

SOCIAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2013 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Mrs. Cook (Chairman)

Cllr. Ms. Lowe (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Ball, Bosley, Brookbank, Eyre, Mrs. George, Horwood, Maskell, Neal, Mrs. Purves, Raikes, Searles, Miss. Thornton and Towell

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Butler, Ms. Chetram and Firth

Cllrs Mrs. Davison, Davison, Mrs. Hunter and Miss. Stack were also present.

30. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Social Affairs Select Committee held on 22 January 2013, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Action 1: The Head of Community Development look into arranging a Members' visit with Carers First.

31. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest made other than already registered.

32. Formal response from the Cabinet following matters referred by the Committee and/or requests from the Performance and Governance Committee

There were none.

33. Actions from previous meeting

The actions from the previous meeting were noted.

Change in order of agenda items

The Chairman proposed to take agenda item 5 later, which was agreed.

34. Pest Control Service

The Head of Environmental and Operational Services presented the report which provided details on a full review of the pest control service currently provided by the Council. The Committee was asked to consider proposals for future service delivery with effect from April 2014. The Head of Environmental and Operational Services advised that it was not a statutory duty to provide the service but the Council did have a statutory duty to prevent damage under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949. Despite

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best efforts of the staff to reduce expenditure and increase income, the trading account, on average, had made a loss. The current in-house service provided free advice on pest control issues, which may not be continued if service delivery was ceased. If the Service was continued by any of the options put forward, it was clear that an element of Council subsidy would remain.

In response to questions the Head of Environmental and Operational Services advised that it had not proven cost effective to advertise in publications such as the yellow pages, but details of the service were on the website and published in 'In Shape.' The Officers also had leaflets. With regards to 'on costs' he advised that this was covered in the figures provided, and two employees working a four day week only incurred a small management cost. In response to further questioning he replied that any potential subsidy, if contracted out, would not be known until market tested. Imposing a time limit or a subsidy clause for those on means tested benefits or any other contract performance requirements would incur a cost in monitoring the contract.

The Portfolio Holder for the 'Cleaner and Greener Environment', addressed the Committee explaining that she was keen to hear the debate on the options and any alternatives, especially as regards to future provision.

It was MOVED by the Chairman and was duly seconded that the service be continued, as existing, until 2014, maximising income by charges and additional commercial sector work, whilst remaining competitive, but accepting that the service will produce a net deficit on the trading accounts of an average of £12,000 per annum; and that the Social Affairs Select Committee carry out a further review of the service in October 2013 to consider exposing the service to competitive tender.

Members thought that it was an excellent report and wished it recorded that the the two Officers carrying out the service were highly valued and their flexibility and efforts fully appreciated. There was no question that it was an excellent service, the main concern was the net deficit and the fact that it was not a statutory duty.

Members discussed and asked questions as to the possibility of the two existing employees setting up their own company and how the Council might assist them in respect of the loyalty they had shown. It was suggested that the profile could be raised on the website (to include a price list), and the use of social media should be explored. At the suggestion, the Head of Environmental and Operational Services agreed to explore the possibility of offering home surveys with regard to pest infestations like wood worm.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that there were no adverse equality impacts arising from the report.

The motion was put to the vote and there voted –

8 votes in favour of the motion

7 votes against the motion

It was therefore

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Resolved: That it be RECOMMENDED to Cabinet to continue the service as existing until 2014, maximising income by charges and additional commercial sector work, whilst remaining competitive, but accepting that the service will produce a net deficit on the trading accounts of an average of £12,000 per annum; and that the Social Affairs Select Committee carry out a further review of the service in October 2013 to consider exposing the service to competitive tender.

35. Improve the lives of Young People

The Committee was addressed by one of the Youth Councillors and the Project Manager from House in the Basement. A handout was tabled. An overview of the facilities and activities offered was provided. In response to questions the Committee was advised that there had been good press and social media coverage to promote the project. Local residents associations had noticed a decrease in noise and anti social behaviour. Difficulties experienced in areas such as around The Vine had decreased and that may be attributed to the opening of the project.

The Committee extended their thanks and appreciation to both speakers and particularly congratulated the Youth Councillor on an excellent presentation.

The Head of Community Development advised the Committee of all the work carried out within the District at the Council's leisure centres, through the Leisure Trust via leisure activities and sports clubs; the Crime and Safety Partnership worked with Kenward Trust asking them to go to areas where it was felt their presence was needed to deal with drug and alcohol abuse, and there was a project where young people were introduced to offenders at Sutton prison to help deter them from repeated anti social behaviour or crime, as well as work with families and victims of domestic abuse. Health work included family weight management programmes and teenage conception work. The Council had participated in the 100 in 100 campaign seeking 100 apprentices in the area, and 109 had been achieved, and graduate internships and volunteers. The Council also administered grants to voluntary organisations who supported young people across the District.

Some Members from the Swanley area did not believe that the voluntary services were advertised fully in that area.

Action 2: Cllrs. Brookbank and Searles to meet with the Head of Community Development and discuss their concerns.

The Chairman represented the Sevenoaks District Arts Council, and gave a presentation on its work and history. A short sample presentation on a project currently being worked on called 'A journey through time' was shown to the Committee. It was a community project based on similar lines to the previously successful jubilee community project, with pictures from the Sevenoaks Camera Club and live narration tracing the area from prehistoric times to the present day.

The Committee showed their thanks and appreciation.

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36. Future business, the Work Plan 2012/13 and programme of visitors to future meetings

The Chairman advised that 'Mind the Gap', the District's Health Action Plan, would be brought forward to the June 2013 meeting, and that she had requested a tour of the new Police Station in the Argyle Road offices to take place potentially prior to a Full Council meeting. There would also be a mini review of appraisal priorities for the grants to the voluntary organisations scheme in June, focussing on voluntary organisations that undertook services that the Council would otherwise have to provide.

37. Community Plan 2013 - 2016 and 15 Year Vision (Final)

The Head of Community Development presented the final draft of the three year Community Plan and fifteen year vision. The document and its supporting Action Plan had been developed following comprehensive consultation with Members, residents, a wide range of voluntary and community organisations and partner agencies. The results of the public consultation had been taken into consideration in the final draft. The Action Plan and the associated performance monitoring were the result of discussion with partner agencies about realistic delivery of the aspirations in the Community Plan.

A Member had a number of small points on layout which it was agreed would be raised out of the meeting with the Head of Community Development. The Chairman advised that she had requested that a summary of the action plan, similar to the public consultation draft be added as she had found it clearer to follow. The Head of Community Development explained that the layout differed as it had been necessary to include performance measuring.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that there were no adverse equality impacts arising from the report.

Resolved: That the final draft Community Plan and its supporting Action Plan be RECOMMENDED to Cabinet for approval and signing off.

38. Feedback from Members' Visits

The reports from the Members' visits to House in the Basement, and the Sure Start Centres at Dunton Green and Edenbridge were noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.15 pm

CHAIRMAN