

Monday 4 September 2006
at 6pm



Scrutiny Committee

MEMBERSHIP:-

Councillor Mrs BANNISTER (Chairman) Councillor MARSDEN (Deputy Chairman),
Councillors LACEY O.B.E, TESTER, TAYLOR, WARNER and Miss WOODALL.

8 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2006.

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2006 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

9 Declarations of Interest.

None

10 Airbourne Task Group – Final Report.

The committee considered the report of the Airbourne Task Group, informing the committee on the outcome of a review into the true value of Airbourne to both the town and Eastbourne Borough Council, including how the event was perceived.

Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5 July 2005 agreed to set up a scrutiny task group in order to establish the true value of Airbourne to both the Town and to the Council, comprising Councillor Belsey and Slater with the Assistant Director – Economy Tourism and Planning and Events Officer providing the Lead Officer roles.

Members were provided with copies of the last three Airbourne visitor research reports and in addition, members agreed that all stakeholders would be invited to make a presentation. Also circulated amongst the task group was a copy of a Brighton University student's research, detailing impact of the Airshow on local residents. The list of representative stakeholders was detailed at Appendix 3. Letters were sent to the list of representatives inviting them to attend, and a list of key questions was included in order that they could prepare the relevant information. Key questions list attached in Appendix 2.

The forum took place on 26 January. Not all invitees attended, so in order to gather as much information as possible from various groups in support of and against Airbourne, and Members agreed that a second meeting should

be held. Appendix 5 to the report contained minuted notes and copies of all presentations and written responses.

As part of the review members also agreed to invite responses from the general public, in order to ascertain the views of the 'silent majority'. A short questionnaire was published on the Eastbourne Borough Council website which allowed members of the public to submit their views online. An invitation to take part in this online consultation was emailed to the subscribers of 'Friends of Airbourne' (a database of people interested in the latest news about the airshow. Over 200 emailed responses were received from the general public, which was the highest number of responses for an online questionnaire for a Scrutiny Review in Eastbourne. A synopsis of the public's views was attached at appendix 4 to the report.

Mr Gross addressed the committee regarding the estimated figures of attendance contained within the report, and reiterated his concerns as stated within appendix 5 of the report.

Councillors Belsey and Slater were in attendance to present the report to Committee, and thanked all those who took part for their efforts and contributed to this important review.

Members agreed that although the figures contained within the report were estimated it was appropriate to say that those that attended could gauge the sheer volume of people in attendance at Airbourne.

Councillor Lacey stated that the Police had a method of estimating numbers in attendance at Airbourne which could perhaps be used to give an indication of people attending. Councillor Lacey also felt that Airbourne put Eastbourne 'on the map' as did the Tennis event, and one of the Council's aims was to ensure a rolling programme of events throughout the year. Airbourne brought great advertising value to Eastbourne and with the train service now running between Eastbourne and Ashford there was potential for accessing and attracting the European market. Airbourne supported the RAF and was a great way for the RAF to recruit and the Red Arrows were a major attraction; in conclusion Councillor Lacey supported the continuation of Airbourne.

Councillor Marsden thanked the Events Team for their efforts, and agreed that a method for verifying numbers attending the Airbourne event should be sought.

Councillor Warner thanked Officers, Councillors and stakeholders that took part in the Review, and highlighted the rallying and support of local businesses in raising sponsorship funds for this year's event following the loss of sponsorship by CSMA.

Councillor Woodall agreed that the event was noisy although it was only at certain times during the four-day event.

Councillor Taylor agreed that a method of verifying the numbers attending the events should be sought and proposed that this should be added as a recommendation of the Review Team.

Councillor Tester stated that the Environmental impact of Airbourne was important, and felt that the Task Group had reached their decision to continue the event based on sound evidence. Councillor Tester agreed that monitoring the numbers attending was necessary. Councillor Tester also highlighted the change in the perception of Eastbourne by visitors which was detailed in the report.

