

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 15 October 2019
Present	Councillors Danny Brook, Miss Susan Carey, Laura Davison, Michelle Dorrell (Vice-Chair), Peter Gane, Terence Mullard, Tim Prater, Patricia Rolfe, Rebecca Shoob (Chairman) and Lesley Whybrow
Apologies for Absence	None
Officers Present:	Kate Clark (Committee Services Officer), Adrian Hammond (Housing Strategy Manager), Andy Jarrett (Chief Strategic Development Officer), John Bunnett (Corporate Director - Place and Commercial Services), Jyotsna Leney (Community Services Manager), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Tim Madden (Corporate Director - Customer, Support and Specialist Services), Susan Priest (Head of Paid Service), Andrew Rush (Corporate Contracts Manager), Charlotte Spendley (Assistant Director) and Lee Walker (Group Accountant) and Karen Weller (Environmental Protection Team Leader)
Others Present:	Elaine Bostock and Graham Blackman (Shepway Tenants and Leaseholders Board), Councillors Jenny Hollingsbee, David Godfrey, David Monk, Stuart Peall and Connor McConville.

23. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Patricia Rolfe, Peter Gane and Terry Mullard declared an interest, with regard to Agenda items 7 and 9 in that they are directors on the Board of Oportunitas. Dispensations have been applied.

Councillor Miss Susan Carey made a voluntary announcement as she is a customer of Oportunitas Ltd.

All members remained in the meeting and took part in discussions.

24. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

25. **East Kent Housing - Housing Management: future options appraisal**

This report set out a headline options appraisal of future housing management options, taking into consideration the current arrangements between the four councils (Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council, Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Thanet District) and East Kent Housing.

The Chairman introduced Elaine Bostock (Chairman) and Graham Blackman (Deputy Chairman) from the Shepway Tenants and Leaseholders Board (STLB).

Ms Bostock advised members that the STLB had been around for 25 years. She said the Board had a very good relationship with East Kent Housing and were kept regularly informed of performance and future works to be carried out. Ms Bostock also pointed out that the Board had a good relationship with the EKH Chief Executive.

Ms Bostock and Mr Blackman had concerns about the proposed recommendation to bring housing management services back in-house as past history showed a less successful relationship with the Council and tenants with stigma attached. They felt that in the past there had not been adequate tenant involvement and were keen to point out that tenants' views are invaluable.

Councillor David Godfrey acknowledged the importance of ensuring STLB are involved, however non-compliance issues identified were serious and the structure of EKH needs to be considered.

Members comments included:

- In-house administration would give more strength and efficiency in dealing with issues that arise.
- Engaging and listening to tenants' concerns.
- Legal and Compliance issues are the Council's responsibility
- The need to be kept informed of the decisions made by the other three Councils.

Mrs Susan Priest, Head of Paid Service, emphasised to members and STLB that an 'in principal' decision will be made at Cabinet followed by a consultation. Tenants will be encouraged to take part and drop-in sessions are also planned.

Mrs Priest assured members that consultation questions will be balanced and there is no weighting attached to these.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Rebecca Shoob and

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Cabinet that there is maximum engagement with the Shepway Tenants and Leaseholders Board.

(Voting: For 10; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

Councillor Tim Prater made reference to Part 12 of the Constitution which states a recommendation to be approved by the executive and Full Council.

Proposed by Councillor Tim Prater
Seconded by Councillor Peter Gane and

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Cabinet that a final decision on East Kent Housing management is referred for full discussion to Full Council.

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

Proposed by Councillor Michelle Dorrell
Seconded by Councillor Peter Gane and

RESOLVED:

To receive and note report C/19/29.

(Voting: For 9; Against 0; Abstentions 1)

26. East Kent Housing - Electrical Testing and Water Risk Assessments

This report has been prepared in response to the safety compliance issues identified in respect of East Kent Housing's management of the housing tenanted properties. The report reviews the current position with EICR compliance and makes recommendations on a new inspection regime. The report further updates the position with regards to water risk assessments and the budget provisions needed for completion of these works. The report ends with a summary of year to date additional costs for compliance improvements mainly related to additional EKH staff.

Members and representatives of the Shepway Tenants and Leaseholders Board agreed that the five year rolling programme of electrical testing of its tenanted properties was a sound idea.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Danny Brook and

RESOLVED:

To receive and note report C/09/31.

(Voting: For 10; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

27. Flytipping

Mrs Karen Weller, Environmental Protection Team Leader, presented the briefing note.

