

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2013 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Hogarth (Chairman)

Cllr. Horwood(Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Ball, Butler, Ms. Chetram, Mrs. Cook, Fittock, Horwood and Maskell

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley and Davison

Cllrs. Eyre and Mrs. Sargeant were also present.

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Hogarth be appointed as Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

(Cllr. Hogarth in the Chair)

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Horwood be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

3. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

4. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman, who was the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development, reported that he had recently signed a Portfolio Holder decision that enable the Armed Forces Community Covenant to officially be signed by the Leader of the Council on Monday 24th June 2013, following the Armed Forces Day, Fly the Flag event.

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

There were no referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee.

6. Scope of Officer Responsibilities

The Head of Community Development, the Head of Environmental and Operational Services and the Head of Housing and Communications gave a presentation to the meeting regarding their areas of responsibility falling within the remit of the Committee. They also explained which matters they considered would be key upcoming issues.

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Within Community Development a number of issues were brought to the Committee's attention including the Community Plan, Health, Leisure, Economic Development and Tourism. Key challenges included ensuring that the two Health and Wellbeing Boards within the District worked for the benefit of residents, and ensuring that through the Community Plan good quality services were secured for residents of the District and that our economic development work was able to secure a dynamic economy including a strong business sector within the District.

Within Environmental and Operational Services the Committee's responsibilities included Emergency Planning, Business Continuity, Building Control, Markets, Parking and Land Charges. A key source of income was parking and a review of parking changes would be considered by the Committee in September 2013.

The Committee also had within its terms of reference the West Kent Leader Programme. The Head of Housing and Communications explained that this programme was funded by DEFRA and the EU. The programme had been running since 2007 and would end in December 2013. A bid for transitional funding for 2014 would be submitted and the Council would know in August if the bid had been successful. A further bid for funding would be submitted in 2015 and this funding would be for a further five years.

The Chairman highlighted that almost every area of the Committee's responsibility had either income or strategic implications. Any growth in Council funding would be based on growth in business rates across the District and therefore one of the key priorities was to encourage business to the District. It was suggested that it would be helpful to have a facilitated session on Economic Development in the future, a suitable date for such a meeting would be arranged.

7. Interaction between this Committee and the Health Liaison Board

The Head of Community Development reported that there had been a number of significant changes to local health services in recent years and these changes were wide-ranging and complex. The Health Liaison Board was designed to bring Members with an interest in local health services together to share their knowledge and experience. The Board would also play a role in ensuring that health services across the District were consistent.

The Chairman of the Health Liaison Board highlighted that there were many aspects of the Community Plan that had a bearing on health. It was agreed that it was important for the Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee to receive the minutes from the Health Liaison Board.

Resolved: That the Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee receive the minutes of the Health Liaison Board for information.

8. Grants to Voluntary Organisations - Review of the Guidelines

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Community Development providing an overview of grants to voluntary organisations. Grant guidelines were reviewed during 2010/11 and revised guidelines were agreed by Cabinet in September 2010. It was proposed that a further "mini" review should take place in 2013 in order to increase the emphasis placed on volunteering.

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The next steps for the review would be a six week consultation with the voluntary sector. Recommendations would then be made to Cabinet in September 2013 and the new guidelines would be operational by November 2013. The key changes that were being proposed were (a) streamlining guidelines and the application process, (b) a clearer focus on outcomes, (c) a minimum application amount of £100, and (d) compulsory performance indicators.

The Committee agreed that volunteers were a valuable resource that needed to be retained across the District.

A Member highlighted the need to ensure that funding was being targeted at the right services. The need for joint working between the District Council and the County Council was emphasised. The Head of Community Development said that the Locality Board had looked at this in relation to youth services but the District Council had not decided to contribute. The Chairman suggested that the Committee may wish to consider strengthening joint working between all layers of local government at a future meeting.

In response to a question, the Head of Community Development explained to the Committee that the District Council provided more support to voluntary organisations than simply giving grants. The Voluntary Organisations already spent a huge amount of time fund-raising and many had fund-raising committees. Many of the organisations provided valuable services to the community but did not necessarily have the type of branding that would attract donations from the public.

Resolved: That Cabinet be recommended to agree that the new guidelines for grants to voluntary organisations should have a clear focus on volunteering.

9. Rural Broadband Working Group

The Head of Community Development introduced the report and explained that the Council had been involved in campaigning for better rural broadband across the District.

The following terms of reference for the Rural Broadband Working Group were proposed:

- (a) The membership of the Working Group to consist of 5 Councillors and made up of, where appropriate, of Members from the Advisory Committee and other appropriate members of the Council with relevant experience.
- (b) The Working Group to be set up for the consideration of the following only:
 - (i) any work already undertaken in order to improve broadband in the District to date;
 - (ii) any additional work that might usefully be undertaken by the Council;
 - (iii) consideration as to whether the Council has a role in promoting private broadband provision through small providers.
- (c) The Working Group to regularly report back on its findings to the Advisory Committee via 'Action Sheets'.

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The Chairman proposed that the Working Group should be established and Councillors Scholey and Piper should be invited to join the Working Group which would also include Councillors Ball, Hogarth and Horwood.

Resolved: That the terms of reference outlined be agreed and that Councillors Ball, Hogarth, Horwood, Piper and Scholey sit on the Rural Broadband Working Group.

10. Work Plan

The Committee considered its work plan for the year and agreed that the new Chief Officer for Planning should be invited to the September meeting of the Committee to discuss the issue of business land being converted to residential land.

Action 2: That the Chief Officer for Planning be invited to the September meeting of the Committee.

A Member also queried whether the Committee would be considering any relevant sections of the budget. The Head of Community Development suggested that she should investigate where this would sit on the work plan and report back to Members.

Action 2: That the Head of Community Development to investigate when an item on the budget will be considered by the Committee.

Members noted that the review of parking charges would be considered in September 2013.

A Member suggested that it would be beneficial to have a meeting with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in the District. Following discussions it was agreed that this should be taken forward by the Health Liaison Board.

The Committee noted that a report concerning the future asset maintenance requirements of Whiteoak Leisure Centre in Swanley would be considered at a future meeting.

Resolved: That the Work Plan be noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.38 PM

CHAIRMAN