Minutes of a Meeting held at Riverside, Lowestoft
on Thursday, 8 September 2016 at 6.00 pm

Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Councillors A Cackett (Chairman), S Barker, N Brooks, G Elliott, T Gandy, L Gooch, A Green, P Light, C Rivett, L Smith and C Topping

Cabinet Members in attendance

Councillor F Mortimer – Cabinet Member for Customers & Communities
Councillor M Rudd – Cabinet Member for Community Health & Safety

Sentinel Leisure Trust

Chris Ames – Director of Business Development
Matt Stebbings – Leisure & Business Development Co-ordinator

Officers present

K Hubbard (Community Development/Community Safety Manager), A Jarvis (Strategic Director), A Stapleton (Democratic Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Logan and B Provan.

Councillor A Green attended as a substitute for Councillor S Logan.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 6 July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising from the Minutes, Councillor Gooch advised that she had spoken to the Parents, Teachers and Friends Association of Pakefield High School concerning the lack of take-up of funding for pupils to take the peer mentoring qualification, and had been advised that this was a communications issue and that the school had been unaware that the programme could be accredited. The relevant information had now been provided to the school. The Cabinet Member for Customers & Communities added that the Chairman of the Youth Council had sent communications on the qualification to the schools, but that sometimes staff positions changed and messages were not passed on. They were therefore looking to improve communications for future years.

Also arising from the Minutes, a Member asked when the Committee’s recommendations with regard to the future of the various civic items in the care of the Council would be taken forward, and was advised that a report was to be taken to the 20 September 2016 meeting of Cabinet.
4 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO ANY REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OR REPORTS OF ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET

There were no announcements.

5 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP YEAR END REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Community Health & Safety presented a report which provided information on projects commissioned by the Waveney Community Safety Partnership (WCSP) during 2015/16, together with a crime review update, and information on the Suffolk Constabulary Policing Review. The Cabinet Member advised that the Partnership met quarterly, and directed Members to the Partnership Plan set out at Appendix A to the report, and details of projects commissioned during 2015/16.

Whilst the Police and Crime Commissioner no longer provided funding support to Community Safety Partnerships, the WCSP worked closely with other agencies to assist in accessing funding, where possible, to support projects. Whilst it was now more difficult for the Partnership to continue to support projects, some had been continued through the hard work of the Active Communities Team and partners.

Projects commissioned for 2015/16 were aimed to meet the three priorities of the Partnership of Protecting Vulnerable People, Demand Reduction and Night Time Economy. Projects included Anti-Social Behaviour Partnership, Domestic Homicide Review, the Government’s Prevent training on identifying those who may be vulnerable to terrorism/radicalisation, the Summer Activities Programme, Y-B-Yz (a project promoting good citizenship), Crucial Crew (which provided scenarios on personal safety for pupils aged 9-10 years) and a Memory Box Project. Further details of all projects supported were set out in the report.

The Partnership had also worked with partners through Lowestoft Rising to develop a mentoring programme which placed volunteers in Lowestoft high schools to support the raising of aspirations of young people.

Due to the changing face of crime and budgets, Suffolk Constabulary had changed the way it policed in Suffolk. New policing boundaries had been created, and these were set out on a county map at Appendix B to the report. These changes, as well as changes to IT systems, meant that Suffolk Constabulary had experienced difficulty in producing meaningful data for partners.

Turning to the crime review update element of the report, in general terms crime was down across Suffolk. All reported crime was judged against new assessment criteria, which had provided an improvement in accuracy of incidents recorded, though was thought to be a factor in the increase of some data. Anti-social behaviour statistics showed a County-wide reduction of 38% on the 3 year rolling average. Domestic Violence County-wide had seen an increase, but this was mainly put down to confidence in reporting.

The following questions and issues were raised during the discussion of this report:

- Referring to the 3 successfully resolved mediation cases in respect of neighbour disputes mentioned in the report, these had been referred to the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer by the Police. Neighbour disputes which partners had been unable to deal with were often referred to this officer, whereas issues concerning environmental nuisance such as noise were passed to the Environmental Protection Team.

