

# **STRATEGIC OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES**

**THURSDAY 6 JULY 2017  
GIPPING ROOM, GRAFTON HOUSE  
6.00 PM**

**Present:** Councillors G Chisholm, S Darwin, G Debman, S Gage, M Goonan, E Harsant (Chair), J Macartney, C Smart, H Whittall, I Fisher (Substitute), B Knowles (Substitute) and A Leeder (Substitute)

**1. Election of Chair**

**Resolved:**

**that Councillor L Harsant be elected as Chair of the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2017/18.**

**2. Appointment of Vice-Chair**

**Resolved:**

**that Councillor S Gage be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2017/18.**

**3. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Riley, R Pope and T Grant. Councillor O Holmes was also unable to attend the meeting.

**4. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 March 2017**

4.1 Councillor Debman requested that, following the discussion that took place at the meeting on 2 March 2017 during Item 5a – Update on the Orwell Bridge Crossing, that the Chief Executive write to Highways England asking that in the event of high winds on the Orwell Bridge, vehicles be restricted according to wind speed for the safety of bridge users and to minimise disruption to traffic similar to the model for the Forth Bridge.

**Resolved:**

**that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2017, be signed as a true record.**

**5. Declarations of Interest**

- 5.1 Councillor Gage declared an interest in Item 7. OS/17/01 Task & Finish Group Migrants and Looked After Children, as she was an employee of the Benjamin Foundation.

**6. To Confirm or Vary the Order of Business**

**Resolved:**

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

**7. OS/17/01 Task & Finish Group - Migrants and Looked After Children**

- 7.1 The Chair presented the notes of the Task & Finish Group and drew attention to the actions the Group had put forward for recommendation to the Committee from the last meeting held on 21 March 2017 and whether the remit of Proposal Form Ref No: 18 had been addressed. Also present were Councillors Meudec, as Portfolio Holder for Communities, Ian Blofield as Head of Housing and Community Services and Peter Whittall, Operations Manager, Housing Advice.
- 7.2 Councillor Darwin, as a member of the Task & Finish Group, suggested that an update on the actions be requested as they mostly involved input from Suffolk County Council. It was Suffolk County Council's duty under Section 20 of the Children's Act to provide accommodation for any child in need as a result of no one having parental responsibility, being lost or abandoned or the person caring for them being unable to provide for them.
- 7.3 The Housing Team at IBC, worked with Social Services to encourage registration after the age of 16 on the Gateway to Homechoice, choice based lettings system to allocate to council and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) properties in Ipswich.
- 7.4 In respect of Suffolk Leaders and other authorities contributing to support the housing services offered by IBC it was thought that an agreement existed but the Chief Executive would be asked to confirm this.
- 7.5 Mr Whittall said that in respect of which buildings could be considered as suitable supported housing, it was the type of accommodation required for need which was crucial with smaller accommodation being preferred to larger establishments. The Officer said that increasing the amount of properties available was more important than listing the amount available and talks were being held with Housing Associations to release any suitable properties. In response to a question about the statutory responsibility for support for a care

leaver, it was confirmed that it was now either until the age of 21 or 25 if in full time education.

- 7.6 The Chair suggested that the Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills be invited to the meeting in November 2017 to update on the service and with reference to the following:
- That the Y:Cube scheme be investigated to provide additional accommodation.
  - Commissioning contracts for providers be extended to allow them to achieve more strategic sustainability.
  - Organisations providing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) be more co-ordinated in the services they provided.
  - An advertising campaign be launched to promote more foster carers.

## **8. Annual Portfolio Holder Update - Community Protection and Customer Services**

- 8.1 Councillor Ross as Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Customer Services presented an update to the Committee and gave a summary of the areas of responsibility and main service challenges faced during the year as well as the achievements. The remit of the Portfolio also encompassed Licensing, Environmental Health and Emergency Planning with the emphasis being on education rather than punishment. He introduced Ian Blofield as the Head of Service for Communities and Janine Last, Operations Manager for Customer Services.
- 8.2 The Customer Services Team had restructured the way the Council dealt with the public, with 16,000 calls or messages being received a month. Services continued to improve to ensure that residents felt that their enquiries had been dealt with. Ms Last reported that there were many channels of contact to deal with enquiries; by telephone, on-line (24/7 availability) and social media and face to face engagement which was more costly in respect of Officer time. However, Officers and equipment was available at the Customer Service Centre to help residents access information and to promote remote access.
- 8.3 Over 6,000 residents had signed up to 'My Ipswich' the 24 hour on-line access portal to report, request, apply or make payment services. The target had been 2,500 residents by March 2017 and 10,000 by 2017/18 so this had already been exceeded. An integrated 'MyAccount' service which enabled residents to access account information about Business Rates, Council Tax and benefit claims was now available.
- 8.4 The Hears Alarm Service continued to grow and the uptake of 'Hears' users was expected to increase over the next year.
- 8.5 Environmental Health had relaunched an 'out of hours' service which could respond better to noise nuisance and the focus for the next year was on the standards of Private Sector Housing (HMO's in particular). In respect of food safety, the ratings had improved and IBC supported the Eat Out, Eat Well award scheme.