The Assistant Director – Economy Tourism and Planning advised the Committee that the event was attended by thousands of people who brought millions of pounds to the town. The Council recognised the importance of the environmental issues raised and had taken steps by engaging over the last two years with the local rail network to encourage use of the railways as a preferred mode of transport. Car use was down from 70% 2003 to 65% in 2005, there had been the introduction of park and ride schemes (Five Acre Field – St Andrews) to reduce the volume of cars in the town and consequent congestion, and in addition the introduction of additional parking to reduce unwanted / unneeded journeys. The Council was working in partnership with Sussex Police in removing illegally parked vehicles to ensure free flowing traffic. In addition the true value of the event was not only measured by the tangible economic drivers such as the evidence provided but also in the non tangible elements. Airbourne was not just an event it was an education from WW II planes such as the Spitfire / Hurricane and the part they played alongside the brave individuals who fought for freedom and changed the history of the world to the modern F16 / Mirage jets and the advancements in science and technology. The visitor base of the event catered for people of all classes, as the air displays were free to watch and accessible to all regardless of income, ability, status. Additionally it helped unite families and crosses the generations from grandparents to grandchildren.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet be advised that the Scrutiny Committee supports the recommendations of the Task Group; subject to the addition of recommendation (e), which were:

- (a) Airbourne is a positive benefit to Eastbourne and the South East region and should therefore continue
- (b) Eastbourne Borough Council continue to run the event unless a successful alternative is found
- (c) Attention should be given to feedback from the general public and ways should be found of measuring and minimising negative impact
- (d) That this scrutiny review is carried out on a three yearly cycle in order to review the value of the event
- (e) That a method of verifying the number of people attending the Airbourne event be sought.

11 Coaching Industry Task Group.

The Committee were advised that the final report for the Coaching industry Task Group would be presented to the Chair and Deputy Chair at their next

meeting on 27 September 2006. The final reporting date had been delayed due to workload and officer time available to compile the report. Members were also advised that the final report would be presented to the committee on 4 December 2006.

NOTED.

12 Quarter 1 Performance Indicators- 2006/07.

The report was submitted to Members on 4 August 2006. No questions were received; therefore the next report for Performance Indicators was due to be distributed to Members on 6 November 2006, in time for the next Committee meeting on 4 December 2006.

Note: Members will be requested to submit questions regarding the Performance Indicators to the Scrutiny Co-ordinator by 20 November 2006.

NOTED.

13 Eastbourne Park Management Plan.

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Economy, Tourism and Planning informing Members of the background to the preparation of the latest draft of the Eastbourne Park Management Plan.

Members were advised that the Landscape Group at East Sussex County Council were commissioned by the Borough Council to write a Management Plan for Eastbourne Park which would also include a Water Level Management Plan. Stakeholder consultation on the draft Plan took place in September 2004 and as a result of the representations received, the Plan was amended and further consultation was undertaken in July and August 2005 with landowners, public and private stakeholders and interested organisations.

The Plan had been further revised having regard to the representations received and to ensure the document complied with the adopted Eastbourne Borough Plan 2001-2011.

Members noted that the latest version of the Management Plan was to be the subject of a further five week consultation period in August/September of this year. The consultation method was detailed within the report.

Representations received and any modifications proposed to the Plan would be reported back to Members of Cabinet and the Planning Committee at their meetings in December. At which time, authority would be sought to adopt the document.

The revised draft of the Eastbourne Park Management Plan (incorporating the Water Level Management Plan) (August 2006) sought to ensure that the flood mitigation scheme, the nature conservation and archaeological assets were protected and maintained. It would also provide the framework for managing future changes to the area.

The boundary of the Draft Management Plan was shown to the Committee and this was consistent with the Adopted Borough Plan. Members discussed the proposed road links detailed in the Borough Plan and agreed that of the three proposed, the St Anthony's link was the most important as it would improve the infrastructure of Eastbourne, increase Housing and employment land and ease congestion. Members noted that this was not the primary purpose of the Eastbourne Park Management Plan, however Members felt that additional text expressing their views should be incorporated into the Core Strategy due to be reported to Cabinet in October 2006.

NOTED.

14 Planning Peer Review.

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Economy, Tourism and Planning updating Members on the progress with the Planning Peer Review and seeking input into the Draft Planning Improvement Plan.

Members were advised that on the last day of the visit the assessors gave a presentation of the initial feedback on their findings. The report had used that feedback, together with the self assessment, to prepare a draft improvement plan for The Service. At the time of writing, the report from PAS and I&DeA had not been finalised.

Members noted that the process of self-assessing the Planning Service had been a positive experience. Staff had been judged by an external peer group and found to be performing well in a wide range of key areas and still improving. The experience had identified other areas where the Council could continue to improve The Service and the methods of improvement had been encapsulated in the Draft Improvement Plan.

Members particularly agreed the need for a Conservation Officer and improvements to Member site visits. Members also discussed the monitoring of complaints and how this would be achieved.

Members noted that their comments would be incorporated into the Draft Plan and that Cabinet would be asked to endorse the actions for implementation.

NOTED.

The meeting finished at 7.25 p.m.

**Councillor Mrs Bannister
Chairman**