

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at: Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone

Date: Tuesday, 10 December 2019

Present: Councillors Danny Brook, Miss Susan Carey, Laura Davison, Peter Gane, Michelle Keiutenius (Vice-Chair), David Monk, Terence Mullard, Tim Prater, Patricia Rolfe, Rebecca Shoob (Chairman) and Lesley Whybrow

Apologies for Absence

Officers Present: Tim Bailey (Planning Policy Specialist), Andy Blaszkowicz (Assistant Director), Kate Clark (Committee Services Officer), Leigh Hall (Case Management Lead (Support Services)), Adrian Hammond (Housing Strategy Manager), Katharine Harvey (Chief Economic Development Officer), Cheryl Ireland (Chief Accountant), Andy Jarrett (Chief Strategic Development Officer), Amandeep Khroud (Assistant Director), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Andrew Rush (Corporate Contracts Manager), Charlotte Spendley (Assistant Director), Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist) and Lee Walker (Group Accountant)

Others Present:

41. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Peter Gane declared a voluntary announcement in Respect of item 5 – The Play Area Strategy in that he is a member of Folkestone Town Council.

Councillor Tim Prater declared a voluntary announcement in Respect of item 5 – The Play Area Strategy in that he is a member of Folkestone Town Council and a Parish Councillor.

Councillor Michelle Keutenius declared a voluntary announcement in Respect of item 5 – The Play Area Strategy in that she is a member of Folkestone Town Council.

Councillor Patricia Rolfe declared a voluntary announcement in Respect of item 5 – The Play Area Strategy in that she is a member of New Romney Town Council.

Councillor Danny Brook declared a voluntary announcement in Respect of item 5 – The Play Area Strategy in that he is a member of Folkestone Town Council.

42. **Minutes**

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Peter Gane and

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2019 were submitted and will be signed by the Chairman once the amendment made at the October meeting has been corrected as follows:

Minute 25 from Overview & Scrutiny Committee of 15 October to be amended to read:

‘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.
- There is no stigma attached to renting and inhabiting Council housing.’

(Voting: For 8; Against 0; Abstentions 2)

43. **Draft General Fund Revenue Budget 2020/21**

This report set out the Council’s Draft General Fund budget for 2020/21.

Members paid particular attention to the following:

Connect 38 – members asked that this item could have been clearer within the report and were informed that it was correct to be part of the investment income area in that it needed to reflect income from assets but this would be made clearer when the budget reports are presented in February.

High Street Regeneration – members asked for clarification on this spending and were informed that the reserves had been established, monies will remain in the reserves until decisions are taken to approve the use of funds. If the programme progresses before February then this will be reflected within the budget setting paper.

CE38 Community Parks and Open Spaces – members noted that due to the increase in the waste contract additional re-charging has been placed in the relevant codes.

New Homes bonus Grant – members were informed that officers have yet to receive the Local Government Finance settlement so allocations are yet to be confirmed, however it is anticipated this will reduce each year and funding will therefore need to be found from elsewhere to support the budget.

Development Management Admin – under this budget there have been a number of changes as follows:

- The previous budget allocation for consultancy re Otterpool is not required in 2020/21
- Consultancy firm fees to cover the backlog of work due to staff reductions increased due to a longer term of use.
- Masterplanning – regeneration opportunities for Folkestone Town Centre will be reflected as part of planning policy.

It was noted that staffing issues have now been addressed with new staff joining the planning department in the new year. The department has also seen a change in how it works internally focussing on two teams being created one to work on strategic issues and one of enforcement.

Community Safety Engagement – this change did not reflect a reduction in establishment but the movement of a post to the Area Officer team.

ICT Operations/staffing – members were informed that a number of IT budgets are linked to the transformation programme and will be reflected in the base budget. Additional costs around service related to licenses and moving e-financials to the cloud, items that had previously been considered within the growth list.

Budgets - all budget managers consider their own budgets for their service areas, in the first instance, followed by discussions with CLT as to what items are progressed.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Ms Susan Carey and

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and note report C/19/50.**

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

44. The Play Area Strategy 2020 - 2030

The Play Area Strategy 2020-2030 detailed how high quality play areas will be provided and maintained throughout the District over the next ten years. The Strategy outlines how Folkestone & Hythe District Council will work

with Town and Parish Councils, Community Groups and other stakeholders to provide a network of Priority and Strategic Play Areas across the district that provide high quality play space, are well maintained, have good access and are financially sustainable.

Members paid particular attention to the following:

- Small play areas – an important part for very small children and regularly used in all area.
- Inclusive play areas – should be accessible to all ages and all abilities. It was noted that all new and redeveloped play areas will be considered for all inclusivity.
- Non-Strategic play areas – concern was raised in respect of the possibility of the selling these sites as a last resort and this is now reflected in the recommendations below.
- Town and Parish Councils – members asked that a set of guidance notes ie toolkit, could be provided to help with managing and maintaining play areas that are in the control of town and parish councils.

Officers understand that the current number of play areas is not financially sustainable and the play area strategy defines a clear way forward to provide a smaller number of high quality, well maintained sites that are financially sustainable. Officers will work with Town and Parish Councils to implement a wider number of smaller strategic sites.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Ms Susan Carey and

Resolved:

- 1. That following formal consultation a report is presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in advance of a decision at Cabinet.**

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

Proposed by Councillor Tim Prater
Seconded by Councillor Peter Gane and

Resolved:

- 2. To ask Cabinet to remove the suggestion of sites to be sold in respect of Non-Strategic Play Areas**

(Voting: For 8; Against 2; Abstentions 0)

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe and

Resolved:

3. To receive and note report C/19/48.

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

45. Place and Policies Local Plan - Consultation on Main Modifications

This report is to update Cabinet on progress with the Places and Policies Local Plan (PPLP), following consultation on a proposed site for gypsies and travellers (see C/19/13). The report seeks Cabinet's approval to publish and consult on main modifications to the plan, the final stage before the planning inspector issues his report and the PPLP can be taken forward for adoption.

Members were informed that following submission of the draft PPLP the independent inspector identified concern that it did not adequately address the housing needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community. The Council assessed a number of sites and identified a preferred site in Old Romney for development.

Following consultation in respect of this site the inspector received all the comments and evidence and made the decision that no further hearings are required and the Council can now proceed to the final stages.

Members noted the Main Modifications listed in the appendix to the report and asked for clarification as to why the policy relating to fast food outlets had been amended. It was explained that, although officers argued at the PPLP examination that there was evidence nationally and at county level about the health impacts of fast food outlets, the PPLP Inspector was not convinced that there was local evidence of a direct link in Folkestone & Hythe district.

Members were informed of the next stage in the process to adopt the PPLP. Once Cabinet have agreed the report a consultation on all the main modifications will take place. At this stage consultation comments can only be made on the Main Modifications themselves; the Inspector will not consider matters that have already been raised or any new matters not previously raised.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Rebecca Shoob and

Resolved:

1. To receive and note report C/19/45.

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