- 8.6 The main item of discussion at the recent Public Protection Working Group had been CCTV and Councillor C Smart asked whether there was capacity to expand this service and what criteria had to be met before siting or reviewing a certain location. The Portfolio Holder reported that all Councillors would shortly be receiving a guide to CCTV and IBC would also be informed by the Police where temporary CCTV cameras would be sited. Nationally there was a complex issue around payment for the CCTV service as no contribution was received from the Police and it was noted that funding had been requested from Area Committees to install and fund temporary mobile cameras.
- 8.7 In response to a question about IBC's expectation around Emergency Planning training it was confirmed that (working in partnership with colleagues of the Joint Emergency Planning Unit) any response would be how to deal with media and community responses rather than core decision making. A successful training exercise had taken place recently and in the autumn a seminar would be run for Councillors, working with a response team and the community to refresh their skills.
- 8.8 Discussion took place about the performance statistics for the Portfolio Holder which was detailed at Page 81 of the agenda under the next Item 9 - OS/17/02 End of Year Performance Dashboards 2016/17. In respect of the target being amended to 85% for 2017/18 from 96% for the Performance Indicator LI190, Councillor Fisher had hoped that this target would have increased year on year. The Operations Manager for Customer Services explained that the face to face service was being reduced to on-line and this reduction of customer satisfaction had been reflected in the survey. Councillor Knowles asked if more explanation could be given about how customer satisfaction was measured and the Officer said that it was part of Customer Management System which was fully recorded and measured.
- 8.9 The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and Officers for updating the Committee.

## **9. OS/17/02 End of Year Performance Dashboards 2016/17**

- 9.1 The Chief Operating Officer presented this report which highlighted the performance across all portfolios to the end of year, at 31 March 2017. It had been reported at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 2 March 2017 that this further information would be provided. The performance across the Council was good although there were some areas where attention should be focussed.
- 9.2 Discussion took place about whether trends could be noted in future reports and whether target LI 195(i) was 100% attainable, when the number of missed bins amounted to 45 per 100,000 (or 99.96%) of bin collections being undertaken on the scheduled day. There could be many factors, some out of the Council's control, which could be the reason for non-collection and Councillor C Smart suggested that a grading system be put in place e.g. below 30 – 'green', 30-45 'amber' and over 45 'red'.

- 9.3 Councillor Debman expressed concern about the reduction in the number of visitors to Christchurch Mansion and that the income of the sports and leisure facilities was being lost to private facilities. The Officer confirmed that this was a target setting issue as the Constable Aspire exhibition had been at Christchurch Mansion when the target had been set and that recent building work had also affected the visitor numbers however, the marketing and advertising of the museums was to be improved over the next 12 months. The Sports and Leisure review, which was now in the process of being implemented, included changes to memberships and more football teams had been recruited at the Whitton and Gainsborough facilities.
- 9.4 Councillor Whittall said that homelessness needed to be measured more critically as the performance statistics did not highlight where any obvious priorities were needed. The Officer confirmed that systems were in place to address the priorities, through the Corporate Risk Register and that the Performance Dashboard offered an overview with a brief summary of each Portfolio. The new Corporate Plan also offered information of where IBC was 'Building a Better Ipswich.'
- 9.5 Councillor Knowles said that he could not understand why there had been significant capacity issues in Legal Services which continued to be addressed by employing agency staff. Councillor M Cook, in his capacity as Portfolio Holder said that this would only be a short term solution. Partnership working had been considered but it had been decided it would not be effective, legal staff were in high demand and it remained difficult to recruit to legal posts. The Chief Operating Officer said that existing staff had been recruited to the Lead Lawyer posts and the Operations Manager post would soon be put out to advert.
- 9.6 Councillor Gage asked whether focussing on the red grading guides of the risk matrix should be put into context and the Chief Operating Officer said that the Performance Dashboards should be looked at as part of a wider picture and each relevant Portfolio Holder could bring briefing papers with more detail on their service when they were invited to give their Annual Portfolio Holder update.

## **10. OS/17/03 Work Programme 2017/18 including Proposal Form No 21**

- 10.1 The Chair confirmed that the Mental Health Awareness, Task & Finish Group would continue to meet as the SCC Director of Operations had been invited to the next meeting.
- 10.2 Councillor Gage asked for confirmation that, in respect of the Ipswich Park & Ride item on 2 March 2017, that the Chief Executive (in liaison with the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport) had written to Suffolk County Council and First Buses to emphasis the issues raised by the Committee. She requested that when the Park and Ride Service was reviewed by the Committee at the meeting to be held on 26 October 2017 that the SCC Cabinet Member for Transport and First Buses be invited to attend.

10.3 Councillor Gage presented Proposal Form Ref No 21: S106 Developer Contributions and reported that the Operations Manager, Planning & Development had confirmed that much of the work on the form had been completed. It was suggested that the Officer be invited to the next Committee to set out what evidence was available about how effectively Developer contributions had been used.

10.4 Future items which could be the subject of Proposal Forms were:

- Provision for Travellers – SCC Cabinet Member could be invited to speak to a Task & Finish Group.
- Homelessness – Royal Assent had been given to the Homelessness Reduction Act, the cross-government approach to be implemented next year. It would mean changes to how IBC and other authorities dealt with homelessness and the Chief Operating Officer would facilitate discussion on this.
- I-Cards – (Councillors Debman and Harsant).

10.5 The Chief Operating Officer reported that the Performance Dashboards would be updated and be submitted to the meeting on 23 November 2017.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm

**Chair**