

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Mrs. Bayley, Clark, Eyre, Mrs. George, Mrs. Parkin, Raikes and Miss. Stack

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mrs. Purves and Miss. Thornton

Cllrs. Fittock was also present.

14. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee held on 24 June 2014 be approved and signed as a correct record.

15. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

16. Actions from Previous Meeting

Members noted that the action had been completed and circulated to the Committee via email.

17. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman, and Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Performance advised that the Switch and Save scheme had had a positive uptake and was continuing to grow. Some residents had made savings in excess of £400 on their combined energy bills. He advised that any money which the Council received as a result of someone switching was put back into the Council's schemes to help make homes more energy efficient.

18. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were no referrals from the Cabinet or Audit Committee.

19. Budget 2015/16: Service Reviews and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAS)

The Chief Finance Officer presented a report which detailed the update to the 2015/16 budget within the existing framework of the 10 year budget and savings plan. The report considered by the Committee represented the second stage of the budget process and

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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. He advised that the budget was currently balanced and this was where the Council wanted to be at the year end.

Currently there were no growth or saving proposals identified which were applicable to the Committee. The Service Overview was a new document that was intended to provide Members with improved information to give further context.

In response to questions the Chairman advised the Committee of staffing levels within Democratic Services and how as the team was so small, there were limited options for partnership working.

It was queried whether previous Freedom of Information (FOI) requests could be included on the website. The Chief Finance Officer advised that there was an Officer working group looking at what additional information regarding FOIs could be included on the website.

Members discussed the length of the reports and whether there were alternative options for the information to be presented. The Chief Finance Officer advised that the contents of this report has changed over recent years to reflect Members comments and any further comments would be considered when writing similar reports in future years. The Chief Executive advised that certain information included in all reports was a requirement and also that safeguarding was an important issue. Members agreed that it was important to have a high standard of reports, so that if processes failed lessons could be learnt.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That there were no further suggestions for growth and savings for the services within the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee

20. Customer Experience Update

The Chairman advised the update provided on the customer experience project linked with the Communication Members Work Group update.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

21. Communication Members Working Group - Update

Cllr. Miss. Stack gave a [presentation](#) to the Committee on the Council's Brand Positioning. The brief set out the working groups aspirations and recommendations as how to change the public's perception on 'the Council.'

In response to questions Members were advised that the five promises in the corporate plan were being achieved. Support and Development of the Local Community was being achieved by grants, and business supports to different types of business. It was

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discussed how Officers and Members had to be realistic in planning permission and the Green Belt, it was acknowledged that it was a sensitive subject to many people.

The Working Group presented suggested attributes for the District Council. Members queried whether some of the attributes could be linked together as many had similar meanings. It was important for members of the public to understand that many of the processes were governed by statute, but Officers and Members understood that different areas of the Council could be emotive. The Working Group agreed that Officers and Members wanted to do the best job that they could and that the perception of 'the Council' was changed.

Many opinion polls were not an accurate reflection of what Council's do, as the blame was put on 'the Council', but there were many services the District Council did not provide; this needed to be communicated carefully at every level.

It was hoped that in the future there would be some training for Members on Communication tools to help promote the promises and the services provided by the District Council.

Members discussed the need for a corporate voice on all documentation. The public needed to be able to identify Council information by it's visual identity. It was noted that some residents' only experience of the Council was speaking to the refuse collectors or Civil Enforcement Officers. Members agreed that all employees and Councillors were brand ambassadors for the Council.

The Committee thanked Cllrs. Miss Stack, Miss. Thornton and Officers who had been involved for their hard work.

Resolved: The updated be noted.

22. Update on Corporate Plan

The Head of Transformation and Strategy presented a report which detailed the progress made in the delivery of the five promises to the community as set out in the corporate plan that the Council aim to make significant progress on by 2015. It also explained the Council's ambition to become financially self sufficient in order to address the ongoing challenge in delivery services with decreasing levels of government funding. The plan set out 25 actions and an additional four actions had been set to help lead the organisation progress towards financial self sufficiency. 90% were close to being achieved, with three of an amber status which showed that reasonable progress was being made but there was some risk to achievement.

The Chairman advised that the website was amber as it had been agreed that more time needed to be invested into the website to ensure that it was completed properly. Cllr. Miss. Stack advised that she had been on a webinar (internet based seminar) with the Customer Services Manager on web chat for the website. This was something that Cornwall County Council had successfully implemented onto their website and had reduced the number of calls received. It was a tool which was used to encourage residents to self serve and to stay on the website and be talked through how to find the information. It was a tool that could be included on the Council's website and be used in

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the future. It would allow Customer Service Officers to help on average 4 people at a time, but would require relevant training to achieve this.

Members agreed that this was a positive way forward for good customer service as there was a change in how people communicated and would provide another way to reach people. The Chairman also advised that work continued on the Investment Strategy to enable the Council to generate income.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: The report be noted.

23. Equalities Update

The Head of Transformation and Strategy presented a report which provided an update on the progress of the Council's equality aims and commitments. He advised that the Equalities Officer was shared between Sevenoaks District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. The Partnership aims and commitments 2012- 16 were within the Council's Policy Framework. The annual report was published on the website and would be reviewed in 2016.

In response to questions Members were advised that the low gender pay gap at 0.3% was a positive result. Roles were assessed on the skills required to fulfil a job. Members were advised that 0.3% was an overall average and the marginal increase was that there was a small number of female staff on the higher salary bands.

In response to questions the Committee was advised that Kent County Council, as the education authority, had information on 16/17 year olds which also included those who went to independent or free schools. Members were also advised that the progress made on monitoring the impact of the housing allocations scheme was that Housing Register was held by West Kent Housing Association and work was being undertaken to identify whether those removed from the register had been removed to being assessed as adequately housed or whether they do not meet the criteria of the new register. It was harder to find information on those who had been removed from the register as they may have moved away or gone into private rented accommodation.

Action 1: Chief Officer Housing and Head of Transformation and Strategy provide Members with an update on the progress of the work being undertaken of the Housing Register.

Members were advised that the Inspectors' report of the Allocations and Development Management Plan had been circulated previously and that no significant changes had been made, the report would be recirculated to Members.

Action 2: For Head of Transformation and Strategy to recirculate the Inspectors Report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the progress against the Council's equality aims and commitments be noted.

24. Work Plan

Members were informed that items would be added for the March 2015 meeting.

Resolved: That the work plan be noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.15 PM

CHAIRMAN