

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 7th October, 2021

Present: Cllr J L Sergison (Chairman), Cllr M O Davis (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr Mrs A S Oakley (Vice-Chairman), Cllr C Brown,
Cllr R I B Cannon, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr F A Hoskins,
Cllr S A Hudson, Cllr D W King, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr M Taylor and
Cllr D Thornewell.

(Note: As Councillors J Botten and F Tombolis were unable to attend in person and participated via MS Teams they were unable to vote on any matters)

Councillor Mrs T Dean was present in the Council Chamber pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, Mrs S Bell, M D Boughton, V M C Branson, D Keers, D Lettington, B J Luker, P J Montague, W E Palmer and M R Rhodes participated via MS Teams and joined the discussion when invited to do so by the Chairman in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M C Base, R W Dalton and J R S Lark.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

OS 21/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

With reference to Item 6 (Special Expenses Consultation) and for reasons of transparency, Councillor Mrs Dean advised that she was the Chairman of West Malling Parish Council.

OS 21/19 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 March and 27 April be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**OS 21/20 NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - INTERVENTIONS REPORT**

The joint report of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Transformation and the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer summarised the key issues arising from the Commissioners' Interventions Report at the former Northamptonshire County Council. Members were asked to review the issues raised and to consider whether TMBC was adequately equipped to avoid these issues occurring. Members were also asked to consider what role the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could play in supporting the 'financial agenda' and, more generally, whether it was felt that specific training might be needed.

The Chairman commented that there was insufficient time at the meeting to give this item the in-depth consideration it deserved and invited Members to undertake an initial debate to identify issues/matters which could be given detailed consideration at a special meeting of the Committee in November. The Committee noted the need to ensure that the Council was properly equipped to deal with the issues identified in the Interventions Report and that, as the Cabinet alone could not solve all the problems, all Members needed to shape the way forward. The Committee was reminded of its role to challenge decisions, particularly those with financial implications, and acknowledged the need for training in addressing specialised matters such as estimates and budgetary control.

RECOMMENDED: That 

- (1) a Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be held in November specifically to allow more detailed consideration on this subject; and
- (2) the Training Programmes provided through the Local Government Association be explored by the appropriate Officer and all members of the committee encouraged to register for the LGA's "Leadership Webinar on Scrutiny Essentials" to be held at 2.30 pm on 22 November 2021. The booking information and link to be circulated to Members.

*** Referred to Cabinet**

OS 21/21 SPECIAL EXPENSES CONSULTATION

The report of the Management Team provided details of the responses received to the consultation launched on 22 June 2021 regarding potential adjustments to the Special Expenses Policy. The report invited Members to consider whether the cost of the non-strategic Public

Conveniences located in Tonbridge and the cost of Christmas lights should be included within the Special Expenses Policy.

RECOMMENDED: That 

- (1) the Special Expenses Policy should be updated to include the non-strategic public conveniences which are located in Tonbridge;
- (2) the Special Expenses Policy should not be updated to include Christmas lighting; and
- (3) Cabinet be invited to consider the position of public conveniences across the Borough.

*** Referred to Cabinet**

OS 21/22 FINAL REPORT: MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Further to the Scoping report presented to the Committee on 11 March 2021, the report of the Chief Executive brought forward a revised protocol for marketing and promotion across the Council.

RECOMMENDED: That: 

- (1) the proposed charging structure for billboards in respect of commercial organisations, as set out at section 1.4 to the report, be endorsed and no charge be made in respect of charity events;
- (2) the move to promotional and marketing materials to be made available in digital formats only (in all but a limited number of exceptions) be endorsed;
- (3) the use of design agents to develop a corporate style and brand for the Council be endorsed; and
- (4) further evaluation be undertaken to better integrate the Council's communication channels, looking at the possibility of future marketing and promotion to go via the Head of Communications. Findings to be reported to the relevant Advisory Board.

*** Referred to Cabinet**

OS 21/23 REVIEW OF TONBRIDGE FORUM AND PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

The report of the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive provided details of the action taken to seek the views of community representatives and town and parish councils on the format and

operation of the Tonbridge Forum and the Parish Partnership Panel in order to improve engagement with the Borough Council.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the proposed changes to Tonbridge Forum, as set out at section 1.2.4 of the report, be endorsed; and
- (2) the proposed changes to Parish Partnership Panel, as set out at section 1.3.2 of the report, be endorsed.

* Referred to Cabinet

DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

OS 21/24 SCOPING REPORT: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

The report of the Chief Executive provided an overview of the existing Equality and Diversity Policy and advised that a review be undertaken to improve the policy and identify best practice that could be adopted by the Council.

RESOLVED: That the approach identified in section 1.2 of the report to review and update the existing Equality Policy Statement be endorsed.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

OS 21/25 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN - ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER

The report of the Monitoring Officer set out the annual report of the Ombudsman regarding complaints received and dealt with over the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

RESOLVED: That the report be Noted.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

OS 21/26 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 10.18 pm