

## PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room - County Hall, Lewes on 19 March 2019.

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PRESENT	Councillors Richard Stogdon (Chair), Godfrey Daniel (Vice Chair), Colin Belsey (substituting for Councillor Chris Dowling), Martin Clarke, Claire Dowling, Simon Elford, Nigel Enever, Darren Grover and Barry Taylor
LEAD MEMBERS	Councillors Nick Bennett, Bill Bentley, David Elkin and Rupert Simmons
ALSO PRESENT	Becky Shaw, Chief Executive Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport James Harris, Assistant Director, Economy Nick Skelton, Assistant Director Communities Karl Taylor, Assistant Director Operations Victoria Eaton, Team Manager Emergency Planning Dale Poore, Contract Manager Highway Infrastructure Services Ian Gutsell, Chief Finance Officer  Jo Shippey, Community Engagement Manager, South East Water Douglas Whitfield, Head of Production, South East Water Andy Beston, Operations Manager (East), Southern Water Joel Hufford, Stakeholder Engagement Manager (Sussex), Southern Water.

## 22 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

22.1 The Committee RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2018 as a correct record.

## 23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

23.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Dowling and Pat Rodohan. Apologies were also received from Stephen Potter, Head of Customer & Library Services and Richard Sands, Head of Assets, South East Water.

## 24 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

24.1 Councillor Claire Dowling declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 as she is the Wealden District Council Cabinet Member responsible for Emergency Planning.

## 25 URGENT ITEMS

25.1 There were none.

## 26 EMERGENCY PLANNING - WATER COMPANY RESPONSE TO SEVERE WEATHER EVENT

26.1 The Team Manager, Emergency Planning introduced the report and outlined the background to the incident which occurred at the beginning of March 2018. There was a disruption of water supplies over 3-4 days during which time the Emergency Planning Team and Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) were involved in the response to the incident. Learning from this incident has been captured by the multi-agency Operation Kirkwall de-brief held by SRF three months after incident. Since that time the Emergency Planning Team has been working with the Water Companies and the Resilience Forum on the lessons learnt to update and amend emergency plans.

### South East Water

26.2 Douglas Whitfield, South East Water, gave a presentation to the Committee which outlined the water supply areas covered by South East Water; the background to the freeze thaw incident; the company's response to it; and the follow up work that was been undertaken. The points raised in the presentation are summarised below.

26.3 South East Water supplies around 517 million litres of water per day to properties across Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Berkshire. The majority of the water comes from ground water sources (80%) with the remainder coming from surface water sources.

### *Freeze thaw incident*

26.4 The Eastern Region which covers Sussex and Kent was affected by the freeze thaw incident during which temperatures went from -11°C to +11°C. The rapid change in temperature caused ground movement which led to a large number of burst pipes, particularly on customers' premises. 70-80% of the burst pipes were on customers' premises and around one third (20-30%) were on the water supply network. This led to a 20% increase in demand for water of around 105 million litres on the first day of the incident, which drained the water supply network. This was the worst loss of water supply incident that South East Water has experienced in the last 20 years, and it affected 8,000 properties in East Sussex.

26.5 South East Water responded to the incident through an emergency plan and in conjunction with the Resilience Forums. The emergency plan included setting up an incident team in advance of the weather event due to the forecast impact on the water network of an increased number of leaks and burst pipes. However, South East Water did not anticipate an incident of this magnitude, which involved a large number of leaks on customer's premises.

26.6 Teams of engineers repaired 633 leaks over the five day period and 28 burst mains a day; 675 vulnerable customers were contacted and provided with emergency water supplies; and emergency supplies were provided to affected farmers and businesses. South East Water also set up a communications sub group to provide communications through councils and other partners, but accepted that it needs to make more use of these links in future.

### *Emergency Water Supplies*

26.7 Customer feedback showed the main concern was about the availability of emergency bottled water and the location of the distribution centres. It was clear this needed to be improved. Since the incident South East Water has worked closely with Local Authorities and the SRF on the provision of bottled water and has revised the location of distribution centres. Bottled water supply arrangements have been changed and South East Water now holds larger

stocks of emergency bottled water. It has also invested in additional plant and equipment to provide emergency water supplies.

#### *Communications*

26.8 Communications were also a major concern, with residents complaining they could not get accurate or up to date information about the incident. In particular customers wanted to know which areas were affected, when supplies would be restored, and where and when emergency water supplies would be available. South East Water acknowledges that they were not proactive enough with communications. They will aim to improve information from the incident team on updates, and will make more use of social media as the speed of communications is much more important now.

#### *Compensation*

26.9 South East Water wrote to all affected customers within a week of the incident to offer compensation. They provided automatic compensation, above the minimum levels, determined by the length of time customers were without a water supply.

#### *Follow up actions*

26.10 South East Water do plan for cold weather and have a priority services register of vulnerable customers who they contact in the event of an interruption to the water supply. Following the incident, they have done a lot of stakeholder engagement to get feedback on what needed to be improved. South East Water have revised their emergency plans in the light of this feedback, and carried out an exercise to test the plans.

26.11 An Action Plan on how South East Water is going to improve resilience was also required by the regulator, Ofwat. To date around 40 out of the 61 actions listed in the Action Plan have been completed. The focus of South East Water's work over the next 5 years is to improve resilience to weather events, climate change, and population growth. The Business Plan is available on their website and would welcome the Committee's input on the Business Plan.

#### *Southern Water*

26.12 Joel Hufford, Southern Water, outlined the water supply areas covered by Southern Water. The freeze thaw incident mainly affected Southern Water customers in the Hastings water supply zone (postcode areas TN34 and TN35) and in particular the Fairlight area which had the worst water supply interruption. Across the whole Southern Water supply area (2.3 million people in Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight) 7,700 customers were out of supply for up to 4 hours during the freeze / thaw event, and 2,246 customers were out of supply for up to 3 days.

26.13 The severe weather impacts on the water supply were similar to those experienced by South East Water. There was a rise in bursts on the water supply network and customers premises, although this impacted fewer residents in East Sussex. Southern Water responded to the incident in a similar way by:

- Setting up emergency bottled water distribution points;
- Undertaking bottled water delivery to priority customers;
- Communicating information about the incident and Southern Water's response;
- Working with the SRF and other partners on the incident; and
- Customers were offered automatic compensation based on the length time without a water supply.

26.14 Following the incident, Southern Water has focussed work on increasing resilience for severe weather and other events. They were also required to produce an Action Plan by Ofwat and have fully implemented around half of the actions, with the remainder in progress. Vulnerable customers have been encouraged to sign up to the company's priority services

customers register. Southern Water have held an internal review of the lessons learnt and worked with its Customer Challenge Group, the Consumer Council for Water and Local Resilience Forums to improve their response and emergency plans. They have also conducted research among customers who were affected to gain their insight and use this to make improvements. In future, incident communications will provide clarity on what has gone wrong, and why, when will it be fixed and what customers can do. A full list of actions has been published on the Southern Water web site.

26.15 Longer term, Southern Water is working on key areas under their Business Plan including the 'Target 100' project, which aims to get water usage down from 130 litres to 100 litres per person, per day. Another project 'Network 2030' aims to have a water supply network which is more intelligent. The aim is to have fewer customers out of supply if there is another incident, and Southern Water wants people to have confidence in their response in terms of alternative water supplies and when the supply will be restored.

26.16 The Committee highlight that it is particularly interested in the steps being taken to improve the response to future incidents, including the provision of alternative water supplies, communication with residents, and the support available for vulnerable residents. It observed that communications about the incident were very poor and there was no information on the South East Water web site about what had happened to cause the interruption to the water supply. There was little reliable information on when supplies would be restored and no accurate information on when alternative water supplies would be delivered to distribution centres.

26.17 Douglas Whitfield, South East Water, acknowledged that communications needed to be improved. In the first 48 hours of the incident South East Water was trying to establish what had caused the problems. From the customer point of view communications were not good and in future South East Water will use local organisations and groups to assist with communications. Jo Shippey added that they learnt very quickly throughout the incident and responded by setting up dedicated pages on the South East Water web site. It proved very difficult to give accurate timescales for restoring supplies, as engineers strove to understand the cause of the problems. South East Water accepted that communications needed to be improved and recognise early communication of information to customers is important to them.

26.18 The Team Manager, Emergency Planning commented that a major incident was not declared until Monday so there was a delay in the multi-agency response. This meant resilience groups were not involved early enough to assist the water companies. The Team Manager, Emergency Planning confirmed that when a major incident is declared the Priority Service Register from other utility companies can be shared with the responding organisations. The SRF and partners are looking at how to share information more quickly and store it in standard format. Jo Shippey confirmed South East Water is working with SSE and other utility companies to share data. Both water companies confirmed work is ongoing on this issue, and there is an ongoing communications campaign to get people to sign up to the Register.

26.19 The Committee discussed the relationship between the water companies and the SRF, and asked if there had been sufficient engagement from South East Water with the resilience forum. The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport outlined that the water companies are covered by the Civil Contingencies Act. There is no incentive for them not to engage with other authorities as it is not in their interests to do so. The incident created a difficult set of circumstances for the water companies to deal with. The water companies have the primary responsibility to deal any water supply incident, and the multi-agency partnership role is to facilitate the water companies' response.

26.20 The Committee commented that it was surprised that a major incident was not declared sooner. There is a need to engage with partners sooner as they could have provided assistance with the incident response more rapidly (e.g. in Wealden, the use of showers was offered to

affected residents by Freedom Leisure, the leisure centre operator). The representatives from the water companies re-affirmed that there is a willingness to engage with customers and stakeholders in the resilience forum to deal with incidents and emergency planning.

26.21 The Committee also raised the issue of Water Supply and Drought Plans and whether they have taken into account of the amount of new housing and business space being built in the County. Joel Hufford responded that Southern Water has a 50 year water resources management plan, as does South East Water, which sets out the measures that will be taken to provide adequate supplies of water.

26.22 The Committee asked if the water companies were now better equipped to deal with providing emergency water supplies than previously. Douglas Whitfield confirmed that South East Water are better prepared and hold a much greater stock of bottled water. They are taking greater ownership of the response in first few hours and can bring in vehicles to deploy emergency water supplies. Jo Shippey added that they have also worked with partners to identify better locations for distributing supplies in the event of an incident.

26.23 The Committee asked if the water companies could have done more to anticipate the incident. Douglas Whitfield responded that the water companies were prepared and had emergency plans in place, but were surprised by the temperature swing and the number of burst pipes. It is thought that it is unlikely that these particular set of circumstance will happen again. However, actions are in place to address the failure to anticipate the scale of the impact of the weather event. Both water companies have plans to utilise smart technology for monitoring the water supply networks to anticipate leaks and manage demand.

26.24 The Chair thanked the water company representatives for attending the meeting to speak to the Committee about their concerns.

26.25 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report the report and the water companies' response via their action plans.

## 27 RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR) 2019/20

27.1 The Chair introduced report and outlined that this is the Committee's opportunity to review its input into the RPPR process. The Chief Executive commented that as the Council had just completed the RPPR round and was working toward the State of the County report in July, it was a good point to review the process.

27.2 The Chair asked what benefit there had been from the Place Scrutiny Committee input into the RPPR process, and invited comments from the Lead Members. The Chief Executive commented that in shaping the proposals for activity and budget planning that it was helpful to have the Scrutiny Committee's input on areas of search for savings, desired approach to activity and risk. The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport reminded the Committee of the work it has done historically that has helped shape the savings plans.

27.3 The Lead Members commented that they valued the input from the Scrutiny Committee and understood the Committee's request to have more detail earlier. Information had been shared as soon as it was available with Scrutiny Committees and also through Whole Council Forums. The RPPR process involves all Councillors in the budget setting process, and the activity and savings proposals came forward through this process. The Lead Members noted the Committee's comments on RPPR, but did not perceive there had been any challenge from Scrutiny on the areas of search for savings in the last round.

27.4 The Committee discussed the timing of the RPPR information received by the Committee. It noted that at the September meeting the Committee had the full State of the

County report and the Portfolio Plans with all the departmental budgets and targets. The savings plans were available at the October Cabinet meeting. The Committee considered whether it may be better to move the September meeting to after the Cabinet papers are published, so the Committee can then ask for further information based on the savings plans presented to Cabinet.

27.5 The Chair added the Committee has had real impact where it has early access to the detailed financial information, but this appears to have stopped happening. The way the RPPR process has been presented to the Committee this year has meant the Committee has not been able to make the contribution that it would have liked to have made.

27.6 The Chief Executive responded that the Scrutiny Committee did have the opportunity to request information and offer suggestions for savings. As budgets become tighter the room to manoeuvre is much less, therefore savings options are much more constrained. The approach agreed by full Council in February 2019 included savings plans for the next two years as well as 2019/20 so consideration of those could be made immediately. Scrutiny has had impact through other work and officers are ready to make the information available that Scrutiny requests. It is also possible to look at the timing of Scrutiny meetings if that would be helpful.

27.7 One of the Committee members commented that the RPPR report gave the impression that it was an officer report, when in truth it had been agreed by Cabinet Members. The Lead Member for Transport and Environment responded that the proposals in the report to Cabinet are agreed with Lead Members. The Lead Member for Communities and Safety outlined that there is a dialogue between officers and Lead Members over income and expenditure for the services within their Portfolio. There is always an offer to meet with other councillors to discuss the options available for services.

27.8 The Committee observed that the time between when final budgets are known, and when Full Council has to agree the budget, is very short. This leaves little time for Scrutiny to discuss the budget proposals, whereas Lead Members have regular access to officers. The Chief Executive acknowledged the challenges presented by the timing of central Government confirmation of local authority funding and outlined that officer support is available to all councillors.

27.9 The Chair thanked the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport for his comments and the department's support for scrutiny work.

27.10 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report and examine changing the timing of meetings to take into account the RPPR reports to Cabinet.

## 28 LIBRARIES STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING STRATEGY (LSCS) - IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE REPORT

28.1 The Assistant Director Communities introduced the report. The Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy (LSCS) was agreed as way of making the Library and Information Service (LIS) modern and sustainable. The report details the work that is being undertaken to meet the four strategic outcomes of the Strategy. This has included an enhanced e-Library, community library facilities and outreach work. To date, two community libraries have opened in Langney and Ringmer. The report also details the results of the Public Library User Survey (PLUS), which demonstrate that the LSCS has been successful in maintaining high quality services.

28.2 The Committee welcomed the progress on implementing the LSCS and the opening of the community libraries. The Committee sought clarification on a number of issues and asked a number of questions about the implementation of the Strategy.

- The Committee asked what was delaying the opening of the Ore community library. The Assistant Director Communities outlined that the Libraries Team is working with the Ore Community Association and has approved their request which was received last year. The delay is due to work on the detailed agreement between the Council and the Ore Community Association being finalised. The Assistant Director Communities agreed to circulate an update to the Hastings ESCC local Members.
- It was clarified that no expressions of interest were received regarding the operation of the Mobile Library Service, so the Service has been ceased and the vehicle (which was at the end of its useable life) has been disposed of.
- The Committee noted the shared use of library buildings with the Parking Service and asked if other partners could be invited to share library facilities. The Assistant Director Economy outlined that East Sussex College has been approached about the shared use of facilities.

28.3 The Committee asked how the £500,000 potential savings identified in the Council's MTFP will impact the implementation of the Strategy. The Assistant Director Communities responded that the LSCS is a needs based approach to provide a modern and sustainable library service. The Strategy aims to meet users' needs which are changing all the time, and the Team will review the needs assessment and service offer. Historically the Library Service was demand led and the Team will review whether the strategic outcomes and needs assessment are still being met by the Service. The plan is to carry out the review in 2021.

28.4 The Lead Member for Communities and Safety commented that the library structure would benefit from a Parliamentary review, as the legislation is now over 50 years old. The growth of the e-Library and the electronic access to books and information is now a key way library services are used. It is challenging to provide a modern library service, within the constraints of the existing legislation.

28.5 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- (1) Note how the changes to the Library and Information Service have been introduced and their impact on service users; and
- (2) Endorse the progress that has been made to deliver the Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy.

## 29 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ROAD REPAIRS

29.1 The Chair, who was also Chair of the Review Board, introduced report. The Committee discussed the review and the recommendations of the Review Board. The Committee noted the issues raised in the report and endorsed the recommendations.

29.2 The Committee noted that in relation to recommendation 7, the Council already has the power to ban parking on pavements and verges. However, use in practice can be problematic in terms of enforcement, and can lead to a misunderstanding of the restrictions. There are also residents who use pavements as a parking space, and enforcement will need to be effective if parking bans are to be successful in protecting pavements.

