



Overview Scrutiny Committee

Members of the **Overview Scrutiny Committee** of **Gravesham Borough Council** are summoned to attend a meeting to be held at the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend DA12 1AU on **Thursday, 21 September 2023 at 7.30 pm** when the business specified in the following agenda is proposed to be transacted.

S Walsh
Service Manager (Communities)

Agenda

Part A

Items likely to be considered in Public

1. Apologies for absence
2. To sign the minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 5 - 8)
3. To declare any interests which members may have on the items contained on this agenda. When declaring an interest members must state what their interest is.
4. To consider whether any items in Part A will be considered in private or any items in Part B in public
5. Call ins

Item 'Called In' from the Cabinet meeting of 11 September 2023.

The Chair of the Overview Scrutiny Committee has called in the following item for the meeting on Thursday 21 September, 7:30pm: -

Item 11 – Interests in land and assets belonging to the council

Reason:

- To ensure that the decision represents value for money and to assess if proper due diligence is in place.
- To ensure that the decision is robust and will not cause long-term damage to the Council's financial position.

Officers: Stuart Bobby (Chief Executive) and Sarah Parfitt (Corporate Services).

(Please ensure you have access to the Cabinet agenda for 11 September 2023 previously circulated to Members).

6. Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

7. Private Items

To move, if required, that pursuant to section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded from any items included in Part B of the agenda because it is likely in view of the nature of business to be transacted that if members of the public are present during those items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Act.

Part B

Items likely to be considered in private

8. Call Ins

Items 'Called In' from the Cabinet meeting of 11 September 2023.

The Chair of the Overview Scrutiny Committee has called in the following item for the meeting on Thursday 21 September 2023, 7:30pm: -

Item 14 - Interests in land and assets belonging to the council (Part B)

Reason:

- To ensure that the decision represents value for money and to assess if proper due diligence is in place.
- To ensure that the decision is robust and will not cause long-term damage to the Council's financial position.

Officers: Stuart Bobby (Chief Executive) and Sarah Parfitt (Corporate Services).

(Please ensure you have access to the Cabinet agenda for 11 September 2023 previously circulated to Members).

Members

Cllr Jordan Meade (Chair)

Cllr Karina O'Malley (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

Ejaz Aslam

Deborah Croxton

Emma Elliott

Leslie Hills

Daniel Adewale King

Gavin Larkins

Tony Rana

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Overview Scrutiny Committee**Thursday, 6 July 2023****7.30 pm****Present:**

Jordan Meade (Chair)
Karina O'Malley (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Ejaz Aslam
Deborah Croxton
Emma Elliot
Leslie Hills
Daniel Adewale King
Gavin Larkins
Tony Rana

Note: Councillor Lauren Sullivan was also in attendance

Jamie Izzard Director (Communities)
Chloe Taylor Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

6. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

7. To sign the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 08 June 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

8. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

9. Call Ins - Item called in from the Cabinet meeting on Monday, 26 June 2023; Item 7 - Events Review

In agreement with the Chair, the Committee started with item 6 on the agenda.

The Director (Communities) presented Members with the Events Review report. The purpose of the report was to look at the expenditure of events that were across a number of different teams, such as Leisure, Town Centre and Community Engagement.

Through this review, they were able to identify a total £103k in savings, reduced from the general fund. £40k of these savings were against previous underspends and the cancellation of small events. The remaining £63k was saved by moving expenditure from the general budget to the Enterprise Zone and using this to fund certain activities. Some events relied upon sponsorship, such as the fireworks, with Swale being the previous sponsor. However,

work was being done to secure a new sponsorship.

