26. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Grant and Xhaferaj.

27. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 October 2016

27.1 Councillor Debman asked that, following the update on the Orwell Bridge Speed Restriction at the last meeting, a further Task & Finish Group be held in the new municipal year and that this be included on the Work Programme 2017/18.

Resolved:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2016, be signed as a true record.

28. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

29. To Confirm or Vary the Order of Business

Resolved:

that the Order of Business be as printed on the agenda.

30. Hidden Needs in Suffolk Presentation
Wendy Herber of the Suffolk Community Foundation presented this item and the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Councillor Meudec also attended. The Suffolk Community Foundation, one of 48 foundations within the UK, was an independent grant making charity which had been set up 10 years ago to reach those in most need by combining robust evidence with local service delivery. Working directly with national charities, following the submission of grant applications, the Foundation held funds to award grants to organisations to benefit local people and communities. Applications were open to all and help could be given to organisations to raise awareness of their services or by advising how to put suitable governance in place. Copies of the Annual Review for 2015/16 were available which listed each of the grants allocated, broken down by District.

The Foundation had commissioned the University of Suffolk to revisit the ‘Hidden Needs’ report written in 2011 which had been funded by a private donor and Ms Herber confirmed that the definition of need included the amount of money available, the access to services and isolation. The Hidden Needs in Suffolk, Five Years On (2011-2016) report incorporated information from the Indices of Deprivation released last year and other data and the study was a good tool to provide accessible information and inform decision making. It also included interactive maps of detailed super output areas (SOA)’s which were identified to be where money for support needed to be concentrated. Over 83,000 people in Suffolk lived in income deprivation, which was an increase of 5,000 people over the last five years and only 4 other places had shown such a similar decline as Suffolk.

The demographics had changed over the last 5 years in relation to a steady increase in the ageing population and the ethnic composition of Ipswich which therefore increased the demand on the voluntary and community sector.

Councillor C Smart expressed concern about how donations were steered towards the causes most in need and Ms Herber said that the range of donors differed greatly and part of the role of the Foundation was to take donors to Groups to encourage engagement.

Councillor Chisholm said that where the study touched on migration, White British and White Other categories were combined yet there could be differences in both culture and language. Ms Herber said that because of the huge range of data, work continued with ISCRE on issues around this and how it would develop going forward.

Councillor Macartney asked whether there was a limit for how many times organisations could receive funding from the Foundation and Ms Herber confirmed that there was a once a year limit for each project but organisations could be funded more than once a year for different work.

Councillor Harsant asked whether there was a limit for funding and Ms Herber replied that there was usually a £2,000 limit however, for some groups larger
grants were available dependent on the source of the funding and all grants could be for both revenue and capital.

30.8 Councillor Gage asked whether within the employment and wages data, an increase in flexible contract hours had been identified and Ms Herber said that it had been recognised that these contracts were prevalent and could cause chaos.

30.9 Councillor Pope asked about the reference to educational attainment being by District as pupils often travelled from out of their catchment area to school and Ms Herber said that this was based on several factors one of which could be how to access higher education.

30.10 In respect of 1 in 4 young people living in income deprived households, Ms Herber said that this reflected many different life situations and it fluctuated across areas of the town.

30.11 Councillor Whittall asked whether Suffolk County Council (SCC) worked with these targets as the indices of deprivation were consistently considered within the work of the Area Committees. Ms Herber said that the academic study had been well received by SCC as a tool to be used in a number of ways. The Chair thanked Ms Herber and Councillor Meudec for their attendance.


31.1 Superintendent Kerry Cutler (the Area Commander for the Southern Area) presented this item and the Portfolio Holder for Community Protection and Customer Services, Councillor A Ross (Chair of the Community Safety Partnership) and the Operations Manager, Community Protection also attended for this item.

31.2 Ipswich being split into three policing localities was led by Inspector Donohue (Central area), Inspector Horton (Western area) and Inspector Salmon (Eastern area). There were 236 Officers in the Southern area and included Response Officers, PC’s and PCSO’s, CID Officers, the Dog Unit, the Firearms Unit, Roads Policing, the Drugs Team and other specialist Officers.

31.3 Further savings of £1.2m would be required by 2020 to achieve a balanced budget over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan and the 2% Council Tax increase to the precept in 2016/17 had secured additional income for extra PC’s and PCSO’s. The funding for Suffolk remained one of the cheapest forces to run with the lowest costs of policing per head of population however, a national project for radio replacement would mean an additional cost over time.

