

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2013 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Hogarth (Chairman) (Chairman)

Cllr. Horwood (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Ball, Mrs. Bosley, Ms. Chetram, Mrs. Cook, Davison, Fittock and Maskell

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Butler

Cllrs. Mrs. Morris, Mrs. Purves, Raikes and Ramsay were also present.

11. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 June 2013, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

13. Parking Charges for 2014/15 and Christmas Parking Charges 2013/14

The Chief Officer, Environmental & Operational Services presented the annual review of parking charges which proposed options for increases in respect to car park and on-street parking charges to meet the income budget targets for 2013/15 and included consideration of free Christmas parking.

The Chairman invited Cllr. Maskell to address the Committee on behalf of Westerham Town Partnership (WTP). He reported that the WTP had identified parking charges were not taking into account the development of the town, so they were proposing charges to support the development of town and business. They had identified that charges could be used to draw people to certain areas for long term and that parking charges should not be looked at from a purely revenue point of view but as a support tool for the development of the town.

The Chief Officer, Environmental & Operational Services advised that the report would be considered by Cabinet on 7 November 2013 and if agreed would go out to a three week consultation period which was when the public could submit comments which would then be reported back to Cabinet on 6 February 2013. He would ensure that Westerham Town Partnership were consulted and welcomed their input. However the information had still yet to be shared with Officers and was not received in time to include in the report.

In response Cllr Maskell commented that in relation to the process where officers had used data and information from the last three years this was a traditional approach, but things had moved on and the focus of the Council had changed and therefore there needed to be new processes for pre-empting and looking at opportunities.

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Members generally felt that the information had been received too late and at this point would be more suitably considered as part of the consultation process. In response to questions, Cllr. Maskell advised that he had only been given sight of part of the WTP proposals within the last day. He had been told that known parking patterns had been taken into account and that they disputed the Council's figures and that there were fundamental issues that needed to be taken into account. It was suggested that out of town parking fees be reduced to encourage movement from the town centre but that it agreed with rises in central parts. The consultation procedure and system needed to be looked at, and the proposal put forward from WTP needed to be looked at seriously.

A Member suggested that the situation may have highlighted a need to look into procedures and consultations prior to the report stage. The Vice Chairman sympathised with the situation, he had seen the WTP proposals and whilst there were some slight differences there was nothing immediately controversial, this Committee was not making the final decision, Cabinet had yet to consider the report and then there would be the consultation process.

The Chairman stated that input was welcomed from all informed sources and lessons had been learned. With regards to the schedule of charges laid out by the WTP there was a proposal for a free period of time, was there any barrier to this proposal. The Parking Manager responded that there was no barrier to free charging periods, but ultimately it was a case of achieving income targets. The Chief Officer, Environmental & Operational Services added that once the WTP had shared their findings with Officers they could look at the implications of their proposals and report these to Cabinet on 7 November 2013.

Members agreed that it was not possible to make a decision on information only circulated to Members, and that any information received should be put to Cabinet to consider. The Chief Officer, Environmental & Operational Services

With regards to the recommendations before the Committee, Members were generally against Sunday car parking charges, and in favour of continuing free Saturday parking at the Council Offices. It was felt that night time charges should possibly be reviewed to benefit restaurant goers.

A Member commented that car parking charges had been a recent news item and that government was not liking the way some Councils were charging for inappropriate purposes to balance the books. He stated that the Committee needed to be sure the fees set were not in confrontation with central government over this issue, and that the law of diminishing returns needed to be looked at. With regards to night time charges it would be interesting to correlate it to the social cost of night time entertainment. He suggested that local comparators needed to be looked at such as Dartford Town Centre. Another Member also raised the issue of diminishing returns.

The Chief Officer, Environmental & Operational Services confirmed that the central government issue was in relation to on-street parking. He added that the income needed to be found to meet the 3.5% assumption, costs were going up as was inflation. In response to the issue of potential diminishing returns he added that it was a valid point but that there could be other factors to consider such as not enough car parking spaces and inability to meet demand.