The Director (Communities) and Cllr Sullivan (Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure) fielded questions from the committee and explained the following:

- The measurement of success from events was not strictly an economic outcome. There are social measurements, alongside measures such as footfall data which provided evidence that such events were increasing in attendance.
- Previously, the Christmas events had been spread across a longer period of time, and this had demonstrated little impact on footfall in 2022. With a bigger event in the space of one weekend, footfall numbers were likely to increase.
- The economic measurements of success were not just based on the success of local businesses, but through increasing the number of visitors to the borough. This could be measured through a partnership with Visit Kent, and thus widening that economic impact.
- The remaining events were based on footfall data. If the data was low, it was less likely for these events to go ahead. A public consultation had not been held in relation to the proposed budget reduction.
- Under the new budgets, the Gravesham in Bloom event was not going to be funded other than through the town dressing element.
- The cost of staffing was not included within the budgets. The core events team consists of 3 to 4 members of staff.
- As a one-off grant, community organisations can apply for grant funding.
- The aim wouldn't be to only strive for social outcomes but to move towards better economic ones through reviewing the timing of events, and encouraging businesses to stay open and benefit from them.
- Gravesham Borough Council will not always be the provider of local events, but they can help enable smaller events to take place.
- A review was done on the charging structure of public spaces, but they were not currently looking to make a profit, but instead were looking to reclaim those spaces.
- Most complaints relating to events were regarding noise, which needed to be taken into account.
- The Director (Communities) was confident that the events team, as well as other member of staff, were well equipped to deal with the proposed event review. Additional funding for staff overtime was not included in the budget.
- When members expressed confusion regarding the budget pots, Cllr Sullivan explained that the review hopes to lessen that confusion and make it clear where money was being spent.
- The Director (Communities) explained that they could look into using the volunteers from the Woodville for future events.
- Regarding The Woodville, the focus was on having a diverse programme and moving towards commercial bookings that were missed out on due to covid-19. Literature was being produced on how this could be packaged.
- Work for finding sponsors was underway, and it involved developing a package to cover the fireworks, the outdoor cinemas and others, to encourage that working partnership.
- Some of the smaller events that would not have a budget provision included the Lunar New Year Celebrations, Pancake Day and the Strongman Event.
- The reference to marketing in the report was to ensure that the public knows what the borough has to offer. It included making use of networks and branding. Looking at tourism, marketing could be better. There had not been a set budget for marketing

- events, but this had been included in the proposed budget.
- Members were keen to have clear signage, especially on the roundabout that leads to Gravesend.
 - Concerns were raised regarding the level of policing at events. Members were assured that whilst cuts from national government made it harder for police presence at events, there were more families at the riverside festival this year and it ended earlier than previous years. They were looking at ways to reduce crime and reminded members of the fireworks display in 2022, where it was scheduled to take place on a weekday and earlier in the evening.
 - Members agreed for the Chair to present the Chair of the Crime and Disorder Committee (Cllr Baljit Hayre) with the minutes from the meeting and propose a scrutiny topic review to be held on the community policing model.
 - Social media was identified as a tool where the promotion of safety could be shared, speaking to residents about how they felt at events.
 - Work was being done with local businesses to encourage them to stay open when events were being held in the town centre. It was felt that they would benefit from staying open.
 - It was raised whether some local businesses considered the engagement from GBC as unequal. The Director (Communities) emphasised that this was something they needed to move away from and engage with businesses across the borough and not just the town centre.
 - The Chair raised that some community groups benefit off the back of council led events. For example, raising money at the firework display. The Director (Communities) assured members that no other organisations would be impacted as a result of the event review.

Resolved that the Director (Communities) and Cllr Sullivan (Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure) take on board the comments and concerns raised, and that the Chair of the committee present the Chair of the Crime and Disorder Committee with the minutes from the meeting and propose a scrutiny topic review to be held on the community policing model.

10. Future Scrutiny Topic Reviews

The committee held a brief decision on topics for scrutiny review and suggested the following:

- **Green Spaces** – In specific spaces that were owned by Kent County Council. The review would explore the ways in which the spaces were being used and/or neglected. The focus of the review was encouraging the use of green spaces and tree planting.
- **Post Pandemic Domestic Violence** – Specifically relating to the breakdown of families and the impact this has on children and their wellbeing, education and sleep.
- **Cleaning Up Urban Areas** – A review would explore the ways in which cleanliness in the rural areas of the borough could be improved.
- **Engagement with Planning Services** – Councillors were contacted frequently regarding planning applications; a review would look into the engagement with planning issues.
- **Governance Framework of Rosherville Ltd** – A review would include looking into the governance framework of Rosherville Ltd ensuring it was fit and robust enough to succeed in the future.

The suggested topics would be presented to Management Team for consideration.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.00pm