29.3 The Assistant Director Operations responded that the Council can introduce pavement parking bans, but this will need to be through Area Parking Reviews and the use of Traffic Regulation Orders and appropriate signage. The Council can then issue tickets in Civil Parking Enforcement areas, via the parking enforcement contractor.

29.4 The Lead Member for Transport and Environment thanked the Committee for the report and the work put into the review. There are challenges in implementing the recommendations in the report, but all the recommendations will be addressed.

29.5 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) Agree the report of the Review Board; and
- 2) Make recommendations to Cabinet for comment, and Full Council for approval.

### 30 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS

30.1 The Chair of the Review Board, introduced the report. He thanked the officers and other Board members for their work on the review. He outlined that the officers in Planning, Development Control and Transport Planning were very helpful in pulling together the information and evidence required for the review. It was highlighted that although there will be time costs involved in implementing the recommendations of the review, there are no additional budgetary requirements.

30.2 The other Review Board members added that officers were very helpful and engaged with the review. In terms of the recommendations, it became apparent during the course of the review that the information about creating a School Travel Plan had slipped off C-zone (the support for schools web site), which will be addressed. Other recommendations deal with the need for schools and others to monitor School Travel Plans, as well as providing support for their preparation.

30.3 The Assistant Director, Economy commented that it was helpful to have pragmatic recommendations and welcomed the review. He added that officers are happy to accept all the recommendations and they will be addressed through the department's response and action plan.

30.4 The Chair thanked the members of the Review Board and officers for their work on the review.

30.5 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) Agree the report of the Review Board; and
- 2) Make recommendations to Cabinet for comment, and Full Council for approval.

### 31 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - PRESENTATION

31.1 The Lead Member for Economy introduced a presentation on the activity being undertaken to improve the economy, infrastructure and skills in East Sussex. One of the main challenges for local businesses now is being able to employ people with the right skills. Since 2014 the Economic Development Team has raised £557m for investment in East Sussex, and without ESCC involvement this money is unlikely to have been raised. The presentation will demonstrate the impact this investment has made.

31.2 The Assistant Director Economy outlined that infrastructure, skills, and business support are the main areas of focus for the work of the Economic Development Team. However, culture and creative industries, as well as visitor services, are becoming increasingly important. Business growth helps the local economy grow, individuals realise their potential, and helps increase the resilience of communities.



## Infrastructure

31.3 In terms of infrastructure, the Team work to influence strategic road and rail investment as well as enabling the development and delivery of infrastructure projects such as:

- Newhaven flood defences to support the creation of employment space;
- The construction of road infrastructure which has opened up land for housing and employment space such as Combe Valley Way (Bexhill link road), North Bexhill Access Road (which is now open), and the Newhaven Port Access Road;
- Superfast Broadband project which aims to get 99% coverage for superfast broadband throughout the County, to support the digital economy and rural businesses.

31.4 Examples of other infrastructure projects the Team are working on include the strategic investment in the upgrade of the section of the A27 between Lewes and Polegate, and High Speed 1 (HS1) to provide high speed rail access to Hastings, Bexhill and onwards to Eastbourne. Work has also been undertaken on the Major Route Network (MRN) which provides an opportunity to bid for money to upgrade key principal roads in East Sussex.

31.5 The Team has secured £2.8m to build out the North Bexhill Enterprise Park and the North East Bexhill Gateway Road has enabled more development after opening 18 months ago. Projects have been undertaken to regenerate Town Centres including Eastbourne, Hailsham and Uckfield, with activity also planned in the Bexhill and Hastings areas. There have also been improvements in walking, cycling and public transport through the Local Transport capital programme.

## Skills

31.6 The skills work is delivered through Skills East Sussex which is a board of local employers and colleges in East Sussex. It has established six sector task groups to ensure the curriculum is tailored to address the skills needed locally and in the local economy. All schools now have business advisors to help link schools to enterprise and running your own business if that is a career option students wish to pursue. This area of work also involves working with careers advisers and Children's Services on the Open Doors project which has helped 400 young people work with 40 local businesses.

