

**A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Councillors Allen, Beavis (P), Mrs Cully (P), Farr (P), Forder(Chairman) (P), Mrs Forder(P), Foster-Reed(P),Geddes(P), Hazel, Mrs Hook (P), Hylands (P), Scard(P)

15. APOLOGIES

There were none.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

17. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 JUNE 2014 AND THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 28 JULY 2014.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 24 June 2014 and the extraordinary meeting held on 28 July 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as true and correct records.

18. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Geddes be elected as Vice Chairman for the remainder of the 2014/2015 municipal year.

19. REPORTS RECEIVED

POLLING PLACES REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Solicitor and Deputy Chief Executive updating the Committee on the responses to the start of the review and to consider the draft proposals for consultation and recommendations to Full Council.

Members were advised that amendments were proposed to Privett Ward, Brockhurst Ward and Rowner and Holbrook Ward.

It was proposed that in Privett Ward Thorngate Halls would be used a polling place for Polling District GO2 (the Cheriton Road Estate), rather than St Mary's RC Primary School. The Privett Ward would also be reduced to two polling districts, with those voters living closer to Thorngate Halls voting there in future. This would also help alleviate the potential queuing and confusion at the Gomer School Polling Place where there were currently three different polling stations, covering two wards.

The Committee were advised that Cricket Club had been examined for potential use, but that it was unsuitable for reasons set out in the report.

Councillor Mrs Forder advised that the Privett Ward Councillors were supportive of the proposals and Members recognised the benefit in investing in disabled access for the Thorngate Halls.

It was proposed that in Brockhurst Ward, the polling place for polling district GE3 be relocated to the St Mary's School, following the relocation of the Privett polling place. This would reduce the demand on Solent Evangelical Church, which was currently the polling place for the entire Brockhurst Ward. It was noted that Brockhurst Ward had lost two polling places over the last few years.

Councillor Hylands advised that as Ward Councillor for Brockhurst he welcomed that a number of elderly residents in GE3 would no longer have to negotiate Ann's Hill to vote.

The Committee were advised that the changes to Rowner and Holbrook Ward were a reduction in the number of polling districts from four to two. There would be no change in the polling place for any elector. It was thought that historically the ward had been four polling districts to reflect the canvass areas.

The Chairman advised the Board that schools were not required to close on polling days and that there were schools in the Borough that remained open. The Returning Officer advised that she was happy to discuss arrangements with Head teachers to ensure the use of schools met both the school and the Electoral Commission's requirements.

A Member raised concern that the loss of community spaces was impacting on buildings available for use as polling stations. It was recognised that many buildings previously used for polling were now used daily for nurseries and pre-schools and therefore could not make themselves available for use as a polling station.

RESOLVED: That the draft proposals set out in Appendix 4 of the report of the Borough Solicitor and Deputy Chief Executive for consultation, be agreed.

BUS SERVICES

Members were advised that the Bus Services Working Group had met three times and had consulted with David Duckett and Peter Shelley, Hampshire County Council's Transport Officer.

The Working Group had established that the issues surrounding bus services were not limited to Gosport, but extended to Hampshire and nationally.

The Working Group were aware of a number of petitions that had been established in the Borough objecting to changes, or supporting the introduction of additional routes.

The Chairman advised the Committee of the initial findings of the Working Group, varying from infrequent services, to lack of services for commuters, poor service in Lee-on-the-Solent and lack of service to QA hospital.

The Working Group had recognised that bus companies were privately run companies and would not run unprofitable routes. It was noted that there was an increase in frequency of services on main routes, but that services to more remote areas and evening and weekend services had reduced.

Members agreed that it was important to improve resident's knowledge on the alternatives available including, Dial-A-Ride, ICANGO and a free bus service to Asda in Newgate Lane. Members felt the services could be better advertised.

The Committee were advised that 28% of Bus Services were subsidised by Hampshire County Council and that there would not be any additional funding available. It was also noted that services subsidised by the County Council were still underused.

A Member noted that bus tickets now detailed the start and finish point of journeys for those using free bus passes.

Members welcomed the update from the working group.

Waste Policies

The Chief Executive advised the Board that in 2013 a change in Health and Safety legislation had meant that side waste, not placed inside refuse bins, would not be collected.

Members were advised that initially a leaflet drop and door knocking had taken place to advise residents, residents had also been offered larger bins, and side waste had been stickered advising of the change in procedure.

The Chief Executive advised that the changes had been widely accepted by residents.

Members complimented staff on their swift handling of incidents of fly tipping.

Portchester Crematorium

Members recognised that the opening of an additional crematorium in Havant had led to a reduction in the numbers of cremations at Portchester Crematorium, but that it was too early to say what the financial implications of this were. It was agreed that the Council's Portchester Crematorium representatives report back to the Committee if they felt the need arose.

Grounds Maintenance

The Head of Streetscene updated the Committee with the progress made with the Grounds Maintenance contractors Sodexo. He advised that improvements were being made and that a half day workshop had taken place between both GBC staff and contractors and had been so successful that plans were in place for it to take place again in future.

The Committee were advised that the grass cutting equipment had been replaced resulting in an improved cutting of the grass and better distribution of cuttings. Cutting rounds had been reviewed and the contractors had also been issued with Blackberry smartphones to allow them to update work undertaken in real time. Additional cutting routes had also been added.

Radio communication had also been improved allowing the admin team to be better informed of any issues, examples included recording of cars blocking verges, allowing this to be reported to customers.

Sodexo and Council staff were alternating working days at the depot and the Town Hall to develop better working practices and the contractors were now also involved in the judging of the in bloom competition.

The Committee were advised that a review of shrubs was now the priority.

Members welcomed the clear improvement in the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance contract. It was accepted that the weather conditions had had a significant impact on the delivery of the contract and that this had detrimentally affected weed control this year.

The Chairman advised the Committee that recent visitors to Gosport from New Zealand had been impressed by the look of the Town and the leisure facilities available.

It was requested that a report be made to the Committee on Grounds Maintenance in September.

Attainment of Primary Schools in the Borough

The Group reflected on the visit of Brain Pope to the extraordinary meeting of the Committee. Overall it was felt that attainment of Primary School pupils in the Borough was higher than anticipated and that the concern appeared to be with GCSE results. It was accepted however that GCSE results had improved this year.

Members felt that Mr Pope's visit had been useful and informative.

20. DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

A) REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY

There were none.

B) WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was discussed and updated.

C) OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY

There were none.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that he had been invited to tour the new CEMAST facility. He advised the Committee that he would seek to extend the invitation to other Councillors.

The Meeting concluded at 7.15pm

CHAIRMAN