

MINUTES

of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 8 June 2020 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor J. Galley (Chair)

Councillors S.M. Goldman (Vice-Chair)

Councillors L. Ashley, N.A. Dudley, I.D. Fuller, I.S. Grundy, R.J. Hyland, J.C.S. Lager, J.S. Lardge, M. Sismey, M.S. Steel, M.D. Watson, R.T. Whitehead and S. Young

1. **Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

No apologies for absence were received and no substitutions were made.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. **Declaration of Interests**

All Members were reminded to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary interests or other registerable interests where appropriate in any items of business on the meeting's agenda. None were made.

4. **Public Question Time**

No questions were asked or statements made.

5. **Decisions Called-In**

The Committee noted that no decisions taken by the Cabinet had been called-in.

6. **Cabinet Portfolio Updates**

Three Members of the Cabinet provided the Committee with updates on their duties as Cabinet Members.

Cllr Robinson – Leader of the Council ([Please note the report is available online](#))

Cllr Robinson updated the Committee on his role as Leader of the Council. The report detailed a normal calendar of events for the role and also covered the Council's response to Covid-19 and the changes it had led to in the way the Council operates. It was noted that the Council would have to continue adjusting the way it worked, across a wide range of departments.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Robinson stated that;

- The weekly briefings between the Chief Executive and Councillors had proved to be very beneficial during the last few months and the prospect of these continuing would be explored.
- There was not yet specific information on which stores in High Chelmer had taken rent holidays, but various initiatives were in place along with the Business Improvement District. It was noted that the Council had recently reduced its exposure to risk of this nature by selling some retail properties.
- Meetings took place with a wide variety of stakeholders around the City, including the University, tech firms and the County Council.

Cllr M Goldman – Deputy Leader/ Cabinet Member for Connected Chelmsford ([Please note the presentation is available online](#))

Cllr Goldman updated the Committee on the key aspects of her roles as the Deputy Leader and as the Cabinet Member for Connected Chelmsford. It was noted that these roles included, promoting Chelmsford, providing a strategic direction for the Council, providing political and strategic leadership within the directorate, communicating key issues and reviewing press releases. Cllr Goldman also provided the Committee with an overview of what has been happening in each service in the Connected Chelmsford directorate and provided an overview of ways in which each service has been responding to Covid-19. It was noted that large areas of work were taking place behind the scenes, without members and the public being aware and it was hoped the presentation would highlight the work in these areas.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Goldman stated that the possibility of holding theatre style events outdoors, would be explored once it was confirmed this was permitted by government.

Cllr Mackrory – Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development ([Please note the report is available online](#))

Cllr Mackrory updated the Committee on the key aspects of his role as the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development. He firstly paid tribute to the staff in the directorate, who had worked incredibly hard and noted that it was brilliant to work with staff so dedicated to their work. Cllr Mackrory took the Committee through each area in detail including, town planning, car parks, the South Essex Parking Partnership and building control. The Committee also heard about various working groups and also the role that Cllr Bracken has as deputy for business and economic development.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Mackrory stated that, the South Essex Parking partnership had to deal with a large number of requests and therefore this could lead to long response times. This was also due to a restricted budget, and the number of staff available. It was noted however that a plan had been to use surplus funding to help mitigate this, but due to current circumstances the surplus was now needed due to a loss of income. It was also noted though, that it was an ambition to reduce wait times and options would continue to be explored.

RESOLVED that the reports be noted and Councillors thanked for their presentations.

(7pm to 8.19pm)

7. Quarterly review of the work of the Chelmsford Policy Board

The Committee received a report on the work of the Chelmsford Policy Board, since its inception in 2019. It was noted by the Chair, that the comprehensive report had been considered by the Policy Board itself the previous week and therefore, this report was for any additional questions.

Cllr Pooley, the Chair of the Chelmsford Policy Board, provided an overview of what work the board has completed over the previous 12 months, including the work it took on from the previous Development Policy Committee. It was noted that the key aims had been to work across party and with external partners to develop policies and strategies which were key to the way forward for the Council. It was also noted that the board had been able to make use of the excellent knowledge of officers and councillors that the Council had available. The Committee also heard that both officers and councillors had responded very well to the different way of working and how the working groups interact with the Cabinet and other bodies.

Members of the Committee also acknowledged the importance of the policy board and stated that they had found it a very useful Committee. It was noted that it had served as a very helpful overview of the Council's work to new members and that it had been very important to engage with external partners through the working groups.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(8.20pm to 8.36pm)

8. Reports from representatives on Outside Bodies

The Committee received an update, including reports from those members appointed as representatives to outside bodies. The individual reports were appended and provided an overview from each Councillor on the work the body does and how they had contributed to it.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(8.37pm to 8.38pm)

9. Annual Report on the Scrutiny Function 2019/20

In accordance with the Local Code of Corporate Governance adopted by the Council on 23 April 2008 a report on the activity of the scrutiny function of the Council for 2019/20 had been prepared. The Code required that the Committee produce an annual report on its work for consideration by the Council and subsequent publication on the Council's website.

It was noted that the Committee had asked for a new format for the report. However, this had not been possible this year due to Covid-19 and it would therefore be amended in future years.

RECOMMENED TO COUNCIL that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report on the Scrutiny Function for 2019/20 be approved for subsequent publication.

(8.39pm to 8.40pm)

10. Decisions taken under delegation to the Chief Executive

The Committee received information on the three decisions taken during the period 1 November 2019 to 31 April 2020 under the Chief Executives delegated authority to take urgent decisions. Two decisions related to, Discretionary Rate Relief and one to the sealing of documents.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(8.40pm to 8.41pm)

11. Work Programme

The Committee considered a report on its work programme which had been updated following the Committee's meeting on 10 February 2020.

It was noted that members of the task and finish group on Community Safety Communication would be contacted by officers with information soon.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(8.42pm to 8.44pm)

12. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business brought before the Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Chair