Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 27 February 2024
Present	Councillors James Butcher, Bridget Chapman, Laura Davison (Chair), Anita Jones, Alan Martin, Elaine Martin, Connor McConville and John Wing (Vice-Chair)
Apologies for Absence	None.
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Scott Butler (Senior Community Safety Officer), Ewan Green (Director of Strategy and Resources), James Hammond (Strategy & Policy - Planning Infrastructure Specialist), Andrew Rush (Chief Officer - Regulatory & Community Services), Adrian Tofts (Strategy & Policy Manager), Karen Weller (Environmental Protection Manager) and Jake Hamilton (Committee Services Officer).
Others Present:	Councillors Jim Martin and Gary Fuller.

41. Declarations of Interest

Councillors James Butcher and John Wing both declared voluntary interest's as Directors of Oportunitas.

42. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024, were submitted, approved, and signed by the Chiar.

43. Minutes of the Finance and Performance Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024, were submitted, approved, and signed by the Chiar.

44.   **Cabinet Member updates**

In accordance with the Constitution Councillor Gary Fuller the Cabinet Member for Resident Engagement and Accountability provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update in relation to his portfolio. This included several key areas including Customer Services, Information Technology (IT), Information Governance, Elections and Audit.

- Customer Services – Members were advised of two key aims being progressed: MyAccount take up and functionality, and the renewal of the Customer Access Strategy. Current MyAccount utilisation across the district is 73%, with a take up of 200 accounts per month. It was identified that take up was lower in the Romney Marsh areas predominantly and officers are looking at ways to improve this. The aim is that MyAccount will become progress a single use service.
- Information Technology (IT) – The Council is exploring ways to utilise current systems more effectively, such as Microsoft, with the aim to become less reliant on individual product licenses. It was noted that Cyber Security was also another area of key importance. Authorities are expecting an increase in attacks generally and particularly across the forthcoming election period.
- Members were advised that work to revise the Customer Access Strategy is underway and that this will progress over the next 6 months. A draft strategy would be subject of a report to the Committee in due course.
- Members were also advised that the Digital Strategy was also in the process of being reviewed, but more information on this will be provided to all members at a later date.
- Information Governance – Members were made aware that the Council was not meeting all the required statutory deadlines for responding and reporting. However, Work is underway to look at ways to improve the reporting processes including reviewing forms which staff use.
- Elections – Preparation for the Police and Crime Commissioner election is underway. The Council currently has 84,114 electors eligible to vote in the PCC election and 68,158 electors eligible to vote in the general election (date not confirmed) in line with the new parliamentary constituency boundary that is due to take effect, following the Boundary Commissions review (more details can be found here).

Following the Cabinet Members update, members raised serval points, including:

- Has the Council considered Applications (App's) – Yes, this is under consideration, however, there are several different types of applications, and these can be very expensive to develop. This will form part of the refresh of the Customer Access and IT strategies.
- Not everyone has access to a smart phone. What are we doing to maintain accessibility for those without access – Residents have access to the Customer Access Point (CAP), telephone and email. The Council

is also considering other options to increase accessibility in more rural areas.

- As the Marsh areas have a lower take up of MyAccount, could members (district, town, and parish) and officers work together to produce ideas. Could the data be analysed to target particular areas, so that we can encourage more residents – The data could be categorised into wards.
- Could the Council and Members look at organisations to help bridge those gaps?

Councillor Jim Martin, Leader, and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy answered questions raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Princes Parade Project – Hoarding removal decision taken by Councillor Jim Martin, as published on 12/02/2024 (Decision Details). Members were concerned about the significant monies to be spent as a result of this decision – Councillor Jim Martin provide members with a summary break down of the costs involved and stated that the approach confirmed meant the Council would be saving money overall.
- As per the report C/23/88 – The report advises that the hoarding should remain in place due to ground contamination – As part of this decision, a new perimeter fence will be installed, to prevent access and trespassing, and due to the design, this will also open up visibility across the area.
- Some members were happy with new fencing being installed and thus opening space up visually. It was also mentioned that residents feel unsafe driving along that particular stretch of road due to the reflection from the current hoardings.

45. **Update from Community Safety Partnership and the new 3 year Plan**

Councillor Mike Blakemore, Cabinet Member for Community and Collaboration introduced the item, Scott Butler, Community Safety Specialist outlined the report which updated the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the draft new 3 year plan.

Following Councillor Mike Blakemore and Scott Butler's introduction, members raised several points, including:

- District Profile (page 27, paragraph 4 of the appendix), Members asked for clarification on the national ranking.
- How can we better communicate the difference these plans are making and how does the partnership decide what should be included within the plan? – It is difficult to demonstrate the success of our plans. Also, the details of the plan are collaborative, it involves, best case scenarios, links with other organisations across the country, to determine what works best, strategic development and projects like Safer Streets.
- Is there a way to show how the actions taken are making a difference and how it is relevant to residents, and connectivity around reporting –

The Partnership could look to promote examples and incorporate the reporting process within the plan.

- Members asked what the partnership was doing to improve streetlighting to make residents feel safer – The partnership is working with organisations to provide torches, it was also noted about safer street (https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community-safety/safer-streets-folkestone). It was mentioned that members could raise concerns regarding streetlighting to the Folkestone & Hythe Joint Transportation Board, which works collaboratively with KCC Highways and the District.
- Members suggested that the plan incorporate more links under the CSP delivery, for example the local engagement events.
- Members asked whether VAR data could be included, and a more detailed breakdown provided.
- Members reiterated the importance of accessibility and including more links to websites.

