

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2019 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Brown (Chairman)

Cllr. London (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Ball, Barnes, Firth, Layland, London, Mrs. Morris, Pender and Purves

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Kitchener

1. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 2 April 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

3. Responses of the Cabinet to reports of the Scrutiny Committee (if any)

There were none.

4. Actions from the Previous Meeting (if any)

The action was noted.

5. Sevenoaks Community Leisure

The Chairman welcomed Jane Parish, the Chief Executive of Sencio Sevenoaks Community Leisure who gave a [presentation](#) to the Committee alongside the Sales Manager and Marketing Manager.

In response to Member questions the Chief Executive confirmed that there were around 6,500 leisure centre members, with no overlapping memberships and around 10,000 if centre members were also included. Questions were raised concerning the planned White Oak Leisure Centre redevelopment and it was explained that Sencio Leisure were not involved in the proposal at this stage. The Marketing Manager clarified that the Marketing budget was around £90,000 and the marketing approach was 80% digital and 20% print. It was questioned whether digital marketing was more effective than print marketing and it was advised that Sencio were better able to monitor the effectivity of digital marketing which aided them in refining and targeting their marketing efforts.

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A Member questioned the surplus and deficit levels for the organisation and were advised that the accounts for 2018 had not yet been finalised but would be affected by the fire at the Sevenoaks Centre in 2018, the delay in the opening of the new gym and dance studio and the closure of the Buckhurst 2 car park. The Chief Executive agreed to share the profit and loss accounts for 2017 with the Scrutiny Committee following the meeting and the accounts for 2018 when they became available.

Action 1: That Sencio Sevenoaks Leisure Centre provide their audited accounts for 2017 and their accounts for 2018 when finalised.

Members were advised that the loan of £600,000 from Sevenoaks District Council had been used only for building renovation and development, and an additional £319,000 had been secured to cover the cost of exercise equipment and machines. The resistant equipment was expected to last more than 5 years and cardiovascular equipment for 5 years. Sencio would consider replacement options for this equipment. Members were advised on the profits for each of the centres however it was highlighted that these profits did not consider central costs. It was noted that from the figures provided in the presentation it appeared that finances and membership appear to have improved following the loan and refurbishment.

The Chairman thanked Chief Executive Jane Parish for her attendance and for hosting the Committee meeting at the Leisure Centre.

6. Performance Report

Members considered the report which summarised performance across the Council to the end of 2018/19. Members were asked to consider 7 performance indicators which were performing 10% or more below their target with a commentary from Officers explaining the reasons and detailing any plans to improve performance. The report also provided key performance indicators relating to the Portfolio Holders in attendance.

Members were advised that the performance target for the percentage of cleaning schedules completed to the agreed frequency had been reduced to a more realistic target of 90%. Although green waste collections were narrowly missing their performance target it was noted that 98% of missed collections would be revisited the following day. It was emphasised that there was a national difficulty recruiting HGV drivers and this was proving a challenge for both refuse collection and street cleaning services.

In response to questions it was clarified that all animal licenses were now issued by their due date. The previous low performance had been due to changes in legislation and a delay in receiving updated guidance however there had since been a rapid improvement of performance against the target.

Discussions took place around the number of households living in B&B accommodation. The Chief Officer Communities and Business advised the Committee that there were now no households living in B&Bs and the indicator

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would in future refer to nightly paid accommodation. Since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, Sevenoaks District Council had seen a considerable increase in its duty to provide support and temporary accommodation to people applying for housing. This duty now required applicants to be housed for up to 56 days. It was reported that the current target of 10 was considered too low and the value of 34 higher than the current number. It was highlighted that measures had been put in place which had increased those housed in longer term private rented and temporary accommodation however this improvement depended on levels of supply and demand. Members were advised that the Council received financial support from central government for this increased responsibility.

Members were informed that benchmarking exercises with other Councils when considering numbers of days lost to sickness absence were difficult as many authorities measured sick days differently or didn't include long term sickness.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

With the agreement of the Committee, the Chairman took agenda item 8 before agenda item 7.

7. Questions to the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener

The Chairman welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener who reported on the remit of her Portfolio and noted that she felt the Portfolio had been successful so far.

A Member questioned the Council's assessment of the need for CCTV cameras and protocol for removing them. It was advised that annual reviews and impact assessments were conducted where it was required to prove that cameras had a legitimate aim. If cameras were found to no longer fulfil this requirement they would be switched off, however it was possible that they would still act as an effective deterrent. A Member noted that there was a considerable amount of functional and non-functional cameras present in New Ash Green and were advised that many of these were private cameras. Through the out of hours service operated by the CCTV control room around 1,300 calls had been received for Sevenoaks and 1,000 for Tonbridge and Malling. It was highlighted that the Council was hoping to achieve further certification and expand the CCTV partnership.

