

## Overview Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 14 June 2018

7.30 pm

### Present:

Cllr John Burden (Chair)

Cllr Conrad Broadley (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:        Lee Croxton  
                          Leslie Hills  
                          Sara Langdale  
                          Lyn Milner  
                          Jenny Wallace  
                          Michael Wenban

Chris Wakeford        Committee Services Officer (Scrutiny)

### 68. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Makhan Singh; Councillor Lyn Milner appeared as his substitute.

### 69. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held 21 May 2018 were signed by the Chair.

### 70. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

### 71. Scrutiny Review Programme - Future work plan

Members of the Committee were invited to consider what topics they would like to put forward to be reviewed.

Since the programme of Scrutiny activities was agreed in September 2015; the following topic reviews have been selected and completed by the Committee:

- Housing Repairs Function.
- Planning Applications Process.
- Gravesham Gateway.
- Kingdom Enforcement Contract.
- Housing Repairs (Part 2).
- Waste & Recycling – HMOs and Flats.
- Reduction in GBC staff numbers and the impact on staff.

The Committee considered the remaining review topics that had previously been put forward by the Committee:

- Public Conveniences.
- Council Tax exemptions and discounts.
- Business Rates.
- Land Asset Use.
- GBC Assets.

The Chair also put forward the following topics for consideration:

- A review of Grass Cutting and Horticulture

The Committee discussed the problems with grass cuttings that have been reported to them by constituents (too few cuts, messy areas, fly-tipping etc.) they also spoke about KCC's responsibilities (the apparent poor service they are providing) and the need to identify who owns / is responsible for which areas of land.

- A review of Council endorsed Property Companies and their control / directorship / responsibilities (title to be amended/confirmed)

The Committee discussed the recent deal with Reef Group to reinvigorate the St George's Shopping Centre. Members considered the Council's role going forward and the potential option of setting up a company to develop out the scheme. Members wanted to discuss the options / approach going forward and get legal advice on the process that can then be distributed to all Members.

The Chair advised that a previous suggestion had been made by officers to review the Executive Arrangements and examine the Committee system and the Cabinet system. The Committee felt that this area was best left alone until at least three years after the next Borough Election.

The Committee discussed all the potential options for the next two reviews before agreeing a way forward.

**Resolved** that the Committee identified the following two topic reviews to be undertaken by the Committee:

1. A review of Grass Cutting and Horticulture
  2. A review of Council endorsed Property Companies and their control / directorship / responsibilities (full title to be amended/confirmed)
- The sub-groups for each review will consist of 6 Members (3 from each political group) Cllr Broadley will Chair the review of Council endorsed Property Companies and their control / directorship / responsibilities and Cllr Burden will Chair the review of Grass Cutting and Horticulture, the remaining Member names will be provided to the Committee Section by Wednesday 20 June 2018.

- The Committee should aim to complete the two reviews by February 2019.
- A report that provides a progress update on all the Scrutiny Reviews / Recommendations that have taken place during the last four years be presented to the Overview Scrutiny Committee in the autumn. Members agreed that the report should contain brief bullet point updates on each recommendation. The Chair and Vice Chair would like to see a draft of the report so they can decide whether officers should be invited to the Committee to answer questions or not.
- The Committee requested that a briefing session on Business Rates be arranged (evening session) to provide Members with a better knowledge of business rates / Discretionary Rate Relief etc.

### **Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm