

People & Places Advisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Bulford (Chairman)

Cllr. Dyball (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Alger, Barnett, Bulford, P. Darrington, Dyball, Edwards-Winsor, Granville, Gustard, Hogarth and Hudson

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Manamperi and Cathy Morgan

Cllr. Robinson was also present.

Cllr. Lindop was present via a virtual media platform that did not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972.

22. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held 3 October 2023 be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

23. Declarations of interest

There were none.

24. Actions from Previous Meeting (if any)

There were none.

25. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder gave an update on the services within their portfolio. She noted a recent article in the Sevenoaks Chronicle concerning the future of the leisure centres. She emphasised that all options were being considered as part of the operator procurement, and that the article downplayed the positive news within the report.

The Better Together Hub had been showcased at the Kent & Medway Health and Care Symposium, where it was well received. The Hub was also showcased at the Children and Young People's Mental Health Services Conference on 16 November, alongside the Youth Mentoring Project.

People & Places Advisory Committee - 30 November 2023

The Council continued to support the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and had held an information event on 16 October in Sevenoaks Town, and would hold another in Swanley in January. The event provided advice on next steps in housing, mental health and wellbeing and employment.

Silver Sunday was ongoing, having held numerous events including advice sessions and Tea Dances on 24 November and 1 December. The Silver Bells Christmas Party would be held on 18 December.

A roundtable meeting with the Police & Crime Commissioner and Laura Trott MP was held on 9 October, regarding shoplifting in the district. The police had further set up monthly meetings to discuss local concerns, the first of which was held on 13 November.

The White Ribbon 16 Days of Action against Violence Against Women and Girls started on 25 November. The Council had released several communications to help all victims of domestic abuse, including a [White Ribbon video](#) regarding standing up against violence, which was completed by male SDC staff members, and a [consultation on violence against women and girls](#). The Council would further be holding a Blue Light event, organised by Look Ahead on 1 December, and would attend the West Kent Domestic Abuse conference on 6 December.

26. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit committee (if any)

There were none.

27. Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

The Head of Finance presented the report which set out updates to the 2024/25 budget process within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan.

Some changes had been made to future assumptions and they would continue to be reviewed during the budget process. The key cost driver continued to be inflation, with pressure coming through on service demand, the pay award and the cost of goods and services. The items listed in Appendix E reported a current annual budget gap of £1.368m. Members were advised that they were likely to have to make more difficult decisions during the 2024/25 budget setting process than they had had to make for many years.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions from Cabinet, it was proposed that the Council once again set a balanced 10-year budget and continued to aim to be financially self-sufficient with no direct funding from Government through additional Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus.

Members asked questions of clarification. The officer explained that the pay award assumption built into the budget was for 5%, with a 3% increase built into the assumption for 2024/25.

People & Places Advisory Committee - 30 November 2023

The report presented savings items that had been identified which needed to be considered, and requested further suggestions from the Advisory Committee, before finalising the budget for 2024/25.

The Committee considered the savings proposals set out in Appendices G and H, which were for finding alternate methods to deliver community initiatives and community grants, and to reduce the annual grant budget. There was support for these proposals.

The officer advised the committee that there had been no additional suggestions for growth or savings by other members which were relevant to this Advisory Committee. Members discussed further possible savings and growth suggestions. Discussions around broader changes in the Council's policies, which would have impacts on services both within the Advisory Committee's remit and outside of it, would be investigated by officers and the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) The saving proposals (SCIA 5, SCIA 6) identified in Appendices G&H to the report applicable to this Advisory Committee, be considered; and
- b) That no further income or growth proposals were identified.

28. Public Spaces Protection Order Consultation results - The Vine, Sevenoaks

The Health & Communities Manager presented the report, which outlined the consultation responses regarding the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order for The Vine, Sevenoaks. The consultation ran from 14 August to 24 September 2023, and was sent to four schools within the district, and to selected schools in Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge. 253 responses were received in total. 83.4% of respondents supported bringing in an Order prohibiting engaging in anti-social behaviour (ASB) and returning to the area within 24 hours after being asked to leave.