- A Member praised the Summer Activities Programme, but was concerned that it was Lowestoft focused. She felt that the Programme should also focus on certain estates and areas where children were known to cause anti-social behaviour. The Community Development/Community Safety Manager advised that the Programme took a lot of time to pull together, due to the need to obtain funding from local businesses. The Partnership would like to see the Programme extended to other areas, but resource
limitations meant that only the areas with the highest level of problems were targeted. Discussions would, however, take place on how the Programme might be funded in other areas, perhaps by commissioning the provision via an outside organisation.

- Referring to the attendance of c. 220 officers and Councillors at workshops to raise awareness of the Government’s “Prevent” initiative, a Member asked how many local people had been identified as being vulnerable to terrorism or radicalisation. The Community Development/Community Safety Manager advised that around 400 people across Suffolk had been identified under the project, and were being worked with. These cases varied in seriousness, and Members were encouraged to bring forward any issues they were concerned about.

- The day-to-day work of the Anti-Social Behaviour Partnership carried an average continual workload of approximately 25 medium to high level anti-social behaviour cases. These cases included both families and individuals and were very varied in nature. The Anti-Social Behaviour Officer acted as the “hub” to keep issues moving forward, and referred them to Partners where appropriate, including the Police, Housing Team, Environmental Health and the voluntary sector.

- Referring to the Mentoring Programme, volunteer Mentors had been recruited from local organisations to provide support in Lowestoft High Schools on the raising of aspirations of young people. 22 volunteers had been trained so far, with the schools identifying pupils needing support, and those pupils being matched up with a volunteer accordingly and meeting with them fortnightly to talk through their problems and issues. A Member advised that the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) provided a school mentoring service, and the Community Development/Community Safety Manager would contact that organisation to see whether there was any potential link-up of the two programmes. The Cabinet Member for Customers & Communities referred to another form of mentoring offered in local schools by the Waveney Youth Council, via its Transition Ambassadors Project.

The following written responses were requested by Members:

- A Member asked whether Hate Crimes were included on the crime statistics table, as she was aware of incidents in Lowestoft where victims had been mistaken for perpetrators, and arrested. The Community Development/Community Safety Manager advised that the statistics in the report only showed those crimes within the remit of the Community Safety Partnership, but that if further information on specific incidents could be provided outside of the meeting, these would be taken forward with the Police, and the Member informed of action taken.

- A Member noted that, whilst Violence Against the Person was shown to have increased in the Lowestoft area, this would include outlying areas of Lowestoft such as Carlton Colville. As the Safer Neighbourhood Team area was so large, it was hard to pinpoint from the statistics given exactly where these incidents were occurring. The Community Development/Community Safety Manager adviser that these statistics were taken from a larger, more detailed document, and this would be circulated to Members. The same Member asked whether statistics on Fraud and Online Crime were included in that report, and was advised that they were.

- Concerning the Summer Activities Programme, a Member asked whether there was any demographic data available to show where the children using the Programme had come from, and this would be provided to Members.

RESOLVED

That the Year End Report of the Waveney Community Safety Partnership be noted.

NB: Councillor Rudd left the meeting at the end of this item, at 6.35pm.
6 CHANGE IN THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

At this point in the proceedings he Chairman advised that the order of business would be changed to enable item 6 (Strategic Play Evaluation/Action Plan) to be considered further up the Agenda.

7 STRATEGIC PLAY EVALUATION / ACTION PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Customers & Communities presented a report which set out the findings from the 2015 Play Evaluation Report conducted by Sentinel Leisure Trust (SLT) and Waveney Norse (WN). It was hoped that that Report’s recommendations would enhance and improve play development and management of play space, repair and maintenance through a strategic plan for the service. The Cabinet Member expressed his thanks to officers from both SLT and WN, who had worked tirelessly on this project.

