

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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| Held at: | Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone |
| Date | Tuesday, 12 November 2019 |
| Present | Councillors Danny Brook, Laura Davison, Peter Gane, Terence Mullard, Tim Prater, Patricia Rolfe, Rebecca Shoob (Chairman) and Lesley Whybrow |
| Apologies for Absence | Councillor Miss Susan Carey and Councillor Michelle Dorrell |
| Officers Present: | Andy Blaszkowicz (Assistant Director), Kate Clark (Committee Services Officer), Leigh Hall (Group Accountant), Cheryl Ireland (Chief Accountant), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Tim Madden (Corporate Director - Customer, Support and Specialist Services), Fred Miller* (Transportation Manager), Charlotte Spendley (Assistant Director) and Lee Walker (Group Accountant) |
| Others Present: | Mr Paul Reynolds* |

(*Present for Agenda item 4 – Parking violations in and around New Romney)

Councillor Shoob (Chairman) opened the meeting and asked Councillor Gane to act as Vice-Chairman for this meeting, which he accepted.

32. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Rolfe, Mullard, Gane and McConville made voluntary declarations as they are Directors of Oportunitas Ltd mentioned in reports C/19/35 and C/19/40. All members remained in the meeting and took part in discussions and voting on all items.

Councillor Rolfe made a voluntary declaration with regard to report OS/19/06. She is an elected member of New Romney Town Council and owns a business in New Romney High Street.

33. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2019 were approved and signed subject to an amendment to Minute no 25.

Proposed by Councillor Tim Prater

Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe

RESOLVED:

That minute no 25 of the minutes from the meeting held on 15 October 2019 are amended to read:

'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 to Council Housing*. They felt that in the past there had not been adequate tenant involvement and were keen to point out that tenants' views are invaluable.

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

34. Parking violations in and around New Romney

The briefing report examined parking violations in and around New Romney and current levels of enforcement.

Fred Miller, Transportation Manager, presented this report. He drew members' attention to 2.3 of the report. Parking is to be closely monitored and to work closely with New Romney Town Council.

Mr Paul Reynolds, a local resident, was welcomed to the meeting and invited to speak. He had raised this concern as part of the Annual Scrutiny programme.

His comments included:

- Areas around New Romney with particular parking problems; Rolfe Lane, Fairfield Road and Craythorne Lane, especially within term times of the local junior school.
- Inconsiderate drivers parking on pavements and grass verges, blocking pedestrian access.
- Parking on or near restriction signs
- Disabled bay usage without displaying a Blue Badge.
- Parking on double yellow lines and zigzag lines.

Members agreed that Mr Reynolds had highlighted valid concerns not just in New Romney, but across the district. Members suggested a blanket ban on pavement parking, however Mr Miller advised this would have to be looked at area by area using traffic regulations orders (TRO).

The introduction of a TRO includes relevant signage, consultation and local paper adverts. There are also cost implications to be considered as well as resourcing regular enforcement.

Mr Miller, summed up to members that Central Government is considering a complete pavement ban for all areas (at present a ban is only enforceable in London), which would negate the need for TROs.

Members thanked Mr Reynolds for his attendance and input to the meeting. They were hopeful that the issues he raised can be rectified.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe and

RESOLVED:

- 1. To received and note report OS/19/06.**
- 2. To recommend that the District Council work closely with New Romney Town Council in forming appropriate enforceable parking restrictions.**

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

35. General Fund Capital Budget Monitoring 2019/20

This monitoring report provides a projection of the current financial position for the General Fund capital programme, based on expenditure to 31 August 2019, and identifies variances compared to the latest approved budget.

Members were advised this budget is subject to change.

Members asked questions as follows:

- Disabled facilities grants and loans – adaptations for residents. Private Sector Housing work with Family Mosaic who manage cases for the Council. Members asked if information from the Private Sector Housing team could be provided as to the level of work carried out with Family Mosaic and also what is being done to increase the take up of these grants and loans by local residents
- Corporate Health and Safety – members were advised this relates to works to be carried out at the Civic Centre, eg fire doors and new door access system. All compliance works are planned in as part of the planned maintenance programme
- Expenditure relating to Princes Parade – a budget had been approved for a five year period. If costs are higher then as part of budget monitoring, this would be presented to Full Council for consideration.
- Coronation Parade - a phased works approach to ensure cliff protection and sea defence.
- Home safe loans – it was noted that demand was lower than expected.
- Laptops additional cost - the costs associated to this are due to an accelerated roll out of replacement laptops to officers along with tablets to newly elected councillors linked to the Transformation project and the need to meet software licensing issues.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe and

RESOLVED:

- 1. To receive and note report C/19/35.**
- 2. To recommend that Disabled Facilities Grants and Loans to be scrutinised at a later date by this committee.**

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

36. Housing Revenue Account (Revenue and Capital) - Budget Monitoring Position 2019/20

The monitoring report provides a projection of the end of year financial position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue expenditure and HRA capital programme based on net expenditure to 31 August 2019.

