

LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2018 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Firth (Chairman)

Cllrs. Barnes, Dr. Canet, Dyball, Eyre, Halford, Mrs. Hunter, McGarvey and Raikes

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Bosley, Lake and Pett

31. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 January 2018 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

32. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Firth declared for transparency as it was not yet registered, that she was as a trustee of West Kent Mind. There were no additional declarations of interest.

33. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

34. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, allowed reading time for her report which had been circulated earlier that day. She corrected her report that the next training session would actually be Development Management prior to Planning Advisory Committee on 25 April 2018, which was confirmed by the Chairman of the Planning Advisory Committee.

The Portfolio Holder also highlighted the Civic Office of the Year Award 2018 recently received by the Democratic Services team for their work supporting the Council's Chairman, and asked the Committee to join her in expressing their appreciation to the Democratic Services team and colleagues for their achievement.

The Portfolio Holder then highlighted that the Government had recently announced that the inaugural National Democracy Week due to take place from 2 - 8 July 2018 to promote democratic engagement and inclusion in the democratic process. Central Government would like to see at least one event take place in every local authority across the Country to promote the importance of electoral registration and for as many Members of Parliament and local Councillors to speak in Schools - perhaps on the Friday when Members of Parliament are in their Constituencies. The Portfolio Holder asked for ideas and Members suggested a few contacts.

35. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

36. Voter registration and engagement

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report which set out the current proposed plan for encouraging electoral registration and elector engagement in the electoral process and outlined some of the activities which would be undertaken.

In response to questions the Electoral Services Manager advised that letters would continue to be modified, where legislation allowed, to deliver the most appropriate message and call to action for residents. A recent successful example of this has been the review letter testing where three revised legislatively compliant and more customer focused letters were sent out. There has been no adverse feedback from any of the three versions. Members thought it would be useful to have a standard covering letter, and may be and a Frequently Asked questions (FAQ) sheet.

Action 1: Committee to be circulated samples to demonstrate the approach taken.

It was recommended that the Access Group be liaised with regards to the letters and envelopes where appropriate.

The Chairman advised that she wished to see an active social media registration campaign with active use of the platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter and suggested looking at authorities who had done similar things.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

37. Equalities Action plan update

The Head of Transformation and Strategy presented the report which provided a summary of progress against the actions set out by Members at their meeting in June 2017.

The Chairman was disappointed that more progress had not been made with the Sevenoaks Trusted Friend engagement scheme, and wished to know whether it was achievable. She had envisaged a register of people who acted as 'trusted friends' who could be contacted and consulted on their needs. Members discussed different ways this could be achieved, and it was agreed that the Head of Transformation and Strategy would speak with the Contact Centre to see if there were a way of accumulating the data at first point of contact; and to the Chairman of the Access Group about having it added to the Access Group's agenda. This could then be revisited and Members could discuss the viability at a future meeting.

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The Portfolio Holder noted that, apart from the Trusted Friend scheme considerable progress had been made against the 5 new actions suggested by the Committee at the June 2017 meeting. 3 out of 5 had already been achieved in full including two new well-being walks with a third one planned in Swanley to make walking accessible even to the old, infirm, post-operative and lonely.

Resolved: That the progress made against the Council's Equalities actions in 2017-18 be noted.

38. Brexit Update

The Head of Transformation and Strategy presented the report which gave an update on the work of the Portfolio Holder and Officers on measuring the impact of Brexit on the council which Members discussed.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

39. Work Plan

The work plan was noted with the following additions:

28 June 2018

Equality Action Plan
Update on National Democracy Week
Licensing contribution to health
Brexit Update (to be a standing item)

4 October 2018

Shared Services Update
SCIAs
Brexit Update
Update on GDPR

19 March 2019

Brexit Update.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.03 PM

CHAIRMAN