In response to a question the Portfolio Holder explained some areas the Council was hoping to pursue to meet its goal to become cleaner and greener. These included LED smart lighting, improved recycling and decreased flytipping and increasing the use of electric vehicles for the vehicle fleet. Electric charging points had been installed in both Sevenoaks new multi storey car parks and investigations were underway to provide electric charging points on taxi ranks. It was recognised that street cleaning would not take place until new roads had been adopted by the highways authority.

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A Member drew the Portfolio Holders attention to an issue in Swanley relating to abandoned shopping trolleys to which the process for designating this responsibility to Swanley Town Council was explained.

It was noted that the Annual Vehicle Replacement Programme for 2020/21 had recently been agreed, and Members questioned if the Council were considering using electric vehicles. They were advised that there were plans for vans and smaller vehicles to be replaced by electric vehicles. It was highlighted that for refuse freighters and other larger vehicles costs are currently prohibitive and electric vehicles would have a significantly reduced payload resulting in increased journey times.

Members questioned some of the performance indicators relating to the Cleaner and Greener Portfolio and if the current targets were set at an appropriate level. It was advised that for some indicators, performance levels were out of the Council's control or there were additional factors the indicator did not consider. The Committee was informed that all refuse which was not reused, recycled or composted was used to generate electricity and a Member considered there should be a greater effort to promote recycling.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder for her attendance.

8. Questions to the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Improvement and Innovation

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Improvement and Innovation who reported on recent achievements and challenges faced by the Council and his Portfolio. He updated the Committee on the Local Government Association's communications peer review of the Council which covered internal and external communications. Some recommendations had been followed up immediately following the review and others were in the process of being adopted. It was noted that the Council had retained its Investors in People Platinum Status until 2020.

Recent changes to customer service were explained and how these were a part of a wider work force strategy. Customer service was aimed at being as modern as possible without comprising the choices available to customers and residents. The Portfolio Holder noted that those wishing to contact the Council are able to do so by telephone, email, on our website or at our offices.

It was highlighted that the Council had experienced recruitment difficulties for planning and legal posts due to a shortage of qualified applicants. Concerns were also raised relating to future recruitment at Dunbrik Depot due to an aging workforce and approaches were being considered to attract new staff to this site.

Specific projects which the Council had been pursuing were the new Sevenoaks Town Car Park and investment in new residential properties through the Council's Housing companies. In response to questions, Members were advised that investments in the Working Men's Club and Meeting Point sites had been made before the creation of the Housing Companies and the current investment strategy.

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Members were advised that investments were required to return a significant capital or produce a revenue return to allow for increased borrowing. The Committee were advised that although not all investments were currently active, Suffolk House and 96 High Street Sevenoaks were proving successful and the Council had not been required to borrow money for its investments.

Issues around land and sale values in Swanley were highlighted and conversations were planned with West Kent Housing regarding the Working Men's Club site. Architects were currently working on the Meeting Point site with plans for development expected by the end of 2019. Upon request, the recent appeal decision on the Swanley U+I Town Centre Application was explained.

Innovations were being considered in the Licensing department which would allow Taxi Drivers to received advice outside of normal working hours. Alongside considerable efforts focused on the redevelopment of Swanley Leisure Centre, there was also a refurbishment planned for the Leisure Centre in Edenbridge. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council had no plans to implement facial recognition technology.

Following the In-Depth Scrutiny into staffing levels, Members were advised by the Portfolio Holder that some of the recommendations had been adopted while others were being considered for implementation.

The Chairman thanked the Leader and Portfolio Holder for his attendance.

9. Work Plan

The Chairman highlighted to Members the opportunity for a Sub-Committee to undertake In-Depth Scrutiny work on a chosen topic. Members were advised to be mindful of the work of other Committees and suggestions for projects were requested. Members put forward topics relating to CCTV and homelessness. It was agreed that Members and Officers would consider potential In-Depth Scrutiny topics ahead of the next meeting where they planned to set up the Working Group. The Committee approved invitations to the Portfolio Holders for Finance and People & Places to the meeting in November 2019. Invitations would be sent to Kent County Council Highways to also attend the meeting on 12 November 2019 and Kent Police in January 2020. The Chamber of Commerce would be listed as a reserve invitee.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.22 PM

CHAIRMAN

