

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2013 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Mrs. George, Mrs. Parkin, Piper, Mrs. Purves, Miss. Stack and Miss. Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Neal

Cllr. Fittock were also present.

9. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Strategy and Performance meeting held on 25th June 2013 be approved and signed as a correct record.

10. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

11. Actions from Previous Meeting

The Chairman reported that actions arising from the previous meeting would be addressed later in the agenda.

12. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman, who was also the Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Performance reported that the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review would be conducted from Tuesday 3rd December 2013 to Friday 6th December 2013. The Peer Review Team had been put together and would include the Chief Executive of Rugby and the Leader of Staffordshire Council. It was also possible that the Director General from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) would also be visiting Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) at this time.

In response to a question the Chairman confirmed that the Peer Review Team would be reviewing information that was already publically available and that the final report would be owned by SDC and not the LGA.

13. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)

There were no referrals from the Cabinet or Audit Committee.

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14. Financial Prospects and Review of Service Plans

The Committee considered a report setting out updates to the 2014/15 budget within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and 4-year savings plan. The report considered by the Committee represented the second stage of the budget process and would be presented to all Advisory Committees. The purpose of the report was for the Advisory Committees to advise Cabinet on growth and savings ideas for the Services within their terms of reference and Appendix C to the report contained a list of growth and savings ideas proposed by the Portfolio Holders.

The Head of Finance reported that the Financial Prospects report had shown a shortfall of £667,000 over 10 years. However, by making two changes to assumptions and including the growth and savings proposed by the Portfolio Holders there would be a surplus. It was proposed to place the remaining balance of £70,000 per annum into the Financial Plan reserve which would be able to fund a further year, essentially year 11, 2024/25. If assumptions changed in a negative way, the remaining balance of £70,000 per annum could be used to reduce the need to make additional savings.

The Chairman highlighted the importance of broadband as a growth item as many parts of the District suffered from low broadband speeds. The funding would be used to work with a private provider to develop a proposal for broadband across Sevenoaks.

Members considered the loss of glass recycling at Sainsburys and noted that this may be the start of a trend across a number of supermarkets. A Member suggested that the Council should consider giving residents bins for the collection of glass recycling but acknowledged that the cost of this proposal would have to be thoroughly reviewed.

In response to a question relating to the checks and balances placed on other precepting authorities, the Chairman confirmed that all upper tier authorities (i.e. County and District Councils) faced the same restrictions imposed by Government, the increases that could be imposed by the Police and Fire authorities were also restricted however, Town and Parish Council did not yet face any restrictions.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

15. Business Transformation

The Chairman gave a presentation on Business Transformation. The presentation highlighted the need to consider the future direction of the Council in light of the changes that were being made to local authority funding. The presentation highlighted the need to work in partnership with other organisations, both in the public sector and in the voluntary sector. The Council would also need to consider innovative ways to provide and deliver services.

The Committee discussed the need to make more of the excellent travel links from Swanley into London as the return of young professionals would help encourage the night time economy and develop the town centre. The Leader reported that Kent County Council (KCC) had been asked to do all they could to encourage Transport for London (TfL) and the Mayor of London to include Swanley in Zone 6. If necessary Sevenoaks District Council would also lobby TfL.

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A Member suggested that more could be done to encourage large corporations to locate their head quarters in Sevenoaks. The good transport links to London by rail, the M25 and the Channel Tunnel made Sevenoaks a very desirable location. It was also suggested that Sevenoaks Town would benefit from another good hotel.

A Member cautioned that it was important for any risks to be seriously considered as the Council would be using public money and a decision had to be taken on the level of risk that was considered acceptable. The Committee agreed that the reasons for any risks that were taken would need to be clearly explained. The Chairman emphasised the risks associated with remaining reliant on decreasing levels of government funding. The need to understand the risk of not taking action was also emphasised.

The Committee agreed that it would be helpful for Members to separate into smaller groups to review all the available options with the Chairman arranging these groups.

Action 1: That the Chairman liaise with Members and establish smaller groups to review all the available options for Business Transformation.

16. Draft Corporate Plan

The Head of Transformation and Strategy introduced the [draft Corporate Plan](#) explaining that the Plan was primarily designed as an internal document to provide both Members and Officers with clarity about the future direction of the Council. The document would also be made publically available and shared with other organisations such as the Council's external auditors. The majority of the draft content had a focus on the Council's Promises and was intended to be very clear in what the Council had achieved over the past two years and what it aimed to achieve in the coming years.

Members reported that they felt the new format for the Corporate Plan was striking and eye catching. A Member suggested that the Plan should include new, more up-to-date photographs of the Portfolio Holders.

The Chairman reported that the draft Corporate Plan would be considered by Cabinet on 7th November 2013 and asked Members to provide any feedback before this date.

Resolved: The draft corporate plan be noted and Members provide suggestions for areas for improvement to the Leader of the Council to enable him to present a revised and updated version to Cabinet for its consideration.

17. Communications Strategy and Work Plan

The Committee considered a report setting out the Council's Communications Strategy and 2013/14 work plan. Communications activity across local government had seen a significant rise in profile in recent years as Council's managed the impact of funding cuts. As a result of this local authorities had sought to increase dialogue with their residents, local businesses and other stakeholders to prioritise savings and efficiencies that reflected community wants and needs and ensured that the community was well informed about services and the value provided by the local authority.

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The Council's Communication Strategy and Work Plan had been reviewed in recent years to reflect the changing priorities for the Council and had been improved to clearly reflect the purpose of all communications activity for the Council and set a clear framework for the Communications Team.

The Chairman suggested that a Working Group should be established to review the Communications Strategy. The first meeting of the Working Group would take place in mid-November 2013 and would report back to the Advisory Committee in January 2014. It was agreed that Councillors Mrs George, Mrs Parkin, Miss Stack and Miss Thornton would sit on the Working Group. Terms of Reference for the Working Group would be agreed at the first meeting.

Resolved: That a Working Group to include Councillors Mrs George, Mrs Parkin, Miss Stack and Miss Thornton be established to review the Council's Communications Strategy.

18. Work Plan

The Committee considered its Work Plan and noted that the Committee would receive a report from the Communications Strategy Working Group in January 2014.

Resolved: That the Work Plan be noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.29 AM

CHAIRMAN