The Chairman reminded Members that an incorrect, earlier version of the report had mistakenly been appended to the Agenda, and that all Members had received a “tracked changes” updated version of the report, and that Members should be clear which version of the report they were referring to when they spoke.

In April 2015 Sentinel Leisure Trust (SLT) had been commissioned by the Council to undertake the strategic role of play development throughout Waveney. Waveney Norse (WN) was commissioned by the Council to manage, maintain, repair and keep clean all WDC owned play provision, and SLT’s role was to advise WN on resource focus and developments to enable a more strategic provision and service throughout the District based on audit and evaluation of the District’s provision.

The first action of SLT was to audit the provision of play across the District, and also the current budgets, resource and management of repair and maintenance of the play provision through WN. The Play Evaluation Report appended to Report REP1370 showed the findings from the Play Space Evaluation Audit, as well as presenting recommendations based on these findings for the future planning and management of strategic resource/assets to enable improvements to play provision and services.

There would be no increase in the current revenue cost of play service as a result of the recommendations, as they included re-allocation of budgets within the existing budget managed by WN into reactive and proactive pots. The Waveney Play Partnership had been consulted on the Report’s recommendations, and was in agreement with the proposals. Consultation with District, Town and Parish Councils, who had been given several opportunities to comment on the proposals, had resulted in some amendments to the final Report.

The following questions and issues were raised during the discussion of this report:

- SLT was working with town and parish councils who may wish to take on responsibility for play areas. If the desire was there, SLT and WN would work with these organisations to support a smooth transition, and would ensure that any play equipment was in good repair prior to any transfer. If a town or parish council took on responsibility for a play area, it would become responsible for its inspection.

- The word “preceded” towards the middle of Page 4 on the revised report should be changed to “superseded”, and “Pigs Lane” on Page 45 should be changed to “Pig Lane”.

- With the merger of WN and Suffolk Coastal Norse (SCS) there was now one shared post across the two Districts inspecting play areas. Suffolk Coastal owned less than 20% of the play areas in its District, whereas Waveney owned over 80% of those in its District. The bulk of the work therefore took place in Waveney. The Strategic Director was asked to check that the costs of the post were being apportioned appropriately. The Director of Business Development for SLT advised that the recommendations of the Report included looking at inspection routes and making efficiencies to ensure the right
level of inspection. This would be revised annually to ensure inspections were being carried out, and new technology had also been introduced to assist and audit the process.

- The Chairman reminded Members that a question setting briefing for the Committee’s annual scrutiny of SLT and WN had been set for 24 October 2016, and that Members should think about what areas they would like covered in these pieces of scrutiny.

- The S106 monies referred to in the Report were held by WDC, not by town and parish councils, and the third recommendation on the covering report was for the Cabinet Member to be given delegated authority for the allocation and specification of such monies on WDC-owned sites. This referred to the current existing monies, but when superseded by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), this would be dealt with differently.

- Referring to Paragraph 5.4 of the covering report, a Member advised that Beccles Town Council had responded to the consultation, and documents would be amended as appropriate.

- Pakefield Green play space had recently been invested in, and was now more focused on juniors than toddlers. Some parents had expressed concern at this, and plans were in place to reinstate some toddler equipment in that area.

- The data from this review could be used in any asset transfer to any future Lowestoft Town or Parish Council(s). It would be for any new Council to decide whether or not it wished to take on responsibility for any assets. It was presumed, however, that any transfers would be more likely to be blocks of land/facilities, which would be easier for a Town or Parish Council to run than assets dispersed across the Parish or Town area.

- The play space at Rider Haggard Lane, Kessingland, had previously been targeted at juniors and toddlers, however the demographics of that area had now changed, with more older people living nearby. The Town Council was to be approached to see if it would be open to taking on the site and transforming it into allotments and gardens. There was good play provision for all ages in Marram Park in Kessingland.

