed limits etc.
- KCC could do more to positively report the work that was done.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

CALVERLEY SQUARE UPDATE

OSC69/18 David Candlin, Head of Economic Development and Property, provided a verbal update for members.

Discussion included the following issues:

- Wider economic benefit was as a result of new office, and as a result of new theatre – local benefit and wider regional benefit.
- The Planning Inspector had up to 8 weeks to issue his verdict on the Compulsory Purchase Order enquiry, but it was not a decision that TWBC could ask for the Inspector to postpone or bring forward. A decision was expected by the 3rd of May.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE FOLLOW-UP

OSC70/18 Finbar Gibbons, Head of Policy and Governance, introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion included the following issues:

- The summary of actions in the appendix is to be adopted as the method by which the Council monitors progress against the Follow-Up.

RESOLVED –

1. That the contents of the Follow-Up letter from the Local Government Association be noted and;
2. That the ‘Initial Responses’ outlined in Appendix B be agreed.

DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2018-19

OSC71/18 Suggestions for amendments to be made to the Chair or Scrutiny and Engagement Officer via correspondence.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND TOPICS FOR 2019-20

OSC72/18 Suggestions for amendments to be made to the Chair or Scrutiny and Engagement Officer via correspondence.

URGENT BUSINESS

OSC73/18 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

OSC74/18 The next meeting was scheduled to be held on 10 June 2019.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 8.20 pm.

An audio recording of this meeting is available on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website.