

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Remote meeting via Zoom		
Date	Tuesday, 9 June 2020		
Present	Councillors	Miss Susan Carey, Peter Gane, Terence Mullard, (Chairman) and Douglas Wade (In place of John Wing)	Laura Davison, Michelle Keutenius (Vice-Chair), Patricia Rolfe, Rebecca Shoob
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Gary Fuller and Councillor John Wing		
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Karen Everett (Customer Services Lead), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Tim Madden (Director of Transformation and Transition), Sarah Pinkstone (Environmental Health and Licensing Senior Specialist), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Andrew Rush (Regulatory Services & Corporate Contracts Lead Specialist), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services), Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist) and Jemma West (Committee Service Specialist)		
Others Present:	Councillors David Monk, Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee, Ray Field, Stuart Peall and Lesley Whybrow		

6. **Declarations of Interest**

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

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

Councillor Douglas Wade made a voluntary announcement as he is a member of Hythe Town Council.

These voluntary announcements were made in respect of agenda items 4 (Corporate Plan), 5 (Recovery Plan) and 6 (Customer Access Strategy).

All members took part in discussions and affirmations on all items for the duration of the meeting.

7. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2020 were agreed and approved. The Chairman agreed that her electronic signature could be added to these minutes.

8. Update for discussion on the development of the New Corporate Plan 2021 - 2031

Report OS/20/04 provided an overview of the work of the Corporate Plan Working Group and the development of the key themes emerging for the new Corporate Plan for the Council. The report sought feedback from the Overview & Scrutiny committee on the emerging key themes of the proposed Corporate Plan.

The Leader, Councillor Monk, portfolio holder for this item, presented this report and drew members attention to the five emerging themes.

Members were advised that their comments would be considered at the Corporate Plan working group on 1 July for the final report.

Members comments as follows:

Housing & Infrastructure

- Sustainability for all housing stock across the district which would ultimately reduce costs for tenants.
- Otterpool Park must be singled out as an important development for the future.
- A measure of child poverty was proposed so that improvements can be made and encourage ownership of communities.

Economy

- Ensure development of a sustained economy
- Consideration given to the finances of the Council since the pandemic and lockdown.

Environment

- Members were pleased to see the word 'exemplar' being used, important to have a definition of green exemplar.
- The next ten years are critical as flooding will affect parts of the district by 2050.

Community Focused Services

- Need to elaborate on health services such as physical, mental and social wellbeing.
- Although this is an early stage pre-pandemic report, consideration needs to be given to the impact on the district, especially the older population.

- Renewed efforts to the district's residents on waste reduction.
- Diversity and equality.

Transparency, Stability and Accountability

- Real opportunities exists to listen to our community during and after the pandemic.
- Important to ascertain residents' needs through effective consultation, engagement and representation.

Members were advised their comments would be fed back to the Corporate Plan Working Group which is represented by Group Leaders.

The Leader and Officers thanked the committee for their valued comments.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe and

RESOLVED:

- 1. To receive and note report OS/20/04.**
- 2. To provide feedback to the Working Group on the proposed key themes for the Corporate Plan.**

The Chairman sought and received affirmation from all members.

9. **COVID-19 Response to Date and Recovery Plan Framework**

Report C/20/08 report provided an overview of the Council's response to date in relation to COVID-19 and sought approval of a framework which will guide the development and delivery of the Council's COVID-19 Recovery Plan.

The Leader introduced this framework report which is evolving.

Members were keen to thank the Chief Executive, all staff and volunteers in helping and supporting the community. They recognised that all have worked extremely hard during the pandemic in helping to keep residents safe and well.

It was agreed that this report was strong, and will ensure a sustained and successful recovery. It showed a holistic approach in linking in with the Corporate Plan.

High Street regeneration was a concern, however the High Street Funding programme is available for high streets district wide. The Folkestone Town Centre Regeneration scheme is at consultation stage at present and maybe the same kind of scheme is needed for Hythe and the Romney Marsh.

The Council's finances and budget impacts were a consideration, Mrs Charlotte Spendley, Director of Corporate Services, assured members that this is a priority with a report being prepared for Cabinet. It may be that there will be a

need to look at deferring projects, a review will also be undertaken on earmarked reserves and the capital programme.

