

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 18 February 2020
Present	Councillors Miss Susan Carey, Laura Davison, Peter Gane, Michelle Keutenius (Vice-Chair), Terence Mullard, Patricia Rolfe, Rebecca Shoob (Chairman) and John Wing
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Gary Fuller
Officers Present:	Kate Clark (Committee Services Officer), Cheryl Ireland (Lead Accountant), Amandeep Khroud (Assistant Director) and Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services)
Others Present:	Councillors David Monk and Connor McConville

The Chairman welcomed Councillor John Wing as a new member of the Committee. The Chairman also reminded members that the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2020/21 is currently open and accepting topics for discussion for the forthcoming year.

54. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Patricia Rolfe and Terry Mullard declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as they are both Board members of Oportunitas Ltd, dispensations have been applied.

Councillors Peter Gane and Michelle Keutenius made a voluntary announcement as they are members of Folkestone Town Council.

Councillor Patricia Rolfe made a voluntary announcement as she is a member of New Romney Town Council.

All announcements and interests referred to Agenda Item 5, General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2020/21. All members took part in discussions and voting on this item.

55. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2020 were approved and signed by the Chairman following the amendments noted below:

Minute 48 – Additional information as follows:

‘Some members raised concerns about the Accounts and some members were not aware that the District Council’s Chairman Councillor Mrs Ann Berry is a Trustee of the Step Short Charity, although this does not impact on the decision made by Cabinet.’

Minute 50 – Members asked about the Minimum Revenue Provision and its appropriateness, referring specifically to Paragraph 2 (iii) Appendix 3 of the report C/19/58.

Minute 51 – Amendment to resolution as follows:

‘To recommend to Cabinet that feedback is given to the *Overview & Scrutiny Committee* on the deployment of the Q3 underspend monies against corporate priorities.’

56. Members' Allowances - Draft Parental Leave Policy

Report OS/19/07 set out the draft parental leave policy for the Committee’s consideration.

Mrs Amandeep Khroud, Assistant Director, advised members that this report would be presented to the Governance Working Group and subsequently to Full Council for their consideration.

Generally members agreed this report showed a reasonable and fair approach to the subject in a non-discriminatory way.

Councillor Laura Davison questioned the removal of the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) if a councillor takes parental leave and special responsibilities are not undertaken. She believed this could cause financial difficulties and may be seen as indirect discrimination.

In comparing the proposed Parental Leave Policy, Mrs Khroud looked at other local authorities, the LGA guidance and the LGA’s Labour Women’s Taskforce, concluding that the SRA is paid to councillors who carry out special responsibilities. In this respect these would not be carried out if Parental Leave was taken and it would seem reasonable and legally correct for the SRA payment to cease.

Proposed by Councillor Laura Davison
Seconded by Councillor Michelle Keutenius and

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Council that the Special Responsibility Allowance remains intact when a Councillor, who receives it, takes Parental Leave.

(Voting: For 3; Against 5; Abstentions 0)

THIS MOTION FELL.

Further comments made included encouraging all members to accept their allowances, attracting a younger generation of potential councillors and pointing out that this policy is relevant to both sexes.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Terry Mullard and

RESOLVED:

- 1. To receive and note report OS/19/07.**
- 2. That the Committee fully supports the Draft Parental Leave Policy.**

(Voting: For 8; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

57. General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2020/21

Report C/19/66 sets out the final General Fund budget and council tax requirement for 2020/21, including that part of the local tax covering district and parish services.

Members noted the following:

- Budgeting decisions relating to the Folkestone Parks and Pleasure Grounds Charity rests with the Trustees.
- Town and Parish Councils determine their own level of precept requirement which on average has increased.

It was also noted that the Budget consultation received little response, comments received were broken down as follows:

- Some respondents said 2% increase in Council Tax charges seemed reasonable for the District.
- Reviewing contracts to ensure value for money.
- Funds should be increased for graffiti removal making for a smarter district.
- Proposed overall increase too high with further comments received on a broad range of topics.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Peter Gane and

RESOLVED:

To receive and note report C/19/66.

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Voting: For 8; Against 0; Abstentions 0)