31.4 The key pressures were a 14% increase (over a 3 year average) of 999 emergency calls and the average time taken to answer a 101 call was 108 seconds (less than 3 minutes). The control rooms were being updated and improvements made to deliver a better service but the general demand was up by 4.5%.
31.5 Superintendent Cutler made reference to an incident in Ipswich West at West Meadows which was, as of today no longer classed as a critical incident. Good public engagement had taken place, an emergency plan had been put in place and the investigation would continue with a police presence on site. Response teams from other forces had supported the enquiry to maintain a level of responsibility and she expressed her thanks to Ipswich Borough Council, Suffolk County Council and the Fire and Emergency Services for their support during this period.

31.6 In response to a stabbing incident in Foundation Street, 9 people had been arrested and it was confirmed that this and the shooting in Siloam Place had been drug related incidents. Unfortunately the Siloam Place incident had occurred on the day when Highways England had closed the Orwell Bridge due to high winds and this had resulted in difficulty for vehicle movements across the town.

31.7 The Superintendent reassured the Committee that these issues were discussed at specific meetings which fed into a wider tasking process which then set the SNT priorities. Additional resources such as patrols or dog units could then be requested if issues were adopted as a priority and often significant arrests resulted from this.

31.8 Operation Volcanic, which had been running in the Ipswich area since 2014, had good results and earned a good reputation due to its engagement and multi-agency approach. Since January 2016, 78 warrants had been issued for drug misuse and there had been 109 arrests for supply and seizure of money offences. 2,532 drug wraps had been seized with a street value of £25k, also £22k of cash and 1.5kg of skunk/cannabis valued at £3k.

31.8 As well as the support from IBC on weapon searches, work had taken place with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and four Criminal Behaviour Orders had been successfully applied for. These allowed the restriction of phone usage and banned youths from certain areas and two further Criminal Behaviour Orders were in the process of being applied for.

31.9 The role of PCSO’s had been developed to focus patrols and problem solving, with areas of specialism being designated such as vulnerable and excluded communities to build up links and combat hidden ‘out of sight’ harm. Links were made with Lighthouse Women’s Aid, ISCRE, community radio, Volunteering Matters and schools to highlight issues such as; internet safety, hate crime and personal safety. The Officers in Ipswich had a strong team ethos, worked long hours and were passionate about their roles.

31.10 Councillor Ross agreed and confirmed that IBC supported the Officers and the Community Safety Group had been relaunched. The Police and Crime Commissioner (P&CC) had given a presentation prior to the Council meeting in November 2016 and Councillors had raised several issues however, it had been the reduction of PCSO’s hours which had been the main concern. It was also a concern that police funding in Suffolk was less than that allocated for Norfolk and that emergency and 101 response times were not lower. The
P&CC had reported increases in domestic crime, rural crime and digital crime but drug issues were his main concern.

31.11 Councillor Ross confirmed that the CCTV in Ipswich was totally financed by Ipswich Borough Council and the Operations Manager, Community Protection spoke of IBC’s close working links with the Police and between the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and the Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

31.12 Councillor Chisholm said that due to recent incidents of anti-social behaviour in Whitehouse ward he had been encouraging residents to contact the Police if any incidents were witnessed however, residents were often fearful of reporting incidents or when they had, no action had been taken. The Superintendent confirmed that individuals in the Whitehouse area had been arrested as a result of extra patrols, increased CCTV monitoring and dog units which had been deployed.

31.13 Councillor Debman asked whether the Superintendent thought that there was adequate CCTV in Ipswich as he received resident concerns about possession of knives, untaxed vehicles and cars being overloaded with passengers. Superintendent Cutler said that a recent repeat operation in Ipswich Central had highlighted such issues and 20 vehicles had been confiscated or ticketed for no insurance, not wearing seatbelts or the use of mobile phones.

31.14 Councillor Ross said that each Councillor and SNT would be receiving a briefing note on the cost and effectiveness of the CCTV operation and he welcomed the continuation of Police involvement at Area Committees. Councillor Pope asked that a written Police report, broken down ward by ward be presented at each Area Committee as the Police Priorities item was currently only dealt with verbally. The Superintendent said that some crime system information was available as data on the Suffolk Constabulary website however, some issues were not available at ward information level.