Members' attention was brought to the results of the consultation within Appendix A to the report. Of the 253 respondents, 228 answered that they had not reported ASB at The Vine. Work was ongoing to help more reports be made to the Police and Community Safety Unit, to allow ASB to be recorded and addressed quickly. The PSPO would stand for 3 years, and would be reviewed after 2 years.

People & Places Advisory Committee - 30 November 2023

Members asked questions of clarification of the officer. They were advised that the PSPO would not limit the consumption of alcohol, as the Town Council were licensed for the area. The PSPO had been created in partnership with the Town Council, Police and other partners and would be managed and maintained in conjunction with them. The PSPO would apply to groups of two or more causing ASB, intimidation, or harassment, but would not prevent people from meeting at The Vine. West Kent Housing Association and Kenwood Trust youth workers would continue to attend The Vine in the evening to provide assistance and advice, and activities would be organised at the House in the Basement to provide an alternative forum for meeting. The police would gather information regarding ASB and the Council would issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) or restorative work. The type of enforcement issued was at officer discretion. The police would also monitor sites at Greatness and Bat & Ball, as it was understood that the groups may instead meet there.

The officer explained that pupils from certain schools were known to coordinate large gatherings at The Vine, which had resulted in ASB, and these schools were targeted for consultation. Presentations were offered to all schools, targeting Years 10, 11, and 12 specifically, as that demographic was the subject of the complaints. It was felt that a consultation concerning a demographic should make specific efforts to engage them in the process, though it was noted that only 7 of the 253 responses were from students. Members discussed the number of responses. The officer explained that the number of responses was high, when considering that the consultation was targeted to a small area and the issue had a limited geographical impact.

Members discussed the report, and noted that Laura Trott MP had written to the Portfolio Holder in support of the PSPO.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

- a) The contents of the report and the outcome of the statutory 6 week public consultation be noted; and that
- b) The recommendation to Cabinet for the implementation of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and its two measures at The Vine, Sevenoaks and surrounding grass areas for a period of up to 3 years be supported.

29. Public Spaces Protection Order - London Road, Halstead, Orpington By Pass Badgers Mount and the M25 Spur Road

The Health & Communities Manager presented the report, which proposed a four-week consultation regarding a public spaces protection order for London Road, Halstead, Orpington Bypass Badgers Mount and the M25 spur road. This PSPO

People & Places Advisory Committee - 30 November 2023

would last for 3 years and would address, among other issues, the blocking of the road with car meets. This had been developed by officers from the council, Kent Police, Met Police, and Bromley Council working in partnership, as the issue was centred on the border between Sevenoaks and Bromley. The officer shared a video of the issue.

If approved by Cabinet, the consultation would begin on 15 December and run for four weeks. This would allow feedback from the consultation to be consolidated and fed back to the committee at its next meeting on 5 March 2024. The survey would be targeted to local residents most affected by the issue. It was anticipated that the cars would move elsewhere when challenged.

In response to questions, the officer explained that the police did check whether the cars were road legal. Members discussed the report, and noted that Laura Trott MP had written to the Portfolio Holder indicating their support for the order.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet approves the consultation.

30. Citizens Advice Service Level agreement 2024-2027

The Health & Communities Manager presented the report, which set out the proposed Service Level Agreement for Citizen's Advice in the district, as the current agreement would end on 31 March 2024. This had been agreed by the Edenbridge & Westerham and Sevenoaks & Swanley Citizen's Advice groups. The agreement was largely identical to the current SLA, with the exception that should the funding for the agreement be affected, Citizen's Advice would be notified.

The officer outlined the work that Citizen's Advice undertook in the district, addressing complex cases in a wide range of areas. Officers were updated on their cases in monthly meetings, and an annual meeting was held between Citizen's Advice, officers, and the Portfolio Holder.

Members discussed the report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the report be noted.

31. Voluntary Sector Barometer Survey

People & Places Advisory Committee - 30 November 2023

The Health & Communities Manager presented the report, which set out the results of the third barometer survey from the voluntary sector. The survey would allow organisations within the Voluntary Sector Forum to update the council on issues they were experiencing, in particular the cost-of-living crisis.