- A Member was concerned at the proposed disposal of any open space, for example Denmark Road, Beccles, and the Cabinet Member advised that this would be carefully looked at.

- Concerning St Anne’s Road, Beccles, it was proposed to make the access and egress safer by reducing the height of the hedge adjacent to each gate/entry and make it less secluded. A 2009 letter drop to nearby residents, following complaints of anti-social behaviour on the site, had received no responses. Other improvements to this play space could be explored outside of the meeting.

- The scoring of each play area included such issues as variety of play equipment, signage, security, condition, availability of bins and seating etc.

- A Member asked about consistency of categorisation of parks on the back page of the Report. Fen Park was not included, but should be, as a well used community park. Belle Vue Park was not included, as this was not a play area. Normanston Park was included, as it had a play area. Another Member felt that play equipment should be added in Kensington Gardens.

- Community groups could often get together to improve play parks, for example Townlands Park Friends had removed rust from and painted equipment. Halesworth Town Park had also been successful in attracting funding for new equipment.

- The Council’s Planning Policy and Delivery Officer had been consulted on the project, and his comments had been included in the Report.
The catchment area for a particular park may not fall within just one District Ward, for example Lucerne Close and Clarkes Lane in Carlton Colville had users from Carlton Ward.

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. That the Play Evaluation Report, its recommendations and its play space action plan be adopted by the Council as the strategic document for Play Development and Play Maintenance services.

2. That the Council accept the recommendations within the Play Evaluation Report and enable Sentinel Leisure Trust, in partnership with the Council and Waveney Norse, to deliver against the Report’s action plan, with the Play Evaluation being updated bi-annually as a minimum to inform the action plan as a ‘live’ document going forward.

3. That delegated authority be given to the Cabinet Member for Customers & Communities for the allocation and specification of s106 monies on Waveney District Council-owned sites and equipment, in consultation with the Strategic Director, in accordance with the Play Evaluation Report.

NB: The Cabinet Member for Customers & Communities and Councillor Light left the meeting at the end of this item, at 7.35pm.

**6 CURRENT POSITION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman presented a report which reminded Members that the current position of the Committee’s work programme was provided at each meeting, in order for it to be continually reviewed by the Committee.

At the June 2016 meeting, the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2016/17 and beyond had been approved, and the Suggestions for Scrutiny discussed at the Work Programme Setting Workshop held on 25 May 2016 taken forward as detailed in Section 3.4 of Report REP1388. These would be considered alongside annual items, reports from partner organisations, finance scrutiny and urgent issues which arose due to changing priorities. Agendas would be set only 2-3 months in advance, rather than annually, in order to make the Committee more responsive.

The Chairman reminded Members that ideally no more than two substantive items should be considered on each agenda, in order to keep meetings to a manageable length. She also reminded Members about the question setting briefing to be held on 24 October 2016 to set the question plans for the Committee’s annual scrutiny of Sentinel Leisure Trust and Waveney Norse, for which session and meetings the Committee would be joined by Members of the Audit & Governance Committee. A Member asked whether the SLT and WN scrutiny sessions could be held earlier than the planned December 2016 and January 2017 meetings, but was advised that it would be difficult for partners to produce their reports, which would be based on the results of the 24 October 2016 question planning meeting, any earlier than at the expected meetings. Any individual service issues could, however, be picked up at an earlier stage if required.

Finally the Chairman advised that ideally, unless any urgent matters arose, she would like to keep the August 2017 meeting clear, in order for Members to have a break from the now monthly cycle of scrutiny meetings.

The current position of the work programme was set out at Appendix A of the report for Members’ review. One item still to be programmed was circulation of the final Kirkley Flooding report from Suffolk County Council, and a Member advised that following a meeting of the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Sub-Committee in June 2016, a number of recommendations had been made which may be useful for circulation to Members.
RESOLVED

That the current position of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee’s work programme, as set out in Appendix A to Report REP1459, be noted.

The meeting was concluded at 7.45 pm

Chairman