Members also had concerns on staffing levels and asked for assurances that there would not be redundancies. The Leader gave this assurance at this time, along with staff support.

Mr Ewan Green, Director of Place, thanked members for their positive comments. He said this report is a starting point for the recovery phase, will be member-led and that there will further engagement on this in due course.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Douglas Wade and

RESOLVED:

1. To receive and note report C/20/08.

The Chairman sought and received affirmation from all members.

10. Customer Access Strategy

A central part of the Council's transformation programme is the relationship with the customer. The Customer Access Strategy seeks to set out the Council's future approach to that relationship enhancing new technology and the benefits of the digital age whilst also ensuring those most in need are not excluded. This is the draft strategy which sets out this approach and the move to channel shift and will form the basis of how the relationship is in the future.

Councillor Ray Field, Cabinet member and portfolio holder, presented this report and advised members it would be considered by Cabinet in July. The strategy forms part of the Transformation Project in providing improved access to customers, especially with the roll out of 'My Account' system, but not at the expense of residents who are unable to use online technology.

Members thanked Cllr Field for his introduction and felt encouraged that recognition was given to customers who use more traditional services, such as face to face and telephone contact.

Members commented as follows:

- Payment services, Paypal mentioned as an additional way to pay.
- Broadband issues in some parts of the district, especially the Marsh.
- Face to face services on the Romney Marsh. Prior to lockdown resident had weekly access to speak to an officer at New Romney Town Council.
- Elderly residents may not have access or knowledge to use online services which means face to face or telephone contact is paramount

Generally, members agreed most people prefer to use online services. It's convenient, 24 hour service, simpler and ultimately saves the Council money which can then be invested in other services to help people less able to use technology.

A comment was made that the district website can be quite difficult to navigate and there is scope to improve this.

The pandemic has provided a good incentive for better online services and customer access.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Michelle Keutenius and

RESOLVED:

1. Note and consider the report OS/20/03.

2. Express the Committee's views so this can be fed back to the portfolio holder and considered prior to being presented to Cabinet for approval.

The Chairman sought and received affirmation from all members.

11. Revised Hackney Carriage and Private Hire (Taxi) Licensing Policy

Report OS/20/02 set out proposed revisions to the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire (Taxi) Licensing Policy. The policy was last reviewed in 2012 and whilst not time limited it is good opportunity to refresh the policy. The new policy will be sent for public consultation and then to Planning and Licensing Committee for approval. The purpose of this report was to give the Overview & Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to review the proposed changes and give feedback that can be incorporated in the development of the final policy.

Miss Sarah Pinkstone, Environmental Health and Licensing Senior Specialist, presented this report.

Members raised the following points:

Certificate of Good Conduct – applicants will be required to provide a certificate if they have lived outside the UK within the last ten years, increased from 12 months under the current policy. Although some new drivers may have difficulty in obtaining a certificate, it is important that they are ascertained as fit and proper. The policy does allow for some flexibility on this.

Medical Certificates – drivers in the affected age bracket would be required to supply medical certificates every three years on renewal of their licence. However, if between these medicals they will be obliged to notify the council of any changes in health or medical conditions that may affect their fitness to drive.

CCTV – although this is encouraged ultimately it is the drivers/vehicle owners choice if they choose to install CCTV. There are logistical issues, re costs,

ownership of equipment, data controller and GDPR. However members were keen to point out that CCTV is for the protection of drivers as well as passengers.

Wheelchair access – there would be a need to encourage the purchase of vehicles with wheelchair access but this could be cost prohibitive and discourage new drivers. Information is available to residents showing operators with wheelchair access vehicles on our website. It was suggested that as part of the public consultation disabled user groups could be included.

Sub-contracting – the policy states that a licensed private hire operator may sub-contract bookings to another licensed private hire operator. This arrangement is expressly permitted by legislation. Licence conditions require operators to maintain records of bookings.

Overall members agreed this was a useful update to a good policy.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe and

RESOLVED:

- 1. To receive and note report OS/20/02.**
- 2. To consider and provide any feedback on the policy to be included in the consultation exercise and developed into final draft to be presented to the Planning and Licensing Committee for adoption.**

The Chairman sought and received affirmation from all members.