## Business Support and Finance

31.7 Business Support work has involved the establishment of Business East Sussex which is one stop shop for business support and advice. Locate East Sussex is the inward investment provider and advisor for the County. Other business support activity includes the South East Creative Cultural and Digital business support programme and the Scale Up Pilots.

31.8 The work on Business Finance includes:

- East Sussex Invest which provides business finance via grants or loans to enable businesses to expand. This programme has created 800 direct jobs and 500 indirect jobs.
- Investing in new business workspaces such as Glovers House, Bexhill; Havelock Place, Hastings; Pine Grove, Crowborough; Pacific House, Eastbourne; Eastside, Newhaven.

## Cultural and Creative industries

31.9 The Assistant Director Economy outlined that 3,000 out of 25,000 businesses in East Sussex are in the cultural and creative sector. The focus of the work in this area is on the working environment and on using culture for cross cutting priorities. Projects include the Devonshire Quarter in Eastbourne, the development of workspaces across the County and collaboration with Public Health to increase cultural activity which supports health and wellbeing.

## Visitor Economy

31.10 This sector has grown by 25% since 2005 and supports 47,000 jobs (1 in 4), in around 180 visitor attractions. Work in this area involves regional work to produce and promote a menu of things to come and see and then stay in East Sussex, with the aim of supporting and boosting the visitor economy.

## Partnerships and Funding

31.11 The Partnership work of the Team is divided into two areas of activity;

- At the strategic influencing level through partnerships such as Transport for the South East (TfSE), South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and Team East Sussex; and
- At the delivery level through partnerships with Sea Change Sussex, and Borough and District Councils.

31.12 Funding work has included:

- Influencing other's investment programmes (Highway England, Network Rail etc.);
- Securing Government funding through a pipeline of projects;
- Securing regional funding through the Local Enterprise Partnership – over £110m of funds secured since 2014;
- European Union Funding; and
- Community Infrastructure levy (CIL) funding.

## Performance

31.13 The Assistant Director Economy summarised the change in the performance indicators for the local economy as a result of some of the work of the Economic Development Team:

- Gross Value Added or GVA has gone up 23% since 2012, up 3% since 2016 and was £10.7bn+ in 2017.
- GVA/head £19,348 up 24% since 2007.
- Economically Active - 74% of residents are in employment (2017-18) compared to 71% (2012-13).
- Business growth: Number of active businesses up to a record 24,170 in 2017 – up 11% since 2012.
- Business survival rates after 5 years: 47% survived since 2012 higher than the national average.
- Percentage of people qualified to at least Level 4 = 37.9% in 2017 - up 7% from 2015
- Visitor economy grown 25% since 2011.

## Summary

31.14 The Assistant Director Economy outlined that there has been lots of good progress, and Economic Development remains a key priority for ESCC. The Brexit process has created a degree of uncertainty, but East Sussex is well placed to continue its economic growth.

3.15 The Lead Member for Economy commented that he had previously observed that East Sussex students go off to university and do not come back. Now East Sussex has some innovative companies that are thriving and employing local people. There is a collaborative harmony in regenerating East Sussex. The performance figures since 2014 are very strong, with major projects in the pipeline which will have a big impact on economy (e.g. HS1 and upgrade of the A27). Skills are particularly important and the engagement of the business community in steering the curriculum offer has been hugely beneficial.

## Feedback and Questions from the Committee

31.16 The Committee commented that it was pleased with the progress that had been made and the benefit to local people that had been achieved. The Committee noted that in some parts of the County more employment opportunities were still needed, and asked which areas the six sector task groups covered. The Assistant Director Economy clarified that the six sector task groups mentioned in the presentation are:

- Construction
- Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing
- Creative and Digital
- Land Based Industries
- Health and Social Care
- Visitor Economy

31.17 Members of the Committee commented that from their experience, business improvement is evident in terms of the demand for business space and the infrastructure improvements that have been delivered. However, what appears to be holding businesses back is a skills shortage. The Assistant Director Economy acknowledged the focus has shifted to skills, rather than infrastructure, now that improvements in transport and employment space have been achieved.

31.18 The Committee asked what the impact would be if it was possible to double the amount of investment in economic development. The Assistant Director Economy responded that it is difficult to judge what the impact might be, but it may not simply be a doubling of the benefits. The revenue cost for service is low, but the capital cost is high. So if it was possible to double the amount of capital it would have a greater impact and would lead to significant benefits, compared with an increase in the amount of revenue.

