

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone.
Date	Tuesday, 8 November 2022.
Present	Councillors Miss Susan Carey, Peter Gane, Michelle Keutenius (Chairman), Connor McConville, Terence Mullard, Patricia Rolfe, Rebecca Shoob (Vice-Chair) and John Wing.
Apologies for Absence	None
Officers Present:	Simon Baxter (Chief Officer - Development), James Clapson (Case Officer (Committee)), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Jyotsna Leney (Health, Wellbeing and Partnership Senior Specialist), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Jonathan Smith (Senior Accountant), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services) and Brian Thompson (Interim Chief Financial Services Officer).
Others Present:	Andy Jarrett, Managing Director, Otterpool Park LLP, Mark Dodson, Head of Finance, Otterpool Park LLP. Councillor Clive Goddard and Councillor Lesley Whybrow.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

Business Plan 2023-24, as she is a Director of Otterpool Park LLP. She left the meeting for the consideration of this item.

Councillor Carey declared a voluntary interest in item 4, Otterpool Park LLP Business Plan 2023-24, as she represents the Council on the Otterpool Park LLP Board.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting dated 6 September 2022 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3. Minutes of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Otterpool Park LLP Business Plan 2023-24

Councillor Shoob left the meeting for the duration of this item as she had declared a pecuniary interest in Otterpool Park LLP.

Mr Jarrett provided Members with a presentation on the strategic business plan that looked back at the progress achieved to date, and forward at plans for the future. The presentation detailed the key milestones and finances for Otterpool Park LLP (OP), and set out proposals for its future priorities. The presentation slides have been included with the minutes for reference.

During consideration of the item it was noted that:

- Early drafting was underway, and discussions were taking place with statutory agencies to help finalise the S106 agreements by June 2023.
- Health service provision should be considered at an early stage in the planning process. Discussions were taking place with GP practices.
- Although the economic environment was volatile, the project remained viable and had been expected to experience several recessions during its lifetime. A collaboration with Homes England would help to further strengthen OP's position.
- The recent legislative requirement to ensure that new building projects were nutrient neutral could be accommodated on the site. However this may have caused a problem for some projects in the district, leading to a reduction in the number of new buildings constructed in the area.
- The negotiations with Homes England would include an equalisation of assets agreement, it was likely that Homes England would have between 20% and 40% of the land.
- The discussions with Southeastern Railways about the extension of Westenhanger Station had been going very well.
- OP would produce a standalone document noting the changes to the Plan and financial forecasts.
- The Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn statement may help to provide some certainty going forward, and collaboration with Homes England would help to spread the risks faced by the project.
- OP currently had 13 full time equivalent positions, and would employ a commercial director in the near future. OP also used consultants who provided specialist knowledge.
- It should be publicised more that the project was to meet a housing need for local people.
- A lot of community based promotional work had taken place, and more was programmed for 2023.
- It was expected that the first house would be up for sale in 2025, however there were a number of milestones to be met along the way to

meet this target, and these milestones were often reliant upon the actions of third parties.

5. **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

Councillor Shoob returned to the meeting.

Ms Spendley provided Members with a presentation that covered the following areas:

- The budget setting process for 2023/24 and consultation process.
- An update on the local and national funding position.
- An update on the preparation of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- An outline of the process for council tax setting.

The slides have been attached to the minutes for reference.

During consideration of the item it was noted that:

- The Council's efforts to engage with residents about the budget had not seen many responses in the past. Suggestions on how to improve the consultation were welcomed.
- The opportunity for residents to participate in the consultation would be promoted in libraries, where residents could also use the onsite computers to take part.
- Thanks were offered to the finance team for their efforts.
- The MTFS had been recalculated several times over the last few months in response to global and national financial predictions. It was likely that further recalculations would be required before it was considered by Full Council in February 2023.
- Global and national financial volatility had led to increased uncertainty, this has been recognised in the risk management appraisal that will form part of the report considered by Full Council.
- A position statement will be produced following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement.
- Three scenarios were modelled, a worst case, middle case and best case. They were based upon projections from the Bank of England and the Council's external financial advisors.

6. **Cost of Living Summit**

Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Special Projects, introduced the item on behalf of Councillor Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities, who was unable to attend the meeting. He advised that the summit had been well attended and successfully brought a number of key organisations together. He offered thanks to everyone who attended, and to the Officers who helped arrange the event.

During consideration of the item it was noted that:

- There were currently 17 warm spaces locations being developed in the district, and a link to a platform where warm spaces were being registered would be included in the 'Your District Today' publication.
- There was a small amount of funding available to help support the setup of warm spaces.
- Once the list of warm spaces had been finalised, the details would be publicised and circulated.
- It was suggested that the Green Doctors and a link to wellbeing support should be added in the leaflet.
- The Winter Well event, to be held on 12 November, was the next major event to take place following the summit.
- It could be useful to provide a date of publication or version number on the leaflet to ensure people had the latest version.
- Information on the Share the Warmth Campaign could be added, and details of some KCC initiatives such as the social tariffs for broadband, and opportunities to receive a computer could also be added.
- The Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS) was a KCC led household support scheme for vulnerable households in Kent who needed help due to rising energy costs. There needed to be effective signposting to the support that was already available.
- An application had been made to Government for an allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The proposed use of the funding includes support for those most in need of assistance to make their homes as energy efficient as possible. This could be through initiatives such as boiler servicing, or the provision of energy efficient appliances.
- If Members had any Ward Grant spare, they could consider putting it towards one of the cost of living support initiatives.

Proposed by Councillor Keutenius
Seconded by Councillor Gane, and

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- Receive and note report OS/22/07
- Endorse the Cost-of-Living leaflet and the ongoing activity following the summit.

(The recommendation was agreed by affirmation of the meeting).

7. Closure of Footpath South of Seaview Bridge Petition

Mr Baxter introduced the item. He advised that Council had resolved, at its meeting on 28.9.2022, that the petition be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their observations before deciding whether to examine the issues raised by the petition.

The wording of the petition was as follows:

'We, the undersigned, request that the path between the first bridge (Seaview Bridge) and the Tram Shelter remains accessible after work is completed daily and at weekends.'

Mr Baxter then provided Members with an overview of the planned work that would impact upon the footpath and explained why it was not possible to reopen the footpath while these works were underway. The presentation slides can be seen in the agenda pack for reference.

During consideration of the item, it was noted that:

- The footpath was currently open and would remain open until works commenced.
- The work was expected to take around 17 months. The contractor would minimise the amount of time that access to the seafront was restricted.
- Once the work was completed, there would be steps and a ramp that would provide disabled access to the seafront.
- During the construction, construction vehicles would pass over the footpath area, and the ground would be reprofiled. This excavation would destroy the delineation of the path. The path would not exist, and therefore it could not be reopened in the evening and at weekends.
- The footpath should remain open until the last possible moment, and residents should be given a reasonable amount of notice before the commencement of works and its closure.
- Consideration should be given to providing a nearby alternative tarmacked path to the seafront, while the footpath was unavailable.

Proposed by Councillor Mullard
Seconded by Councillor Carey; and

RESOLVED:

That the petition had been considered and the Committee felt that the closure must be implemented when works commenced.

(Voting: For 3; Against 0; Abstentions 5)

Following the Committee's resolution, the Chairman urged officers to ensure that residents were given timely notification if work was to commence on the site, leading to the closure of the footpath.