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The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee Members In Depth Working Group on Car Parking addressed the Committee, and stated that with regards to the procedures and the issue around information being fed into the process he was happy to take this away and look at it as part of the current review.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources addressed the Committee and pointed out the Marks and Spencers would not be significantly investing in Sevenoaks if it were not viable and would be providing interactive signage. Studies were being engaged to look into extending long stay car parks. The shortfall that needed to be made up in business rates did not help the situation. Once the interactive data was compiled and a cost effective analysis carried out it may be that a pay on exit system could be a solution. But it all needed to be carefully looked at. Hopefully a report would be put to this Committee next financial year.

A preference for Option 2 was expressed.

Resolved: That the following proposals be submitted to Cabinet for consideration along with this Committee's views in relation to:

- a) the proposed increases to car park charges for 2014/15, as long as within the 3.5% 10 year budget strategy assumption;
- b) the proposed increases to on-street parking charges for 2014/15, as long as within the 3.5% 10 year budget strategy assumption;
- c) the preferred dates for free Christmas parking to be provided in all car parks and on-street parking areas throughout the district for two Saturdays before Christmas 2013; and that the cost in terms of lost income be funded from Supplementary Estimates;
- d) that there should be no amendment to the car park evening charge in Sevenoaks town centre, but options for next year be investigated;
- e) that no parking charges be introduced into the Council office car park on Saturdays;
- f) that Sunday charges should not be considered;
- g) the on-street tariffs at Knockholt Station be aligned with the tariff structure for Swanley; and
- h) a decision on the standardisation of the on-street tariffs for Westerham town with others in the district be deferred pending consideration of information to be submitted by Westerham Town Partnership.

14. 'Visit Kent'

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Jill Dain, Head of Business Liaison and Ruth Wood Head of Research and Strategy of Visit Kent gave a [presentation](#) to the Committee on the work of Visit Kent and how it marketed the district as a tourist attraction.

In response to a question about the most significant challenges experienced by tourism businesses, it was acknowledged that there was a lack of hotels in the south of the district. Accommodation space was a challenge but there was no need to look for a large chain; budget or niche boutique type hotels were in high demand. Another type of accommodation growing in demand was more informal outdoor accommodation, for example yurts. The Chairman commented that he believed there was a Yurt at Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve.

In response to questions concerning how the impact of Visit Kent's marketing was measured and what markets were targeted, the Committee was informed that target markets were 60% domestic and 40% overseas. Looking at what people looked at on the website, this would be followed up with whether people did come and stay what they did, they would also check whether people received the campaign. Trends were good, the domestic market had done well. The best tool for measuring the benefit of journalist's articles was the ABE advertising banding equivalent. This showed that the district received £60,000 worth of Public Relations coverage. The cost to the Council for the Service Level Agreement with Visit Kent for the current year was £9,000.

A Member commented that a lot of pubs were being lost and asked how much work was carried out with breweries and pub managers especially as there was also the possibility of B&B accommodation and how the local economy was promoted. In response it was explained that they worked closely with the Health & Communities Manager, carried out one to one sessions and a series of events with local businesses on how to diversify to increase income.

The Kent Film Office was responsible for film setting but once a site had been used there was lots of potential to advertise the area. The Health & Communities Manager added that she received weekly emails from the film office looking for particular types of location which were filtered out to local attractions.

15. Sevenoaks District Health Inequalities Action Plan

The Health & Communities Manager gave a [presentation](#) introducing the report before the Committee. The Health & Social Care Act 2012 set up a new Public Health Service called Public Health England. At the local level in Kent, responsibility for the public health function had been given to Kent County Council. District Councils in Kent were asked to lead on the production of an action plan which could demonstrate how the County-wide objectives could be delivered locally. The Sevenoaks District Health Inequalities Action Plan set out objectives and actions that would help to reduce health inequalities across the District.

