

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 3rd December, 2020

Present: Cllr J L Sergison (Chairman), Cllr Mrs A S Oakley (Vice-Chairman), Cllr F G Tombolis (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr M C Base, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr J L Botten, Cllr M D Boughton, Cllr C Brown, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr A P J Keeley, Cllr D Keers, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr M Taylor, Cllr Miss G E Thomas and Cllr D Thornewell.

Councillors Mrs P A Bates, Mrs S Bell, A E Clark, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, D W King, K King, D Lettington, W E Palmer and R V Roud were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

OS 20/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

For reasons of transparency, Councillor Boughton advised that, in relation to item 5 (Recovery of Voluntary and Community Sector) he was the Borough Councils outside body appointment to the board of Citizens Advice North and West Kent. As this did not constitute an Other Significant Interest on the grounds that no financial support was being considered, he remained in the meeting but did not participate in the discussion and did not vote on this item.

OS 20/25 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 October 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

OS 20/26 RECOVERY OF VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

The Chief Executive provided an update to the scoping report considered at a previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which had recognised that the voluntary and community sector had been significantly affected by the impact of the pandemic.

Representatives from Kent Community Foundation (KCF), West Kent Mind and Citizens Advice North and West Kent advised what services were being provided, how the organisations had been affected by the pandemic and how services had been adapted.

Members listened to the information provided by the invited speakers with interest and expressed appreciation for the good work undertaken by these organisations. A number of points were raised including the recent survey undertaken by KCF which found that voluntary sector organisations had a potential shortfall in income by March 2021 of 27% (£135M); the establishment of a new Voluntary Sector Steering Group for Kent to provide a strategic view and expert opinion on policies affecting the most disadvantaged communities; the increase in stress, anxiety and mental health issues and the positive transition to providing services online and via telephone. It was reported that many of the changes had been positively received and some customers found the new ways of working more accessible and convenient.

RECOMMENDED: That the Borough Council continued to:

- work with voluntary and community sector organisations;
- develop opportunities to support the sector; and
- explore new opportunities to provide assistance where appropriate.

***Referred to Cabinet**

OS 20/27 REVIEW OF CCTV

Careful consideration was given to the provision and operation of CCTV within Tonbridge and Malling. The matter had been previously reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 August and 10 October 2019. Updated statistics related to operational analysis and the number of incidents recorded (as set out in Annexes 6 and 7) were provided to aid deliberation.

The responses from the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Clarion Housing and Kent Police regarding financial contributions were noted.

Members had detailed discussion on the options set out in the report and recognised the value of CCTV in supporting crime prevention and public safety. However, Members also acknowledged the significant financial pressures faced by the Borough Council and discussed the benefits of live versus passive monitoring; the potential of new technology to reduce costs and which option represented best value for money. It was also recognised that community safety initiatives could be enhanced to maintain residents' confidence, safety and act as a crime deterrent.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) a passive only CCTV operation be provided, with a saving of circa £100,000 contributing towards the Borough Council's overall savings target within the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Due to the existing agreement, 2 years written notice was required to be given;
- (2) a further piece of work be undertaken to review the appropriate locations for passive only cameras; and
- (3) a further detailed analysis be undertaken to include any possible exit costs and reported to Cabinet prior to a final decision.

***Referred to Cabinet**

In accordance with CPR 8.6 of the Constitution (Part 4 – Rules) Councillors Boughton, Botten and Hood asked that their vote against the motion be recorded in the Minutes.

DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE**OS 20/28 VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND HOMEWORKING - SCOPING REPORT**

The report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive set out the basis for a review of virtual meetings and homeworking. It was noted that any continuation of virtual meetings remained dependent upon Government extending the current temporary regulations beyond May 2021.

A number of options for inclusion in the review were set out for consideration as summarised below and detailed in paragraph 1.9.1 of the report:

- the effectiveness of the adopted protocol for the use of video-conferencing facilities;
- whether post pandemic, the Borough Council wished to continue with virtual Council meetings;
- the feasibility of rationalising the Borough Council's office accommodation at the Gibson Building, with a view to increasing the amount of homeworking to support the Climate Change Strategy and reduce overheads.

Members recognised that the adoption of virtual meetings had been a necessity during the coronavirus pandemic and had meant that the Borough Council business and decision making continued. A number of Members felt that the virtual meeting experience had been positive as the arrangements were efficient, transparent and aided structured debate. Other Members expressed a preference for a return to face to

face meetings. It was suggested that the review should give consideration to hybrid as well fully virtual and fully physical meetings.

In addition, Members supported the continuation of livestreaming meetings so that residents were able to observe proceedings.

With regard to homeworking, Members expressed support for reviewing the feasibility of rationalising office accommodation and the Borough Council's assets. However, Members were mindful of the work/life balance and the potential impact on staff of different working arrangements. The Director of Central Services indicated that the welfare of staff remained a priority for the Borough Council and the review would consider all options carefully.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of the report be noted;
- (2) the review include all of the options set out in paragraph 1.9.1 of the report, as summarised above, subject to the inclusion of exploring options for
 - hybrid meetings
 - fully virtual meetings
 - fully physical meetings; and
 - the continuation of livestreaming meetings even if the current regulations were not extended; and
- (3) a further report with final recommendations and associated financial implications be reported to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

OS 20/29 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN - ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER

The annual report of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman regarding complaints received and dealt with for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 was presented for information.

Members noted that 16 formal complaints had been received during the period and 1 complaint had been upheld.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

OS 20/30 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

OS 20/31 REVIEW OF CCTV

(Reason: LGA 1972 – Sch 12A Paragraph 7 – Prevention, investigation or prosecution of criminal offences)

The reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 29 August and 10 October 2019 were attached for information and noted by Members.

The meeting ended at 10.10 pm