

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on Monday, 27 November 2017

Present:

	Cllr I Johnson (Chairman)	
	Cllr K Davis (Vice-Chairman)	
Cllr Mrs H J Addison		Cllr J Kingsbury
Cllr J Bond		Cllr M I Raja
	Cllr C Rana	

Absent: Councillors A-M Barker, G G Chrystie and R Mohammed

Also Present: Sue Barham, Strategic Director, Leigh Clarke, Chief Finance Officer, and Riette Thomas, Project Manager for Celebrate Woking

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 18 September 2017 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to discuss.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor J Kingsbury declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute item 7 – Protocols of the Thamesway Group of Companies arising from his position as a Councillor Director of the Thamesway Group of Companies. The interest was such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Officer Procedure Rules, Sue Barham declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute item 7 – Protocols of the Thamesway Group of Companies, arising from her position as a Director of the Thamesway Group of Companies. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

4. WORK PROGRAMME

It was suggested that an item on 'Online Transactions' could be added to the work programme for the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to be held on Monday, 22 January 2017. The Chairman added that further topics for the January meeting would be taken forward by Democratic Services. OSC17-022

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be noted.

5. CELEBRATE WOKING 2017 REVIEW AND PROPOSALS FOR 2018/2019

Riette Thomas, Project Manager, gave a presentation on the 'Celebrate Woking' events that had been staged during 2017, together with a summary of the proposals for the coming year. It was noted that the number of visitors for the Woking Food and Drink Festival had remained high, despite some bad weather, and that the Party in the Park had once again been a huge success. It was further noted that Woking had been listed as the 8th happiest place in the UK and the happiest in Surrey. Riette Thomas also showed promotional videos of the events that had been produced to encourage interest in sponsoring future events staged by Woking Borough Council.

Proposals for the schedule of events for Woking in 2018 included a celebration of Dame Ethel Smyth and the Suffrage Movement and World War I remembrance. It was reported that Dame Ethel Smyth had been one of the great female composers of the time and had supported the suffrage movement. Woking Borough Council would support performances of her work throughout the coming year and a Blue Plaque would be installed at Dame Ethel Smyth's former home in Hook Heath, Woking. In respect of World War I, the Committee noted that there were also plans to create a map of Woking's 28 war memorials and, with the Surrey Library, compile information on the 700+ soldiers from the Woking area who had given their life during the Great War.

RESOLVED

That the presentation be noted.

6. OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED -BIANNUAL UPDATE

Joanne McIntosh introduced the report which set out the Council's process for dealing with formal complaints, together with details of the complaints received since 1 April 2017. The Vice-Chairman commented that the report was the first full 6-month report received and thanked Joanne McIntosh for her work in compiling the information.

The Committee discussed the complaints received by New Vision Homes and it was noted that a high number had not been categorised, making it harder for the Members of the Committee to identify any trends. It was also mentioned that complaints relating to repairs could be more seasonal as the number of repairs to equipment would be higher during autumn and winter. It was added that seasonal factors would not become fully apparent until the Committee had received more reports.

Sue Barham added that New Vision Homes' Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were in the process of being reviewed. OSC17-023

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7. PROTOCOLS AND BUSINESS PLANS OF THE THAMESWEY GROUP OF COMPANIES

The Chairman and Councillor Kingsbury presented their report on the review of the Protocols of the Thameswey Group of Companies. Appended to the report was a revised version of the Protocols and Members were invited to comment on the changes before recommending to the Executive its adoption.

Councillor Kingsbury drew attention to the lack of attendance to the Thamesway Board meetings by Elected Members, though noted that this could have been due to Members being happy with the current management arrangements of the Companies. However, it was felt that Members should seek to attend in order to broaden their understanding and knowledge as there was a concern that there were misconceptions amongst residents of the work undertaken through Thamesway, in particular of the benefits for the Borough. Overall, the Committee were content with the revisions set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

OSC17-026

RECOMMENDED to the Executive

That the revised Protocols of the Thamesway Group of Companies, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be considered and recommended for adoption by Council.

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW 2017-18

Leigh Clarke, Chief Finance Officer for Woking Borough Council, introduced the Treasury Management Report and reported that, following the 2017 Autumn Budget released by the Chancellor, there appeared to be no impacts upon Woking Borough Council's budgets so far.

The Committee discussed rates for 50 year annuities and Woking Borough Council's long-term borrowing for Victoria Square.

OSC17-024

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9. HOUSING TASK GROUP UPDATE

The Chairman outlined updates to legislation, including the Homelessness Reduction Act and summarised some of the challenges faced by the Housing Team due to the extensive revision of legislation. It was commented that the Housing Needs Team had visited a local authority that had already made considerable headway in changing their processes to get a better understanding of the processes, procedures and culture shifts that would need to take place. Councillor Johnson highlighted that, following the withdrawal of Surrey County Council funding for the Housing Related Support scheme, Woking Borough Council was proposing to cover the deficit for a year following the cessation of funds to give the department time to review the services.

OSC17-029

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

10. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK GROUP UPDATE

Councillor Johnson referred to the disappointing attendance by Members at the Economic Development Task Group meeting held in October and the challenged development proposal for West Byfleet High Street. Councillor Bond clarified that the Secretary of State had not called in the proposal so its approval would proceed without the Secretary of State's input.

OSC17-028

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

11. FINANCE TASK GROUP UPDATE

The Vice-Chairman updated the Committee on the activities of the Finance Task Group. The Committee requested an update on the application to become part of the Business Rates Pilot scheme. Leigh Clarke reported that the application had been submitted on time but that further information would not be available until 11 December 2017. She added that the scheme was countywide and that all Boroughs in Surrey had to collaborate to be considered for the Pilot scheme. It was further added that it would be of benefit to the Borough and considerable income was expected. OSC17-030

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

12. HEALTH AND WELLBEING TASK GROUP UPDATE

The Committee discussed the resettlement of the Syrian refugees in the area. Sue Barham reported that the families were settling in well but that it was only now, one year on, that the full extent of their traumatic experiences were manifesting in mental ill-health. The Family Support team was focusing on developing the individuals' language skills so that they could find employment, noting that the Borough Council would be unable to sustain long-term funding. Sue Barham added that another challenge for the Team had been the cultural and ideological differences between some of the Syrian families where there had been some disputes, especially in regard to Sunni and Shiite ideology and rural/urban lifestyles. OSC17-027

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

13. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Committee discussed the Green Book and it was recommended that the Performance and Financial Monitoring item could be moved to earlier in the agenda as a standing item. It was also requested that the Portfolio Holder should be invited to attend the next meeting in case there were any questions.

The Vice-Chairman referred to the 'Environmental Enforcement Action Taken for Fly-Tipping in the Borough' and requested a definition of enforcement action and information related to any prosecutions that had been undertaken.

RESOLVED

That the Green Book be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 9.05 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____