

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 7 December 2021
Present	Councillors Miss Susan Carey, Gary Fuller, Peter Gane, Michelle Keutenius (Chairman), Terence Mullard, Rebecca Shoob (Vice-Chair) and John Wing
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Connor McConville and Councillor Patricia Rolfe
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Ewan Green (Director of Place), John Holman (Assistant Director of Housing), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer) and Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services)
Others Present:	John Bunnett (Managing Director, Otterpool Park LLP) and Mark Dodson (Head of Finance, Otterpool Park LLP)

27. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Gary Fuller declared a significant interest with regard to Agenda Item 5 Housing Asset Management Strategy as he is a Council tenant. He moved to the public gallery for this item and did not take part in discussions or voting on this item.

Councillor Michelle Keutenius declared a significant interest with regard to Agenda item 5 as she is a Council tenant. As Chairman of this committee Councillor Keutenius handed over to the Vice Chairman, Councillor Rebecca Shoob for this item and did not take part in discussions and voting.

Councillor Rebecca Shoob declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as she is a director of Otterpool Park LLP. At presentation of this item, Otterpool Park Business Plan, Councillor Shoob moved to the public gallery and did not take part in discussions or voting on this item.

Councillor Ms Susan Carey declared an interest with regard to Otterpool Park Business Plan as a landowner within the area. She remained in the meeting taking part in discussions and voting on this item.

28. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

29. **Minutes of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Keutenius handed over the Chair to Councillor Shoob for the following item and left the meeting. Councillor Fuller left the meeting.

30. **Housing Asset Management Strategy**

The Housing Asset Management Strategy (HAMS) is the primary document in a library of housing strategies that provide a handrail for all future maintenance and development for the HRA housing and commercial portfolio together with other non HRA properties it has responsibility for.

Mr John Holman presented the report and strategy. Due to a technical issue the planned presentation could not be shown to the committee, however it is attached to the minutes.

Councillor John Wing thanked the team and portfolio holder, Councillor Godfrey for the report and outstanding strategy, remarking that the strategy sets a high precedent and guide.

Members' comments and questions followed:

- Garages – ensure ward councilors are involved in the proposed garage strategy.
- Tenants at the heart of the HAMS, ensure ASB is addressed; estate inspections; consider vulnerable tenants. A Tenants' Handbook is being developed.
- Government grant funding for carbon reduction initiatives may present opportunities for joint bidding.
- Consider lifetime running costs and carbon emissions for example solar energy which could in turn create income. However, looking at, for example, air source heat pumps, these are complex and potentially have high maintenance costs. There is scope within the strategy to explore further.
- Car pools on new developments – members asked that reference is also made to Active Travel encompassing walking and cycling for further carbon reduction particularly in the housing carbon strategy when it is drafted.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Seconded by Councillor Peter Gane

RESOLVED:

- 1. That report OS/21/10 is received and noted.**
- 2. That the Housing Asset Management Strategy is recommended for approval to Cabinet.**

(Voting: For 5; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

Councillors Fuller and Keutenius returned to the meeting. Councillor Keutenius resumed her Chairman duties for the remainder of the meeting.

31. Budget Strategy 2022/23

The Budget Strategy set out the guidelines for preparing the 2022/23 Budget. It supports the Corporate Plan and aligns with the direction and objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Budget Strategy takes account of current and future financial issues, it set out the underlying assumptions and initial budget-setting proposals and provided a timetable for delivering a balanced budget in 2022/23.

Points raised by members included:

- Website CMS replacement – further costings and technical details to be provided to members.
- New Homes Bonus – remaining balance in reserve will be utilised by 2023.
- Business Rates – funds of £1.7m were allocated to the Mountfield Business Hub.
- On/off parking income increase relates to an increase in the charging schedule rather than volume.
- Provision of fisherman style huts at the Stade – no further details at present, ideas to be developed.
- Folkestone Airshow contribution – how does this sit with the climate change agenda? The Airshow provides a good tourism boost to the town, benefitting businesses.
- Further plans for Park & Ride? A suitable parking site would be required along with bus driver availability
- Training expenses decrease – originally increased for the Transformation Project rollout. Member training is based on demand and specific training requests would always be considered.

The Chairman was pleased to note that consideration would be given to develop a short video for residents to explain Council Tax and the services that it supports.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Michelle Keutenius

RESOLVED:

That report OS/21/11 is received and noted.

(Voting: For 7; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

Councillor Shoob moved to the public gallery and did not take part in discussions or voting on the following item.

32. **Otterpool Business Plan (Annual Review)**

The report presented the first annual update of the strategic business plan for Otterpool Park Limited Liability Partnership (LLP). The draft updated plan provided commentary on progress achieved to date and set out the priorities and key milestones for the LLP over the next 12-18 month period. The report was presented to Committee for feedback ahead of Cabinet considering the draft updated Business Plan in January 2022.

Councillor Miss Carey raised an issue with regard to suitable premises for Stanford Parish Council meetings. At present they utilise a building, on the Racecourse site, which is due to be demolished. Mr John Bunnett, Managing Director of Otterpool Park LLP advised he would be happy to look at this.

Councillor Mullard said it was a thorough report, with many assumptions. Mr Bunnett pointed out to members this was a 30 year project, however certain aspects of the development had been firmed up; medical facilities and primary schools. The assumptions made with regard to costs, house/commercial sales and profits are based on conservative projections.

Other points made included the need to consider mixed housing for all ages; employment opportunities; and superfast broadband availability.

Members turned to the planning application timescales and queried if there would be any potential delays. Mr Bunnett advised that QC advice had been given on the draft documentation. Final submissions in support of the application would be completed imminently. This would then be subject to review and a 10 week statutory consultation period with the intention that the Planning and Licensing Committee would consider the application in Summer 2022. Mr Bunnett also added that in terms of sustainability, the site is among the best in the district.

Councillor Wing advised that Lympe Parish Council had concerns for their residents. Mr Bunnett said he would be happy to make contact with the Parish Council to allay their concerns.

Proposed by Councillor Michelle Keutenius
Seconded by Councillor Peter Gane

RESOLVED:
That Report OS/21/12 is received and noted.

(Voting: For 6; Against 0; Abstentions 0)