Members comments included:

- Increase in fly tipping across the District reported, has this been the case in all Folkestone wards. Information to be supplied to the committee members.
- Enforcement outcomes in Folkestone wards – a breakdown to be provided to members.
- Staffing issues. Mrs Weller was keen to point out that there is a national shortage of experienced staff and this is being tackled Kent wide to identify what type of knowledge each Local Authority has and if training can be provided to officers free of charge to improve the standard of knowledge. The Environmental Protection Officers are very knowledgeable and experienced with over 10 years' service and this puts us in a very strong position with 100% success rate on prosecutions.
- £250k available from Kent County Council to support Kent Councils with Duty of Care fly-tipping, however a breakdown of where these funds are spent is not available.
- Officers have not seen any significant increase in fly-tipping of non-household waste since the introduction of charging at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC). It was noted that only certain materials are chargeable, such as plasterboard, ceramic tiles, bricks and rubble etc. Other household items remained free of charge to take to HWRC or use of social media or free adds to arrange free collection.
- It was noted that other options could be looked at with regard to chargeable Bulky Waste Collections.

Members thanked Mrs Weller for her report and it was agreed that Environmental Services team are extremely proactive and efficient.

Proposed by Councillor Patricia Rolfe
Seconded by Councillor Miss Susan Carey and

RESOLVED

To receive and note briefing paper OS/19/05.

(Voting: For 10; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

28. Medium Term Financial Strategy 20/21 to 22/24

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council's key financial planning document. It puts the financial perspective on the council's Corporate Plan priorities, expressing the aims and objectives of various plans and strategies in financial terms over the four year period ending 31st March 2024. It covers both revenue and capital for the General Fund and the Housing

Revenue Account. Also included are the Council's reserves policies. The MTFS is a key element of sound corporate governance and financial management.

Mr Tim Madden, Corporate Director, pointed out aspects of the report to members.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Danny Brook and

RESOLVED:
To receive and note Report C/19/26.

(Voting: For 10; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

29. **Refresh of the Council's Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy 2019**

The Council is part of the statutory safeguarding role within the wider public sector, with responsibilities to children, young people and vulnerable adults. The safeguarding policy of the Council has been updated and is attached at Appendix 1. A review of safeguarding activity and current status is presented in Appendix 2.

Members were advised about the change from the Kent Safeguarding Children's Board to the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi Agency Partnership arrangements which will provide further effectiveness.

Safeguarding concerns that are being dealt with by staff include mental health issues and suicide threats.

Members comments included:

- Staff training, a reliance on staff to complete adequate training.
- Contractor safeguarding responsibilities and ensuring that they have adequate safeguarding arrangements. Contractor advice note provides levels of safeguarding depending on the agreements in place, Councillor Davison has requested a copy of this.
- Training for Councillors, it is important that members are offered and attend training sessions.
- Folkestone Safe Haven project, a mental health initiative, to commence early next year, details will be made available on the Council's website.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Lesley Whybrow and

RESOLVED:
To note report C/19/32.

(Voting: For 10; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

30. **Treasury Management mid-year monitoring report 2019/20**

This report provides an update on the council's treasury management activities that have taken place during 2019/20 against the agreed strategy for the year. The report also provides an update on the treasury management indicators approved by Cabinet earlier this year.

Mr Lee Walker, Group Accountant, presented this report and drew members' attention to Non-Treasury Investments and the rate of return.

He also mentioned that the Public Works Loan Board's interest rate has increased by approximately 1% meaning any new borrowing would be more expensive.

The extra borrowing mentioned in the report is due to the acquisition of Connect 38, Westenhanger Castle and further funding for Oportunitas Ltd. Additional income streams are being generated from some of these acquisitions.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe and

RESOLVED:
To receive and note report C/19/27.

(Voting: For 10; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

Councillor Terry Mullard left the Chamber and did not return for the remainder of the meeting.

31. **Land at Ship Street, Folkestone**

This report seeks authority to acquire the former gasworks site in Ship Street, Folkestone (East Folkestone Ward).

Members comments included the following:

- There needs to be a good mix of homes, green space and commercial opportunities.
- Obvious risks with remediation however costs have been identified in the pre-development costs.
- The proposed development falls within class A of the National Infrastructure Levy and as such, no contribution is required.

Proposed by Councillor Laura Davison
Seconded by Councillor Tim Prater

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Cabinet that the local community is involved and consulted in the proposed development of the site.

(Voting: For 5; Against 4; Abstentions 1)

Constitution Part 5 (19.2) Chairman's casting vote in favour of the above resolution exercised.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe and

RESOLVED:

To receive and note report C/19/30.

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