The Chairman of the Health Liaison Board, also a member of the Committee, reported that the Board needed to carry out a lot of work but so much was unknown for the moment. There were a significant number of problems within the District and there was the need to talk about care and security for older people: the lack of suitable buildings

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for them to move into; and issues such as only receiving 15 minutes of carer time as in the news recently. Whilst at the same time no funding yet overwhelming demand on voluntary organisations.

The Health & Communities Manager stated that there was a lot of on-going work on integrated commissioning, bringing together social care and health to provide more linked and streamlined services, not fragmented as before. Members briefly touched on issues such as dementia and the work being done on 'dementia friendly communities' and the strong activity from the voluntary sector.

In response to a question as to how the impact of such a strategy benefitted the district, the Health & Communities Manager advised that it identified where and what type of health improvement was most needed in the district. It was also asked what the strategy was to engage with the private sector to facilitate the action plan. In response the Chief Officer, Communities and Business, explained that health services were commissioned through the clinical commissioning groups and the County Council using a standard bidding process open to the public, voluntary or private sector with the best applicant winning the contract to deliver.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Sevenoaks District Health Inequalities Action Plan be agreed and adopted.

At 8.55 p.m. the Chairman adjourned the Committee for the convenience of Members and Officers. The meeting resumed at 9.02 p.m.

16. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board

That the minutes of the Health Liaison Board held on 11 September 2013, be noted, subject to the report 'NHS – A call to action' being placed on the work plan.

17. 2014/15 Budget and Review of Service Plans

The Chief Finance Officer advised that the purpose of the report was for the Committee to advise Cabinet on growth and savings ideas for the services within its terms of reference. Appendix C to the report contained a list of growth and savings ideas proposed by the Portfolio Holder and these together with any additional suggestions made by the Committee would be considered by Cabinet on 5 December 2013.

Some Members expressed grave concern over the loss of a Civil Enforcement Officer; it was mooted that the saving could be found within the Rural Broadband budget. It was agreed that the Chief Officer Environmental & Operational Services should be asked to re-examine this proposal and justify the ability to lose an officer without an impact on service. In response to a question concerning the sum to be set aside for the Rural Broadband fund, the Chief Officer, Communities & Business said that this was a 'best guess' of the cost of buying in rural broadband expertise. This was based on an equivalent to the annual salary of a technically qualified person.

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Resolved: That the the views on the growth and savings proposals identified by the Portfolio Holder, attached as Appendix C to the report, be agreed, subject to further investigations and justification over losing a Civil Enforcement Officer.

18. Actions from Previous Meeting

The actions from the previous meeting were noted, subject to noting that the Chief Planning Officer would be attending February 2014, not 2013.

19. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder advised the Committee of a visit from Mark Dance, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, and Barbara Cooper, Director of Economic Development at Kent County Council (KCC). They had visited Fort Halstead, Lullingstone and Swanley Town Centre and talked through the opportunities at New Ash Green. It was a good opportunity to raise awareness with KCC, so far the developments had fallen below their radar.

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

There were none.

21. Unlocking Kent's Potential

The Chief Officer, Communities & Business, presented a report that sought Members' comments on the draft West Kent input to Unlocking Kent's Potential in advance of wider consultation with Members. A final draft would be brought to Cabinet after consultation. Members were asked to forward any comments.

Action 1: The Chief Officer, Communities & Business to check why Westerham had not been identified as a high area of deprivation unlike the data suggested.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

22. Economic Development Strategy - Members' Input

The Chief Officer, Communities & Business presented a report that summarised Members' input to the Economic Development Strategy workshop held for Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee Members on 15 August 2013 where they had considered the economic needs of the District under the five key actions of the Community Plan's Dynamic Economy theme.

Resolved: That it be noted that Members views would be taken into account in the drafting of the Economic Development Strategy.

23. Work Plan

The Committee considered its work plan for the year and agreed that the following be added:

- Rural Broadband – External Witnesses -- BT

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- Rural Economy Briefing
- NHS Call to Action

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 10.00 PM

CHAIRMAN