31.19 One of the Committee members commented that there is higher unemployment in the Hastings area and there is a shortage of social housing. The closure of the University campus in Hastings has been disappointing for the local community and it would be helpful for local Members to have an update on what is happening with the vacant buildings.

31.20 The Lead Member for Economy responded that the East Sussex College had taken over some of the university courses and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) had moved into some of the vacant buildings. The building that the DWP has vacated can now be let as more employment space. The HS1 rail upgrade is very important to the East Sussex economy and the Lead Member is very determined that this investment will be achieved.

31.21 The Committee noted that the Newhaven local economy is more orientated towards Brighton and is part of the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership. It was questioned whether ESCC would prefer the Newhaven area to be aligned with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). The Assistant Director Economy outlined that Government had started a review of the LEP areas. The ESCC view is that it would be better not to split the County up between two LEP's. Therefore there has been an agreement with both the LEP's that there will be a two year transition period and then those areas in East Sussex that are in the Coast to Capital area will transfer to SELEP.

31.22 The Committee noted the small business start-up survival rate of 47% after 5 years, and asked if this is the sort of level the Economic Development Team expected. The Committee also asked how the various programmes benefitted the rural economy. The Assistant Director Economy responded that the fact that East Sussex has higher survival rates for small business new start-ups indicates that business support is effective. It also means that the local economy is more resilient as there is less reliance on a few large employers.

31.23 In terms of the rural economy, it is difficult to separate the impacts of the programmes between urban and rural settings. Some programmes such as the Broadband project and the Land Based skills sector work will particularly benefit rural areas (e.g. wine producing). The Team will support rural business where there are requests for support. It was noted that most producers would like a platform to sell produce more widely (i.e. produce locally but sell globally). The Lead Member for Economy added that there has also been investment in bottling plants and breweries that support the rural economy.

31.24 It was clarified that the A27 improvement referred to is the construction of a new (off line) dual carriageway, and not the already approved small scale improvements. The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport confirmed that the small scale improvements will not negate the case for a new road. Some of the small scale improvements will provide benefits in the short term, whilst the case for dualling of the road is considered. ESCC has been consistently clear that an off line, dual carriageway solution is the best option to relieve congestion on this stretch of road and improve the road transport infrastructure in the area. Highways England is currently working on the business case to present to the Department for Transport. The Lead Member for Economy added that ESCC will work with all strategic partners to bring about one of the best investments in East Sussex.

## 32 WORK PROGRAMME

32.1 The Committee discussed the work programme and noted the recommendation of the Scoping Board on the potential scrutiny review of Property and the SPACES programme. It was agreed not to proceed with a scrutiny review, but to have a report on Property and SPACES, preferably at the June Place Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Chief Finance Officer will confirm the timing of the report with the Chief Operating Officer.

32.2 The Committee discussed the proposal to conduct a scrutiny review of Orbis and in particular the way in which the proposed savings will be achieved. It was noted that this is a wide subject area and it was suggested that an initial small group of Committee members meet with officers to explore the scope of the potential scrutiny review. It was agreed that the Senior Democratic Services Advisor will arrange an initial meeting with a Scoping Board comprised of Councillors Martin Clarke, Nigel Enever and Claire Dowling.

32.3 The Committee had discussed the possibility of undertaking some work to look at the work of the Coroner's Service. It was agreed that the Senior Democratic Services Advisor will explore potential lines of enquiry and establishing a Scoping Board with Councillor Godfrey Daniel and other Committee members.

32.4 The Chair suggested that the Rural Economy may make a good topic for further scrutiny work. The Assistant Director Economy responded that most of East Sussex is considered to be rural by the Office for National Statistics, with the exception of two towns. Therefore it may be difficult to conduct a review with such a focus, bearing in mind the difficulty of separating the impacts of economic development programmes between urban and rural areas. The Assistant Director Economy will discuss this topic with the Chair outside of the meeting.

32.5 The Committee RESOLVED to amend the work programme in line with paragraphs 32.1, 32.2 and 32.3 above.

The meeting ended at 13.00.

Councillor Richard Stogdon (Chair)  
Chair