The officer outlined the results of the survey. On the whole, community organisations felt that there were fewer funding opportunities available, and that more partnership work was necessary to secure funds. Regular donors were rarer due to the cost of living pressures. They were finding it harder to retain staff, and cases were increasingly complex. Members noted that organisations were working on addressing these issues, exploring alternative delivery methods and funding routes. A follow-up survey would be conducted in February/March 2024 to see if winter had further impacted these pressures.

Members discussed the report. It was noted that the council would work to address issues raised by volunteer organisations. Members discussed the grant workshops delivered in Edenbridge and Hextable, which was provided in response to requests from organisations. There was also safeguarding training for volunteers in the Council Chamber. A volunteer fair was held in Edenbridge in October, with another scheduled for March 2024.

In response to questions, the Chief Officer for People & Places advised that the number of volunteers for many organisations had declined compared with the previous surveys, as a number of people were returning to paid work or those that were previously furloughed during the pandemic had returned to work. Officers worked to connect groups to available funding. The Better Together Hub helped connect organisations and enabled them to work in partnership also. Issues were raised at the Town & Parish Council Forum to help organisations find additional support if appropriate.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the report be noted.

32. Interim Leisure Operator - Monitoring report

The Chief Officer for People & Places presented the report, which updated the committee on the performance and monitoring of the interim leisure operator contract with Everyone Active, for the Edenbridge & Sevenoaks Leisure Centres and Lullingstone Park Golf Course. The contract would end in April 2025, and an options report for the contract arrangements would be presented to the committee in 2024.

At the Chairman's discretion, representatives from Everyone Active gave a presentation regarding their achievements to date.

People & Places Advisory Committee - 30 November 2023

In response to questions, members were advised that there was no membership data available from before January 2023 for any of the sites. Under data protection legislation, Sencio's data could not be transferred to the interim operator. The leisure centres had a capacity of roughly 2500 members each, and it was anticipated that membership would grow significantly as January was a popular month for signups. The Edenbridge centre was outperforming historic membership levels; Members noted it faced less competition from other gyms than Sevenoaks Leisure Centre.

The golf course at Lullingstone had lost members to other courses, before it had received improvements. It was anticipated by the operator that these figures would improve, but membership fees were typically seasonal or annual, so this would be delayed slightly. The operator explained that dynamic course pricing had been introduced, which had improved the footfall of casual players that did not hold memberships.

The officer outlined the future process for the leisure centres. A report would present a number of options to members for their feedback and decision. Any procurement process that may result from this decision would invite a cross-party working group to feed into determining the procurement weighting. Members discussed the importance of due consideration towards maintenance during this process. They were advised that fully costed maintenance and improvement plans could not be prepared for all options, as that would require detailed design briefs be provided by members ahead of the report.

Members asked questions of clarification of Everyone Active. They heard a breakdown of the marketing strategy for the leisure centres, with key achievements shared from the report and were advised that their marketing plan had been shared with the council. Digital media, in particular internet searches, was a major area of advertising, as were mail-out campaigns, targeted at specific areas and demographics. Members further discussed possible issues surrounding the app-based service, noting the high average age of Sevenoaks residents. Everyone Active noted that the centre users are supported by onsite staff if they have issues with making a booking.

In response to questions, members were advised that ~80% of staff were previously employed from Sencio, and that of the non-returning staff, most had either found other employment or elected to retire.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That Everyone Active's performance in delivering the interim leisure operator contract for the period April – September 2023, be noted; and that it be recommended to Cabinet that:

- a) Cabinet note the report; and

People & Places Advisory Committee - 30 November 2023

- b) That Cabinet agree for officers to bring a report to Cabinet providing an update on the provision and procurement process for the leisure facilities currently being managed under the interim leisure operator contract.

33. Work Plan

The Work Plan was noted, with the following additions:

5 March 2024

- Community Grants 2024/25
- Public Spaces Protection Order - Public Consultation Results: London Road, Halstead, Orpington By Pass Badgers Mount and the M25 Spur Road
- Leisure Operator Procurement Options
- Sevenoaks District Community Safety Strategy & Action Plan 2024-25

June 2024

- Broomhill Bank Internship Update
- Citizen's Advice Update

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9:37PM

CHAIRMAN