Members were concerned about the situation since 31 August 2019 especially relating to safety issues and felt that a more up to date profile of the financial position was needed. Members were assured that additional funds had been made available including additional resources and staffing.

Looking to next year priorities will need to be focused on, members were keen to know an indicative figure of extra funding needed, this will be provided.

Consultations with East Kent Housing tenants have proceeded and there are concerns regarding outstanding repairs. It was advised that the future housing function needs to be reviewed and financially sustainable.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Terry Mullard and

RESOLVED:

To receive and note report C/19/39.

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

37. General Fund Revenue - Budget Monitoring Position (end July) 2019/20

The monitoring report provides a projection of the end of year financial position of the General Fund revenue budget, based on expenditure to the 31 August 2019.

Otterpool Park – an overspend is shown with regard to masterplanning and a longer process than originally envisaged. Funds in the Otterpool Park reserve and grants received meet these increased costs.

On/Off Street Parking – additional income is shown, which is due to new CPZs, increase in Pay & Display parking and PCNs. Andy Blaszkowicz, Assistant Director, will provide a more detailed response to the committee.

Members discussed CPZ permit charges and whether there could be help for low income residents.

Turning to the regeneration of the High Streets, free parking was a suggestion which would in turn help small businesses especially in smaller towns within the district. Members noted the free parking on Saturdays in the district leading up to Christmas.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Peter Gane and

RESOLVED:
To receive and note report C/19/42.

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

38. Budget Strategy 2020/21

The Budget Strategy sets out the guidelines for preparing the 2020/21 Budget. It supports the Corporate Plan and aligns with the direction and objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Budget Strategy takes account of current and future financial issues, sets out the underlying assumptions and initial budget-setting proposals and provides a timetable for delivering a balanced budget in 2020/21.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Rebecca Shoob and

RESOLVED:
To receive and note report C/19/40.

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

39. Fees and Charges 2020/21

This report focuses on the proposed fees and charges for 2020/21 which will contribute towards meeting the council's 2020/21 budget objectives and Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Council's Fees and Charges Policy was revised and agreed by Cabinet on 15 November 2017 (Report C/17/54).

Members queried the various charges in this report:

- Wheeled bin charges - No charge to replace a wheeled bin will be made if a resident reports it missing or damaged on day of collection. In all other cases charges will apply.

- Public Health Funerals – These occur if a person dies and no relatives exist, in these circumstances the District Council will arrange a funeral. A new charge of £300 per funeral has been introduced which will be charged against the person's estate. If no estate exists then this charge is likely to be written off.
- Hire of Land – Boot Fairs – a question was raised with regard to the difference in charges especially if a charity regularly organises a boot fair and charged a much higher fee than a charity event without a boot fair. Andy Blaszkowicz, Assistant Director, will check these details and respond.
- Beach Huts – a suggestion was made to look at tenants' main residences falling inside or outside of the District and adjusting the pricing accordingly. The Trustees had made a decision not to consider this.
- Parking Charges– an idea mooted would be to offer the first hour free of charge, however members were mindful of the cost implications.
- Market Licence fee – no figure available, however Leigh Hall, Group Accountant, will update to members.
- Waste and Recycling – Bulky Household Collection – this cost has risen with inflation and fees were approved this year. Charlotte Spendley, Assistant Director, will check and respond to members.

On Street Car Parking at Princes Parade – a member had noticed that this doesn't seem to be utilised much and suggested that a recommendation to Cabinet is made to remove these charges.

Proposed by Councillor Tim Prater
Seconded by Councillor Lesley Whybrow and

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Cabinet that the on street car parking charges at Princes Parade, Hythe are removed.

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

Following this recommendation, Andy Blaszkowicz, Assistant Director, advised members that the charging scheme at Princes Parade had generated an approximate income to the Council of £40K over the past two years.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe and

RESOLVED:

To receive and note C/19/41.

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

40. **Proposed changes to ICT service delivery**

The report relates to the provision of a future ICT service and the end of the current outsourced ICT contract. Due to changes in technology that are driving digital transformation the 10 year ICT outsourced service contract that was entered into in 2012 is becoming unfit for purpose in a number of ways as it was designed to support a working model of a largely static workforce based in a number of fixed offices. The contract does not take account of the range of devices that are increasingly being deployed and the uptake of the use of mobile working to drive efficiency are changing the requirements for supporting a modern workforce, nor does it take account of technologies such as cloud computing.

The ICT contractor, Sopra Steria, have approached the council to discuss possibility of a mutually agreed early termination of the contract as they are operating at a loss. Officers believe that there are advantages to agreeing to this request in that it will allow the ICT service to be reshaped to fit with the council's wider transformation plans and provide the necessary support moving forwards as new technology is adopted.

Tim Madden, Corporate Director, presented this report and advised members that there is a suggestion of early termination of the contract with Sopra Steria two years early, March 2020.

Members referred to 3.1.7 Flexibility and Resilience in the report and stressed the importance of staff training with current IT versions and new technology.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Lesley Whybrow and

RESOLVED:

To support all recommendations to Cabinet within report C/19/33.

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