

## TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13th September, 2016

**Present:** Cllr A K Sullivan (Chairman), Cllr Ms S V Spence (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr M C Base, Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr J L Botten, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr S R J Jessel, Cllr Mrs F A Kemp, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr P J Montague, Cllr M Taylor, Cllr F G Tombolis, Mr P J Drury and Mr D Still (Co-opted Members)

Councillors O C Baldock, N J Heslop, D Lettington and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms J A Atkinson and Mrs S M Hall

#### PART 1 - PUBLIC

##### **OS 16/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct. However, Councillor M Rhodes referred to the fact that he was the current Mayor.

##### **OS 16/19 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 June 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

##### **OS 16/20 DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGY**

The report of the Chief Executive advised that the Cabinet had approved an initial draft of the new Corporate Strategy subject to a number of minor textual amendments at its meeting on 29 June 2016. Consideration was given to the revised draft which, it was noted, differed from the previous highly detailed corporate performance plan in comprising a wider vision of the Council's focus over the three year period, supported by some adopted "key values". The strategy indicated how it was intended to meet the challenges being faced by the Council, its commitment to partnership working and some key measures of success. The Committee welcomed the more succinct approach.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the draft Corporate Strategy set out at Appendix A to the report be commended to the Cabinet for formal adoption by the Council.

**OS 16/21 SPECIAL EXPENSES SCHEME POLICY (FAIRER CHARGING)**

The report of the Management Team referred to the consultations undertaken in respect of the potential introduction of a Special Expenses Scheme and the outcome of the detailed consideration and debate by the Cabinet at its extraordinary meeting on 28 July 2016 (Minute CB 16/60). In accordance with the recommendations, a draft policy was presented for review by the Committee prior to any final decisions being taken by the Council on 1 November 2016.

The Committee noted that during the consultation, a number of parish councils had suggested that small pockets of Borough Council owned land might be more cost effectively maintained by the parish council in the future rather than being charged as a special expense. Consideration was being given to these suggestions.

In addition to the recommendations specific to the Special Expenses Scheme policy, the Cabinet had also requested the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake a review into the future funding of Christmas Lighting and High Street flower displays in readiness for 2017/18 (reference at subsequent Minute OS 16/23).

**RECOMMENDED:** That the draft Special Expenses Scheme policy set out at Annex 1 to the report be approved for adoption by the Council.

**OS 16/22 REVIEW OF MAYORALTY FUNCTION**

Further to Minute OS 16/15, the report of the Director of Central Services presented a comprehensive review of the Mayoralty function which considered the role of the Mayor, Mayoral engagements and fund raising, the role of the Macebearer, Mayoral transport, budget and allowances and, finally, religious involvement in the Mayoralty including appointment of the Mayor's chaplain and the saying of prayers before Council meetings. An Annex containing exempt information relating to costs associated with the Macebearer and chauffeur was included in the private part of the agenda.

The Committee decided to proceed with the review without inviting other stakeholders to participate but written representations from the current Macebearer were read out and a number of Members who were past Mayors contributed to the meeting. Considerable discussion ensued during which the value of the Mayor in raising the profile of the Borough and the appreciation of schools, charitable organisations and other recipients of visits by the Mayor was acknowledged. Whilst it was considered that the majority of engagements should take place within or adjacent to the Borough, Members did not favour a prescriptive approach or linking the Mayoral programme with corporate objectives. The knowledge and experience of the current Macebearer were also recognised.

In considering a number of options in respect of the future of Mayoral transport and allowances, the Committee concluded that flexibility should be maintained to enable a chauffeur to be engaged in appropriate circumstances but competitive quotations should be obtained for the service.

Members debated whether there should be religious involvement in the Mayoralty in future and considered that it should remain at the discretion of the incumbent Mayor, subject to clarification of the options open to them. No change was recommended to the current arrangements for saying prayers before full Council meetings although provision should be made for any Member to join the meeting immediately thereafter if they so wished.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) no changes be made to the role of the Mayor as set out in the Constitution;
- (2) no change be made to the current approach to Mayoral engagements;
- (3) the Mayor should continue to undertake a fund raising role for one or two chosen charities as at present;
- (4) the role of the Macebearer be retained as at present;
- (5) the current arrangements for Mayoral transport be retained but competitive quotations be sought from three providers to ensure value for money and the budget be limited to £10,000;
- (6) the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel be invited to review the allowances payable to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor;
- (7) the incoming Mayor be given the freedom to decide if they wish to appoint as Chaplain a person from any religion for the purpose of providing spiritual counsel or, alternatively, to make no appointment; and
- (8) no changes be made to the current arrangements for the saying of prayers immediately before Council meetings provided that any Member may choose to join the meeting thereafter if they so wish.

**DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE**

**OS 16/23 PROPOSED SCRUTINY REVIEW PROGRAMME**

The report of the Chief Executive set out further topics for review by the Committee. The first related to a review of Christmas lighting provision

and High Street flower displays arising from the Cabinet's consideration of the introduction of a Special Expenses Scheme (Minute OS 16/21 refers). The other involved a review of the future of the Gibson Building as part of the Savings and Transformation Strategy.

It was proposed that two separate informal panels drawn from the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be established to progress the reviews. A suggested composition was set out in the report although this was subject to discussion with the Chief Corporate Policy Officer. The following dates had been set for the panel meetings: Christmas Lighting/Flower Displays on 6 October and Gibson Building on 2 November 2016.

Members suggested that prior to the first meeting, officers liaise with the various parish councils and traders' organisations within the parished areas to ascertain their views of the current grant scheme. In addition it was felt that advance liaison with the Town Team and Tonbridge traders would be helpful in order to formulate ideas for future arrangements in Tonbridge.

**RESOLVED:** That the arrangements for the reviews of Christmas Lighting/High Street Floral Displays and the future of the Gibson Building, as set out in the report, be endorsed.

#### **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

##### **OS 16/24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

#### **PART 2 - PRIVATE**

##### **OS 16/25 REVIEW OF MAYORALTY FUNCTION - ANNEX 1**

**(LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person**

**LGA 1972 Sch 12A Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual)**

Annex containing exempt information in respect of item at Minute OS 16/22.

The meeting ended at 10.05 pm