Proposed by Councillor Elaine Martin,
Seconded by Councillor John Wing; and,

Resolved:

1. **To receive and note report OS/23/10; and,**
2. **To provide feedback on the 3-year plan ahead of it being considered by Cabinet and Council.**

(As there was no dissent the recommendations were approved by affirmation of the meeting).

46. **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

James Hammond, Strategy & Policy (Planning Infrastructure Specialilst), introduced the item with a presentation.

The report outlined the background to the Community Infrastructure Levy, which came into effect in August 2016 and the Governance Arrangements that were adopted by Cabinet in June 2020. It also explained what projects the district council will seek to deliver using CIL receipts it controls, as well as a summary of those projects that Kent County Council (KCC) will deliver using their proportionate share of CIL receipts as set out in the approved Governance Framework.

Following the Strategy & Policy (Planning Infrastructure Specialist's) presentation, members raised points, including:

- When members could have earlier oversight of the CIL receipts? – It was confirmed that the officers explore the suggestion of bringing oversight of CIL to members at an earlier date.

- How is CIL calculated and distributed across the whole of the district? – Typically, the larger the population the higher the CIL funding level.
- Definition of qualifying development – New developments that create net additional 'gross internal area' of 100 square metres or more, or create new dwellings, are potentially liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- As per the report (page 41, table 4.1), why does this table not list all Town/Parishes – There could be several reasons as to why a Town/Parish is not included within the table. There were no qualifying CIL payments at the time of publication, or the particular Town/Parish may not be eligible for CIL (zero rated). CIL guidance to town and parishes.
- It was also noted that Hawkinge Town Council, was incorrectly detailed as 'Hawkinge Parish Council' within the above table.
- How can members encourage Town/Parishes to spend their CIL? – Members could look to projects that other Town/Parishes have delivered. Members were also made aware that an item on CIL will be presented to the Folkestone & Hythe District Joint Parishes' Committee on 14 March 2024.
- As per appendix 1 (page 50, paragraph 2) The difference between CIL invoiced and received – These figures can differ due to the council's policy, which allows recipients to spread the cost over 1, 2 or 3 instalments depending on the amount.
- Could members be provided with a breakdown of KCC CIL funding that has been reincorporated within the district. (KCC CIL Policies).
- Members asked for more information on how they could better contribute to the CIL process, particularly in supporting town and parishes allocate funding. It was requested that a general narrative about CIL could be produced which would give an overview of CIL and what it is used for.
- Members also asked whether more promotion can be done around projects that have been completed with CIL funding.

It was concluded that should members have further questions of feedback that they provide this directly to officers.

Proposed by Councillor James Butcher,
Seconded by Councillor John Wing; and,

Resolved:

1. **To receive and note report OS/23/07**
2. **To offer reflections on future allocation of CIL receipts related to the Infrastructure Funding Statement and supporting Infrastructure Schedule.**

(As there was no dissent the recommendations were approved by affirmation of the meeting).

47. **2023 Full Council Resolution - Folkestone & Hythe Youth District Council**

Adrian Tofts, Strategy & Policy Manager, introduced the item.

Full Council of 29 March 2023 resolved to refer to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) a report on the benefit of establishing a Folkestone & Hythe Youth District Council, referencing the Kent Youth County Council. The report described the youth councils and youth forum that are run by Kent County Council, Dartford Borough Council, Swale Borough Council and Thanet District Council to highlight to OSC the different approaches that could be taken to establishing a youth council and the likely resource implications.

Following the Strategy & Policy Managers introduction, members raised several points, including:

- Member were pleased to see the report coming forward.
- It was suggested by members that the council start with a youth forum, and then build on that once established.
- Members were not keen on replicating the KCC model and preferred the idea of keeping it simple.
- Member suggested if elections were agreed whether the schools/colleges could run these. However, it was also noted that schools/colleges may not have the resources to run such elections.
- Members were of the opinion that they would like the model to include as many young people as possible.
- It was also concluded that members would like to hear from representatives of the KCC Youth Council, in order to formulate a plan.
- Members also noted that by implementing a youth council/forum, that this would give young individuals the chance to input and shape their community and district.
- Members were in agreement that a survey should be sent to schools, colleges, and a wider audience, to give officers the opportunity to incorporate young people's ideas (resource dependant). It was also suggested that if a survey was produced that it have oversight from the Committee before being distributed.

Proposed by Councillor Connor McConville,
Seconded by Councillor Bridget Chapman; and,

Resolved:

1. **To receive and note report OS/23/09**
2. **To note and comment on the different approaches to youth councils and youth forums set out in section 2 of the report.**
3. **To note the key issues and resource implications outlined in section 3 of the report.**

4. **To note the responses to the three parts of the 2023 resolution, outlined in section 4 of the report, and provide recommendations as to the next steps.**
5. **That the item return to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following the delivery and results of a survey to schools, colleges, and other organisations (resource permitted), so that the committee may formulate a recommendation to council on a direction forward; and,**
6. **That a representative(s) of the Kent County Council (KCC) Youth Council attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, when the above recommendation/item returns to the committee.**

(As there was no dissent the recommendations were approved by affirmation of the meeting).