31.15 Councillor Pope asked what work was being done in relation to data showing an increase in drug dealing around schools and the Superintendent said that three dedicated PCSO’s were looking at bespoke engagement within schools, about on-line safety, peer pressure and contact groups. Schools had a responsibility to deliver these messages and it was agreed that early intervention was key. The PCSO’s were also able to engage with individuals with knowledge around repeat troublesome children. The data on needle finds by IBC’s anti-social behaviour team combined with the Police anti-social behaviour data allowed more specific information on occurrences of drug taking.

31.16 Councillor Gage asked about the resilience of Officer numbers in light of Officers being deployed from Norfolk and Bedfordshire during recent incidents and the Superintendent said that all the police forces in the UK had a mutual aid agreement to combine major incident teams. The Chair thanked Superintendent Cutler, Councillor Ross and the Operations Manager, Community Protection for their attendance.
32. Budget Proposals Presentation

32.1 The Head of Resources Management presented the budget update and the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor M Cook and the Leader of IBC, Councillor D Ellesmere attended for this item. The Officer made reference to how the shortfall for 2016/17 had been addressed and the 4 year settlement which would provide a degree of certainty to finances. There had been a £1.6m underspend in 2015/16, a Council Tax base increase of £180k and an increase in funding level of the SCC Pension Fund from 79% to 91% which allowed pension contributions to be reviewed. This was set against the revaluation of business rates which rose to £260k pa and the continued occupation of Gipping House (£180k pa).

32.2 The Officer discussed the ‘Big Ticket’ items and it was confirmed that within these both the Customer Access and the Voluntary ERVRVS items would result in a reduction of workforce and that the Investment Strategy which linked with property was generally on track. Good progress had been made in procurement and zero based budgeting particularly from 6 of the 20 service areas and a large number of reviews had been undertaken under transformation with more savings expected from those still in progress.

32.3 It was unknown how business rate retention and the rollout of full Universal Credit by April 2018 would affect IBC or the preferred option, as outlined in the consultation, to reduce the New Homes Bonus from 6 years to 5 then to 4. The impact of this would be £1m extra shortfall in the final plan and be £2.5m adverse over the next 4 years which was a worse financial situation than had been expected.

32.4 Councillor Pope asked for more detail about the uncertainty of business rates and income generation and Councillor Ellesmere explained that business rates were a complex tax and no indication had been given about how this would affect IBC. In respect of income generation, a report would be submitted to Executive on 10 January 2017 to create a Local Authority Trading Company to generate income for services which the Council provided and discussion took place about the competitive environment of providing services.

32.5 In relation to a statement from Councillor Harsant about devolution Councillor Ellesmere said that there was no direct effect on the budget however, the £18m which had been earmarked for housing would have enabled IBC to build new houses.

32.6 Councillor Ellesmere explained how the change to the New Homes Bonus would affect all District and Borough Councils in Suffolk, even though some Councils did not include the New Homes Bonus within their budgets. Councillor M Cook explained that because of the introduction of the 0.4% deadweight, (the baseline of building) some rural Councils would receive no New Homes Bonus. The Chair thanked Councillor M Cook, Councillor Ellesmere and the Head of Resource Management for their attendance.

33. OS/16/09 Work Programme 2017/18
33.1 The Chair suggested that finance training be provided for the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee prior to the Budget Proposal presentation next year and it was agreed that this would take place prior to the meeting in January 2018.

33.2 The Chair suggested that Portfolio Holders be invited to update the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a review of work undertaken during the year and their proposals for the coming year and Councillor Ellesmere asked that these be programmed in to allow Portfolio Holders sufficient notice of their required attendance.

33.3 Councillor Gage asked for an update on the Orwell Bridge meeting held at Grafton House on 23 November 2016 which the Chief Executive had attended and requested that a member of the Orwell Bridge, Task and Finish Group be invited to attend any future meetings held. The Chief Executive replied that the meeting had been initiated by Highways England to discuss the decision to close the Orwell Bridge during the high winds. There was to be a further meeting held on 26 January 2017 and he agreed to request that a member of the Task & Finish Group be invited to any future meetings.

33.4 A proposal form about the Ipswich Park and Ride service which had been received from Councillor Gage would be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Steering Group and if agreed, would be circulated to the Committee for additional questions to be added.

Resolved:

that the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2017/18, with the amendments above, be agreed.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm