

Eden District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Date: 1 April 2021 Venue: The meeting was virtual, therefore there was no venue. Time: 6.45 pm

Present:

Chairman:	Councillor D Banks	
Vice Chairman:	Councillor M Hanley	
Councillors:	D Holden	D Ryland
	D Lawson	G Simpkins
	E Martin	D Smith
	G Nicolson OBE	D Wicks
	J Raine	
Standing Deputies:	Councillor S Lancaster (for Cllr Councillor M Clark)	
Officers Present:	Les Clark, Deputy Chief Executive	
Democratic Services Officers:	Nichola Baker and Heather Donaldson	

OS/40/04/21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Clark. Councillor Lancaster was present as her substitute for the meeting.

OS/41/04/21 Minutes

RESOLVED that the public minutes OSc/31/02/21 to OSc/39/02/21 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4 February 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record of these proceedings.

OS/42/04/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

OS/43/04/21 Quarter 3 Performance Management Update

The Strategic Lead Officer of Policy, Performance and Customers presented her report F17/21, which provided a summary of progress made against the Council's revised corporate performance targets for the period 1 October 2020 – 30 December 2020. The report also highlighted any areas of concern or issues requiring attention, and the remedial activity carried out to address them.

In response to Members' questions, the Strategic Lead Officer of Policy, performance and customers confirmed that:

- the quarterly reporting would in future be considered by this Committee prior to the Executive, to enable the timely scrutiny of issues. Members also requested that a glossary of terms and/or full terminology instead of acronyms be included in the reports, plus a format suitable for black and white printing.
- reporting on the Zero Carbon Strategy would be done in Quarter 4.

Proposed by Councillor Banks;
Seconded by Councillor Lawson; and

RESOLVED that the progress to date be noted.

OS/44/04/21 Scrutiny Annual Report

The Committee considered the Chairman's report G9/21, in respect of the activities of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the 2020-21 Council year.

The Chairman expressed disappointment that the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic had impeded the progress of the work programme due to the limitations on activities such as public consultation and meeting arrangements, although he acknowledged that this had been an inevitable local consequence of the unprecedented global situation. Members were keen to set up Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups to further the work programme when Covid restrictions were lifted, and to encourage attendance of Executive members at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings for the purpose of being able to respond to questions about the work of the Executive. Councillor Ryland suggested that the Green Growth Portfolio Holder be invited to attend a future Committee meeting as one of the first actions of this approach.

Proposed by Councillor Banks;
Seconded by Councillor Holden; and

RESOLVED that

1. the draft Annual Scrutiny report for 2020-21 municipal year be approved;
2. the report be put to Council; and
3. the Green Growth Portfolio Holder be invited to attend a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in order for Members to find out more about the work and responsibility of the role.

OS/45/04/21 Scrutiny Work Programmes

The Committee considered the Chairman's report G8/21, which set out the current and possible future agenda items for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and in particular considered the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2021-22. The report also invited suggestions for possible agenda items from all non-Executive Members.

The Committee felt that further detailed consideration of the Work Programme was required.

Proposed by Councillor Nicolson;
Seconded by Councillor Banks; and

RESOLVED that a Task and Finish Group comprising Members of the Committee and appropriate Officers be set up to give detailed consideration to the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2021-22, and a report on its findings and proposals be taken to the next Committee meeting.

OS/46/04/21 Devolution of Assets to Parish and Town Councils

The Committee considered a verbal report and presentation from the Deputy Chief Executive in relation to the Council's policy on the devolution of assets to Parish and Town Councils, which had been agreed in July 2017. The policy aimed to provide local choice over discretionary provision of assets such as footway lighting, community land such as play areas, and public toilets. It also considered how reduced government funding had affected service provision, and how services and assets might be devolved to Parishes and Town Councils (P&TC) in order to continue their future provision. From 2018 onwards, any P&TC wishing to take over an asset had received an initial 100% of the funding allocated for that asset by Eden District Council, which would be tapered down to zero for the end of the 2021/22 financial year. In respect of certain assets, it would be the case that they would be removed or closed if not transferred to P&TCs by March 2022. For example, any public toilets not transferred would be closed, but assets such as play areas, benches and memorials would continue to be maintained by the Council after March 2022, with an option to transfer them still being available.

The Deputy Chief Executive provided an overview of which assets had been taken over by P&TCs to date, and which were still in the process of transfer or under consideration. Due to the Covid pandemic, there had been very limited progress on the transfer of some assets, and a year of progress had effectively been lost. Given that this had been due to circumstances beyond the control of those involved, the Committee was supportive of an extension being granted for a further year to enable remaining opportunities for asset transfer to be achieved.

In addition, the Committee felt that there was merit in other issues surrounding the transfer of assets, such as safety concerns arising from discontinued footway lighting, and advice for communities wishing to adopt play areas, to be considered as part of its work programme.

Proposed by Councillor Holden;
Seconded by Councillor Wicks; and

RESOLVED that

1. a twelve-month extension to the transfer of assets to Parish and Town Councils be supported; and
2. matters in connection with the transfer of assets be considered as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme.

OS/47/04/21 Any Other Items which the Chairman decides are urgent

There were no urgent items of business.

OS/48/04/21 Date of Next Scheduled Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was confirmed as 15 July 2021 at 6.45 pm.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm

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