

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 17 July 2018
Present	Councillors Miss Susan Carey, Peter Gane (Chairman), Clive Goddard, Ms Janet Holben, Mrs Claire Jeffrey (Vice-Chair), Mrs Mary Lawes, Michael Lyons, Ian Meyers and Russell Tillson
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Mrs Rodica Wheeler
Officers Present:	Gavin Edwards, Andrew Hatcher (Revenues and Benefits Strategic Manager), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Tim Madden (Corporate Director - Customer, Support and Specialist Services) and Charlotte Spendley (Head of Finance)
Others Present:	Councillor Alan Ewart-James, Cabinet Member for Housing

115. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

116. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2018 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2018 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman following an update on Thermal Installations and what is and has been done so far:

This is being looked at by central government as part of the review of building regulations.

117. **Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2018-2022**

The report presented the new Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy and highlights the changes and additions made since the previous policy was

published in 2012.

Adrian Hammond, Housing Strategy Manager presented members with an update explaining the policy is a key element of the Council's overall Housing Strategy for the district, supporting the continued investment in the improvement of the private sector housing stock in the district.

He informed that it will assist the more vulnerable and sick people on low incomes to remain in their homes longer, thus preventing them from prematurely accessing the hospital and care systems.

The policy also enables timely discharge from hospital where housing conditions are preventing discharge in line with the requirements of the Government's Better Care Fund.

As part of the draft policy, Mr Hammond informed that the Council will continue to provide:

- Disabled facilities grants to enable vulnerable people to live independently in their homes;
- Home safe loans for vulnerable home owners on low incomes to enable them to carry out essential repairs to their homes;
- Joint working with other agencies to help with urgent works and care to enable the vulnerable to be discharged from hospital to an environment that is suited to their needs;
- The provision of a handy man service so that vulnerable low income home owners can carry out minor urgent repairs in their homes;
- Continued loan investment in partnership with KCC to work towards bringing long-term empty homes back into use.

Following consideration at Cabinet on 18 July 2018 and, if approved, a period of consultation will follow.

Following a number of questions members were informed:

- Home safe loans – it is anticipated that 5-10 cases will be assisted each year with not all needing the full amount of potential loan funding.
- Broken conditions – there have been no recent cases of this but officers would work together with the residents and legal team to look at individual cases should this arise.
- Winter warmth loans – this will be available to households on means tested benefits.
- Handy person's scheme – this is a well-used service with at least 85 cases per year.
- Transfer of care – officers are working with hospital staff to assist individuals and their needs when being discharged and works are being carried out in and around the home such as ramps for wheelchairs or bathroom hand rails, all things that will make life easier for individuals and prevent any delay in their discharge.

It is good practice to go in this direction and government are encouraging this and we are already ahead of other councils in implementing these changes

- Publicity – the public will be advised the consultation process is taking place and that they are able to express their views on the draft policy. Officers specifically agreed to inform current and former service users about the consultation process.

Proposed by Councillor Michael Lyons
Seconded by Councillor Clive Goddard and

Resolved: To receive and note Report C/18/18.

(Voting: For 8; Against 0; Abstentions 1)

118. **Annual Performance Report, Making a difference: a snapshot of our year 2017/18**

The report sets out how the Council has continued to deliver for local people in the district in 2017/18 in response to the Corporate Plan (2017-20) vision of *investing for the next generation ~ delivering more of what matters*.

Gavin Edwards, Policy and Performance Officer informed members that this will become an annual fixture of reporting using the refreshed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which will offer a more outcomes-focussed set of indicators that measure the Council's progress in delivering its key delivery plans and strategies. Work on a refreshed set of Key Performance indicators will be ongoing throughout 2018/19.

Members paid particular attention to the following with the intention that they would be included in future reports:

- Performance - It was agreed that future reports include the previous year's performance so that members can compare how the Council is delivering on its plans.
- Appraisal of the District – ensure that Romney Marsh is included.
- Appearance of the District – particularly in respect of damaged and stolen bins, figures need to be available.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Claire Jeffrey
Seconded by Councillor Clive Goddard and

Resolved: To receive and note Report C/18/21.

(Voting: For 9; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

119. **Risk Management policy and Strategy**

This report presented an updated Risk Management Policy & Strategy for adoption by Cabinet which will provide a framework for officers to develop a refreshed Corporate Risk Register as well as Operational, Project & Partnership Registers in due course.

Charlotte Spendley, Head of Finance informed that if Cabinet adopt the new policy it will give a clear and concise framework for officers to work within and aid consistency of the corporate project.

The key changes are set out in the report with the objectives being amended to reflect these changes. In respect of scoring this will be simplified and have better clarification and additional categories will be included to cover mitigation, time frames and target scores, bringing together other documents and information.

It is hoped that with these changes officers will adopt the procedures into their daily thinking, their names will be included as the risk owner with the Cabinet member being listed within the corporate register.

The document will be available to members of the public through the Audit and Governance Committee papers later in the year, with lead officers having access at all times.

Proposed by Councillor Ian Meyers
Seconded by Councillor Russell Tillson and

Resolved: To receive and note Report C/18/23.

(Voting: For 9; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

120. Council Tax Reduction scheme 18/19 - consultation

The existing scheme for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) has existed in its current form since 1 April 2017. This report sets out draft scheme options that can form the basis for consultation.

Andrew Hatcher, Revenues and Benefits Strategic Manager informed the Committee that the changes will reduce the need for admin and be better for the customer. Following a full consultation the changes will be implemented by March 2019.

The main features of the new scheme proposed are listed in part 6 of the report with members being informed that no legal implications had arisen as yet and this is the best opportunity to change the scheme before it is implemented in March.

It was agreed that this is the best solution to universal credit option which will reduce uncertainty but it is clear that it is important to meet the objectives set out and minimise any issues that may arise for those worse off. Officers

recognise there may be some losers and these people will be targeted to help, most will only see penny reductions, with very few in the £s.

A full consultation with applicants will take place and all councillors will be able to take part and put their views through a questionnaire which will be available on the council's website and on request. The consultation will offer the choice of remaining with the existing scheme or a new banding scheme.

Proposed by Councillor Russell Tillson
Seconded by Councillor Michael Lyons and

Resolved: To receive and note Report C/18/20.

(Voting: For 9; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

Councillor Gane informed the committee that he had received a request to add an item onto the annual scrutiny programme in respect of Members Allowances and how these were being dealt with.

Following an update from Tim Madden, Corporate Director this item was rejected by members.