

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Council-Owned Neighbourhood Parades Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday, 8 December 2020 at 6.30 pm

Councillors Present:

R A Lanzer (Chair)

M L Ayling, T Lunnon and D M Peck

Officers Present:

Sue Bader	Asset Manager
Heather Girling	Democratic Services Officer
Karen Hayes	Head of Corporate Finance
Jess Tamplin	Democratic Services Support Officer

Announcements

Councillor Guidera had decided that, due to his involvement and associations with Tilgate parade, he had a prejudicial conflicting interest in becoming a member of the Panel. He had decided to step down and there was therefore a vacant seat on the Panel. The vacancy would be filled before the next meeting.

1. Disclosures of Interest & Whipping Declarations

No disclosures of interest or whipping declarations were made.

2. Introduction to the Review: Setting the Scoping Framework and Timescales

The Chair gave an introduction to the review and summarised the information set out in the draft scoping framework. It was explained that the Panel would explore how effectively the Council's policies (namely the Property Strategy, 2004) support the 11 neighbourhood parades to meet their objectives of being both community assets to local residents and property assets to the Council. The Chair clarified that the Panel was not limited to the evaluation of rental rates, but had a wide scope which may include evaluation of such matters as:

- The various types of units/usages of shops on the parades
- The public footfall – and how this can be maintained or increased
- The current maintenance agreement between tenants and the Council
- The effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on the parade shops.

Panel members gave their thanks to the officers involved in compiling a detailed and thorough report ([FIN/499](#)) regarding the parades, which had been considered by the

Overview and Scrutiny Commission in June 2020. It was agreed that the report would assist the Panel's considerations and provided substantial background information.

The Panel expressed support for the notion of the parades being community assets, and discussed the need to ensure they continue to be meeting places for local people and to facilitate successful local businesses.

The Chair suggested, with agreement from Panel members, that a broad consultation should occur with local people via web surveys and the usage of community noticeboards. As part of the consultation process it was agreed that a witness session would be arranged with a relevant officer or councillor from a Council with a similar 'new town' nature and neighbourhood structure to Crawley. This would give an insight to neighbourhood parade strategies and objectives elsewhere. A further witness session was agreed with members of Crawley Borough Council's Community Services team to provide information on the public perception that there were crime and safety concerns at the parades. It was also suggested that Sussex Police could be consulted regarding this.

Officers answered a query regarding vacant units on the parades throughout Crawley, of which there were currently three (two of which were under offer, and the third was undergoing essential maintenance works). It was explained that interest in rental of the units was high and that usually the duration for which a unit was empty was due to the unit undergoing repairs.

Following a question from a Panel member regarding the rate of rent arrears, the Asset Manager noted that arrears were relatively high and had been exacerbated due to the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic. It was heard that payment plans were in place to recover arrears and tenants were working with the Council to assist with this. The Panel agreed that its considerations should also have regard to the financial position of the Council in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Officers gave details of Government business grants which were currently available for certain businesses, which may include those on the parades. Information was available on the Council's website and it was agreed that councillors would be contacted immediately to distribute this information to ward residents.

A recorded vote was taken to agree the scoping framework (as amended) in accordance with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules. The names of the councillors voting for and against the recommendation, along with any abstentions, were recorded as follows:

For:
Councillors Ayling, Lanzer, Lunnon, and Peck (4).

Against:
None.

Abstentions:
None.

RESOLVED

That the scoping framework be agreed (subject to amendments to incorporate the above suggestions).

3. Dates of Future Meetings

With the scoping framework agreed, Panel members considered it appropriate to agree the dates of the next two meetings of the Panel. The dates were confirmed as:

Tuesday 2 February 2021 at 6:30pm,
Thursday 11 March 2021 at 6:30pm.

It was agreed that the Panel would agree the dates of any further meetings at its meeting on 11 March.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Council-Owned Neighbourhood Parades Scrutiny Panel concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.04 pm

R A Lanzer (Chair)