

IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Bayley (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Andrews, Clayton, Eyre, McGregor, Nelson, Pett and Waterton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Abraham and Bonin

Cllrs. Dickins and Hogarth were also present via a virtual media platform that did not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972.

23. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee held on 4 October 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

24. Declarations of interest

There were none.

25. Actions form previous meeting

There were none.

26. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, provided an update on the services within his portfolio. Sevenoaks District Council had signed a partnership agreement with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), and would work closely with FSB to make sure policies supported local businesses.

The Council had made significant progress on the nine recommendations from the Peer Challenge team from the Local Government Association. The Council's Local Plan, Economic Development Strategy, and Community Plan built on the built on the recent Place Leadership work, and helped address the need for affordable housing, and Council had agreed to lend Quercus Housing £15,000,000 over 10 years for this. The new Customer Insights team would incorporate service data and ONS updates to better serve local communities. £1,000,000 in Brownfield Renewal Funding had been secured to help resolve the balance between the Council's ambition and its resources. The Council was working with external companies in community engagement work and on challenging viability appraisals. The

Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 24 November 2022

Sevenoaks Place Campaign worked to increase inward investment and draw businesses into the District.

The Bevan Place application was rejected by the Development Control Committee. Officers would work with Members to ensure they were aware of the other options and possibilities, and the application may be resubmitted with changes. Work was ongoing on Farmstead Drive. The White Oak Leisure Centre and car park were open. Outline planning permission had been granted for the White Oak Residential scheme, the scheme was being looked at and could introduce modern methods of construction. Plans were being investigated for the site at Otford Road which may include a site for small commercial units.

In response to questions, he explained that the Local Plan was largely focused on urban density, as dictated by national planning policy. The Rural England Prosperity Fund income would be directed towards business and community projects outside the District's major towns.

27. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

28. Budget 2023/24: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

The Chief Officer - Finance and Trading presented the report which set out updates to the 2023/24 budget process within the existing financial strategy. SDC is not immune from the financial challenges affecting the country therefore this budget process is expected to be particularly challenging.

No changes had been made to future assumptions at the stage which would be reviewed during the budget process, as usual. However, due to the April 2022 pay award being higher than previously assumed and an annual savings target of £100,000 already included, an annual budget gap of £735,000 was currently reported.

The report presented growth and savings/additional income proposals that had been identified which needed to be considered. It requested further suggestions from Members before finalising the budget for 2023/24. Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with Cabinet, it is proposed that the Council once again sets a balanced 10-year budget and continues to aim to be financially self-sufficient.

The Committee considered the growth and savings/additional income proposals identified in Appendices E & F to the report. They noted that SCIA 5 would be presented to the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee and did not consider it. The Assistant Chief Executive agreed to provide a short report on the Apprenticeship Levy in SCIA 3, and the restrictions on its use.

Action: For the Assistant Chief Executive to provide a report on the Apprenticeship Levy.

Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 24 November 2022

Further consideration was given to expanding the changes in Environmental Health's working practices in other services. Their use of iAudit allowed for on-site reports to be created, which reduced time lost to travel, and structural changes meant trained officers spent less time on administrative work. They further discussed the energy use within the Argyle Road building, and the Council's ongoing work to balance the heating with a single point of control. They also discussed the potential cost-saving effects of moving committee meetings to take place during the day, but acknowledged the possible impact this could have on attendance.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved:

- (a) That it be recommended to Cabinet that the growth proposal (SCIA 3) and savings/additional income proposals (SCIA's 2 and 4) identified in Appendices E & F to the report applicable to this Advisory Committee, be considered.
- (b) That it be recommended to Cabinet that consideration be given to the following further suggestions:
Savings/additional income
 - (i) Replicate Environmental Health's working practices and structural changes across other services
 - (ii) Continue to review the Council's energy use in the Argyle Road building
 - (iii) Examine the cost savings that daytime committee meetings could bring

29. Work plan

The Work Plan was noted, with the following additions:

23 February 2023

- Hello Lamppost update
- Environmental Health update on changes to working practices.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8:08PM

CHAIRMAN