

A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WAS HELD ON 29 JULY 2015

Councillors; Allen, Mrs Batty (P), Beavis (P), Forder. Mrs Forder, Foster-Reed, Geddes (P), Gill (P), Hazel, Hylands (P), Scard (P) and Mrs Wright (P)

12. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Forder, Allen and Forder.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 9 JUNE 2015

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 June 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

15. REPORTS TO BE RECEIVED

i. Interpretation Boards

The Chairman invited Councillor Scard to provide an additional verbal update to that of Cllr Mrs Forder's written update for members. He shared that Kevin Casey had joined the working group and his knowledge and voluntary work had been helpful to the, group advising that Mr Casey was a volunteer at the Diving Museum and a member of the Friends of Stokes Bay Committee. Costings for the improvements, replacements or addition of interpretation boards had been provided by Mr Casey and Gosport Borough Council.

Councillor Scard advised there had been a suggestion of involving the men's 'Shed Scheme' and that he would be arranging a meeting with Mr Casey and a representative at the 'Shed'. He continued by saying that it would assist if the representative could be involved with the work on the design for future boards as they were currently of different materials and not all were weatherproof. He added that Mr Casey had suggested a design made of Perspex where information sheets could easily be updated. In response to a question Councillor Scard advised members that Tony Lawrence of the Lawrence family had agreed to provide photographs free of charge.

ii. Public Access to Fort Brockhurst

The Borough Solicitor provided a verbal update to the Committee. The Borough Solicitor advised members that contacting and arranging a meeting with English Heritage to look at the Draft Management Plan was still in progress. She added that background papers for this working group would be sent to new members of the Committee.

Clarity was provided in response to questions raised; in relation to the education facility at Fort Brockhurst it was confirmed that the facility was used by schools, The Council for Summer Passport and other agencies; that the bridge has been used by vehicles and further confirmed that English Heritage used some facilities for storage however it was believed this would not impact negatively on access for the public.

16. DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

A. Requests for Scrutiny

The Chairman called on members to raise requests for scrutiny.

Councillor Mrs Wright requested two areas to be considered:

- i) the first being the strategic review of housing allocation and the void properties process within Housing Services Unit.

Members discussed the request. It was advised that recent changes to the allocation policy that had been agreed at Community Board may resolve void property issues. Members also discussed options and timing of the request for scrutiny. It was agreed that it was too early to scrutinise the allocation policy, and It was felt that it be more appropriate to allow time to see the outcome of the changes made.

RESOLVED: That Stuart Palmer, Interim Housing Services Manager, provided a presentation to Members at the December meeting and that scrutiny be programmed for post-Christmas.

- ii) the second area suggested for scrutiny was for the investigation of council spending relating to the use of Agency staff and Consultants.

Members discussed the difficulty in recruiting specialist staff to fill posts and that this resulted in utilising agency staff, during the interim, until such a time when appropriate employment could be matched. Councillor Mrs Wright shared her concerns that due to the reduction in staffing there was often a lack of cover during staff absence that lead to exceeding policy/procedure times for response to residents. She continued by sharing her view that by scrutinising this area problems to recruitment may be identified.

RESOLVED: That a report be provided to the September Committee informing of the number of agency staff and consultants that are currently working at Gosport Borough Council and the reason they would not become permanent staff

B. Work Programme

The Chairman highlighted the work programme attached to the agenda for the meeting and asked for comments. It was agreed that the work programme was fit for purpose.

17. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting concluded 18:37

CHAIRMAN