

Medway Council
Meeting of Regeneration, Culture and Environment
Overview And Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 19 October 2017

6.30pm to 8.15pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

- Present:** Councillors: Bhutia (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Etheridge, Gilry, Hicks, Mrs Josie Iles, Khan, Saroy, Stamp and Tejan
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Kemp (Substitute for Clarke)
Purdy (Substitute for Griffin)
Royle (Substitute for Carr)
- In Attendance:** Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services
Councillor Jane Chitty, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation
Tomasz Kozlowski, Assistant Director, Physical and Cultural Regeneration
Anna Marie Lawrence, Head of Performance and Intelligence
Stephen Platt, Democratic Services Officer
Millie Pountney, Legal Adviser

407 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carr, Clarke and Griffin and the Director for Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Councillor Bhutia chaired the meeting.

408 Record of Meeting

The record of the meeting held on 17 August 2017 was agreed and signed by the Vice Chairman as correct.

409 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

410 Declaration of interest and whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

Councillor Tejan declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Item 5 (Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation) insofar as he is a Director of a company based at the Innovation Centre. However, under this particular item, there was no discussion on the Innovation Centre and therefore Councillor Tejan was not required to leave the meeting.

Other interests

There were none.

411 Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation

Discussion:

Members received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation which fell within the remit of this Committee as set out below:

- Economic Development
- Employment
- Local Plan
- Markets
- Planning Policy
- Regulation – Environmental Health/Trading Standards/Enforcement and Licensing (executive functions only)
- Social Regeneration
- South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership

The Portfolio Holder responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Town Centre Management** – A Member referred to the pilot highway licensing scheme for goods, tables and A-boards on the public highway in Chatham. He expressed concern that some stall holders strayed beyond the boundary of their pitch. He also identified a perception that, due to illegal trading in the area, street trading was associated with crime, anti-social behaviour and inadequate policing. The Portfolio Holder responded that the use of A-boards was regulated. The policing issue had recently been discussed at the Chatham Town Centre Forum and it was recognised that very few people caused a majority of the issues. The Council worked closely with the Police, Community Safety Wardens and charities to improve the offer in the area as a matter of high priority.

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- **Chatham and Gillingham** - A Member noted that the large empty retail unit in Chatham did not create a welcoming environment and asked what was being done to progress the economic development of the town centres. The Portfolio Holder responded that town centre regeneration was a long term strategic process; she cited the example of Strood which, having had many empty units 20 years ago, had now found its niche and was thriving. The refocussing of Chatham High Street was progressing and involved close liaison with local residents who were positive about the future. A Member reported that there was now only one PCSO in Gillingham and expressed concern about anti social behaviour and the reluctance of some elderly residents to visit town centres for this reason. The Portfolio Holder said that this was not part of her portfolio, but referred to the positive and collaborative work of the Community Safety Partnership. She advised that Members and officers were reviewing regeneration opportunities for Gillingham and proposals would be presented to Members when these had been developed. The Assistant Director Front Line Services undertook to raise with colleagues Members' concerns about anti-social behaviour in order that further information could be provided.
- **Local Plan** – A Member referred to the implications of Lodge Hill for the next stages of the Local Plan. In response to the consultation on the Development Options document, around 11,000 specific representations had been received on the proposals for Lodge Hill. A breakdown of this figure was requested to show the number of positive and negative responses. The Portfolio Holder undertook to provide this to Members of the Committee. She added that the Council was working closely with Government officers and was aware of and responsive to the challenge of the Local Plan process.
- **Local Growth Fund for Strood Civic Site Flood Mitigation Works** – A Member noted that flood mitigation measures, for which £3.5 million LGF funding had been awarded in 2016/17, had not yet commenced and expressed concern that, as a result, the area was still prone to flooding. The Portfolio Holder responded that the funding was in place for use as part of the future development of the site. A Member expressed concern about drainage and flood protection for Rochester Cathedral. The Assistant Directors undertook to provide responses on flooding in Strood and at Rochester Cathedral.
- **Economic Regeneration/Social Regeneration** – A Member expressed the view that the statistical information provided within the report should include comparative data for previous years and other local authorities. He had referred to last year's report and noted that the target for jobs created and safeguarded had reduced from 400 to 300, despite 759 jobs being created last year. The number of intensive assists to local businesses, interest free loans and start up grants, and apprenticeships had also reduced. The Portfolio Holder responded that the business community in Medway was very buoyant and optimistic with businesses expanding and employing more people. The current statistics therefore provided a more accurate baseline than last year and reflected a positive position. Employ Medway had been very successful throughout 2016/17

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and had helped people who had been long term unemployed move into employment or start up a business. Fewer people had applied for interest free loans and start up grants, but this funding continued to be promoted and had not been reduced.

- **Development Management** – A Member noted the high performance for processing planning applications and asked if the targets had been revised. The Portfolio Holder advised that these performance figures were subject to seasonal variations and that performance could be more accurately measured at the end of the year. The Assistant Director Physical and Cultural Regeneration undertook to respond on how Medway had performed significantly above the national average during January to March 2017.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) thanked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation for attending the meeting and answering questions;
- b) requested that officers provide further information on anti-social behaviour, particularly in Chatham and Gillingham, to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- c) noted that the Portfolio Holder will ask for a breakdown of the positive and negative responses to the proposals for Lodge Hill to be provided to members of the Committee;
- d) noted that officer responses would be provided to Members on flooding in Strood and at Rochester Cathedral;
- e) requested that consideration be given to providing comparative data for previous years and other local authorities in future reports; and
- f) noted that an officer response will be provided to Members on how Medway had performed significantly above the national average during January to March 2017 in respect of planning applications.

412 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2017/18

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out the performance summary for Quarter 1 2017/18 against the Council's priorities for the Committee:

- Medway: A place to be proud of.
- Maximising regeneration and economic growth.

The Committee raised the following issues:

- **Scheduling of Performance Monitoring reports** - A Member made a general comment about the timing of performance reports to the Committee, noting that the information within the report covered a period that had ended over three months ago. He suggested that it might be

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better for the Committee to consider Quarters 1 and 2 together, as Quarter 1 reports only gave a small snapshot of performance.

- **New Highways Contract 2017** – A Member sought clarification on the implications of the new contract for Council officers. The Assistant Director Front Line Services explained that the Council's Highways Teams had relocated to the depot of the new contractor, Volker, and this had helped create a closer working relationship.
- **Performance Indicator N1 167 – Average journey times along 5 routes across Medway** - A Member expressed frustration at the lack of data for this indicator and suggested that average traffic speed would be a better indicator. The Head of Performance Intelligence advised that continued use of the new Basemap system would result in the extraction of richer data for use in future performance monitoring reports. A Member proposed that a report on this matter be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.
- **Performance Indicator LRCC4a – Number of jobs created and safeguarded (cumulative)** – A Member questioned why the target had been reduced to 300, given that last years target of 400 had been met. The Head of Performance Intelligence responded that this was decision made at Full Council and she undertook to provide the Member with the reasons given in the Council report.
- **Strood railway station** – A Member welcomed the good progress made in rebuilding the station.
- **Chatham railway station** - A Member expressed concern that there were no lifts at the station and questioned whether the station was DDA compliant. The Assistant Director Physical and Cultural Regeneration offered to raise this with the rail operator.
- **To increase visitor numbers** – A Member stated that toilets were an important facility when visitors attend Council events or walk in green spaces. The Member was concerned that they had read a recent press article in relation to Medway Norse and the possibility that Parish Councils may have to manage their own facilities in the future. The Assistant Director Front Line Services agreed to raise this with Norse.
- **Rochester Riverside** – It was confirmed that the planning application would be considered by the Planning Committee on 25 October 2017.
- **Affordable Homes** – A Member expressed disappointment that only 22 affordable homes had been created during the period and did not consider that this represented a performance highlight. The Assistant Director Physical and Cultural Regeneration responded that the Council always sought to maximise the number of affordable homes, but consistently faced challenges in relation to the viability of planning schemes.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- a) note the Quarter 1 2017/18 performance against the measures of success used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities;

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- b) consider adding Performance Indicator N1 167 – Average journey times along 5 routes across Medway as an item for the Committee’s work programme; and
- c) note that officers would respond to the Members who had raised issues in relation to the number of jobs created and safeguarded (LRCC4a) (Head of Performance and Intelligence); the lack of lifts at Chatham railway station (Assistant Director Physical and Cultural Regeneration); and toilet facilities at events and green spaces (Assistant Director Front Line Services).

413 Petitions

Discussion:

The Committee received a report advising of those petitions received by the Council, which fell within the remit of the Committee, including a summary of the responses sent to the petition organisers by officers. No petitions had been referred to the Committee for consideration by the lead petitioners.

A Member requested further information on the timescale for the works to restrict parking in Cherry Amber Close, Rainham. Another Member sought clarification on whether this was part of a wider scheme. The Assistant Director Front Line Services undertook to provide a response to those Members directly.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the report; and
- b) noted that the Assistant Director Front Line Services would respond directly to the Members who had sought clarification on the timescale of works to restrict parking in Cherry Amber Close, Rainham, and on whether this was part of a wider scheme.

414 Work programme

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out the Committee’s work programme for 2017/18 along with suggested changes from the Committee’s pre-agenda meeting on 6 October 2017.

It was noted that at that meeting, it had been suggested that the report on the Annual Action Plan reviewing the progress of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy be produced as a briefing note in early 2018 and, if Members expressed a wish that this be referred to Committee for discussion, it would then be placed on the agenda as a report for the next available meeting.

It was further noted that, as a result of discussions at the agenda planning meeting, it had been suggested that the report on the outcome of investigations

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into a review of the parking in and around Southwell Road, Strood, requested by the Committee on 28 March 2017, following consideration of a petition, be circulated as a briefing note. If Members expressed a wish that this be referred to Committee for discussion, it would then be placed on the agenda as a report for the next available meeting.

The report provided an update arising from the latest Forward Plan published on 25 September 2017.

Members were reminded that, under consideration of the Council Plan Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2017/18, the Committee had agreed to consider adding Performance Indicator N1 167 – Average journey times along 5 routes across Medway as an item for the work programme.

The Democratic Services Officer advised Members that a request for a Members' item to be added to the Committee's work programme on a Challenge 25 system for the sale of corrosive substances had been received.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the current work programme;
- b) agreed that the report on the Annual Action Plan reviewing the progress of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy be produced as a briefing note in early 2018 and, if Members expressed a wish that this be referred to Committee for discussion, it would then be placed on the agenda as a report for the next available meeting;
- c) agreed that the report on the outcome of investigations into a review of the parking in and around Southwell Road, Strood, requested by the Committee on 28 March 2017, following consideration of a petition, be circulated as a briefing note and, if Members expressed a wish that this be referred to Committee for discussion, it would then be placed on the agenda as a report for the next available meeting;
- d) agreed to add Performance Indicator N1 167 – Average journey times along 5 routes across Medway as an item for the work programme; and
- e) noted that a request for a Members' item on a Challenge 25 system for the sale of corrosive substances had been received.

Chairman

Date:

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