

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Tuesday 17 November 2020 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber, Committee Rooms One and Two

Present:

Axam, Davies, Dorn, Drage, Farmer, Lamb, Makepeace-Browne, Smith, Tomlinson (substitute for Wright), Wildsmith and Worlock (Chairman)

In attendance:

Officers: Foy, Grist, Hughes, Jaggard, Phillips, Whittaker and Wood

51 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 10 October 2020 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Wright, substituted by Councillor Tomlinson.

53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

54 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)

None.

55 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman brought to the attention of the Committee Members a recent communication regarding an Overview and Scrutiny mid-year review and a request for any suggestions they may have for agenda items.

56 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

The Chairman proposed that an interface between the Climate Change Working Group and O&S for feedback be added to the O&S Work Programme at the next meeting.

That the Minutes from the meeting held on 8 October 2020 be noted.

57 CRIME AND DISORDER JOINT COMMITTEE

There was a query on accuracy of the minutes regarding the record of attendance for the Commander of the Aldershot Garrison and Kirsty Jenkins from Hart. Neither were present at the meeting.

Minutes from the meeting held on 21 September 2020 were noted and an oral update from the Head of Community Services on the progression of the transition of the Community Safety Team back to Hart was requested for the next O&S meeting.

58 FLOODING MULTI-AGENCIES MEETING

Members were asked to consider how the parish flooding meetings could be structured in a way that would allow them to be held in a virtual format. Any suggestions to be forwarded to the Chair for a subsequent discussion.

Minutes from the meeting held on 12 October 2020 were noted.

59 FLEET ROAD PEDESTRIANISATION UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder for Place & Economic Development gave an oral update to confirm the decision to seek the removal of the Fleet Road pedestrianisation scheme (Executive Decision attached).

Members commented on the potential for future consultation should a similar scheme be proposed in the future. It was agreed that the cost associated with the Scheme both for its implementation, and removal to be circulated to all Members.

Councillor Cockarill asked for a note of thanks to the Hampshire Highways Team be recorded on the minutes for their quick and helpful responses.

60 NATIONAL COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS FROM 5 NOVEMBER 2020

The Joint Chief Executive gave an oral update to Committee on the implications for the delivery of Council services from 5 November 2020 arising from the new national COVID-19 restrictions. It was highlighted that essentially the Council was better prepared to face the current 'lock-down' challenge and conventional decision making was likely to be maintained unless there was an absolute emergency. In the meantime the two new grant schemes will soon be available:

- Local Restrictions Support Grant - for businesses that are legally obliged to close as a result of the national restrictions. (Businesses that would have closed but have chosen to change their business to provide takeaway, click and collect or online with delivery services will be counted as closed).

- Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG) - not yet open - a discretionary grant scheme to help those businesses who are not legally obliged to close but who may have been severely impacted by the lockdown. Officers are currently reviewing the government guidance setting out the support available through the ARG as daily advice is still being issued by the Government on how it should be implemented.

Members discussed:

Could updates on any emergency decisions be circulated to all Members as they are made?

When could local businesses expect funds from grants to arrive in their accounts and were assured that regular updates will be sent albeit that the Government was still issuing advice on how the respective schemes were to be administered. Therefore, no firm date/timetable could be set at this time.

The redistribution of resources by moving Hart Officers around to fill gaps in the service over the pandemic period which may result in some delay in response times. Members were asked to prioritise enquiries to Officers through the use of the councillor enquiries email address and to recognise that in this prolonged period of uncertainty everyone's well-being was important.

Thanks, were expressed to all the Officers continuing to work throughout another lockdown to continue to maintain the delivery of an excellent level of service despite the difficulties and restrictions.

61 COMMERCIALISATION STRATEGY PRESENTATION (DIGITALISATION)

The Digitalisation Portfolio Holder and Digital Manager gave a presentation.

Members considered the following issues:

- The impending launch of Mod.Gov (digitalisation of the Committee Services).
- Reduced costs involved in the production of papers and how this can be measured for future updates.
- How the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the move to working remotely and for improved digital platforms. In line with this, the support the Council can give to staff to work from home will form part of the Revitalise Hart Programme.
- What levels of assistance and/or up to date devices Members may require for the digitalisation changes. Email to be sent out to all Members inviting feedback.

Members thanked the Portfolio Holder and Digital Manager for their comprehensive update.

62 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE ACTION PLAN

Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Working Group on the Planning Peer Review reported back on the final version of the Development Management Service Action Plan.

Members discussed:

- That the exercise was invaluable and worked very well with the right mix of Councillors and Officers.
- The group recognised the actions from the Peer Review and tried to group those accordingly with action plans against those.
- Recognition that organisationally and culturally change is required in the areas came across in the review.
- One outstanding action remains to finish off performance measures.

DECISION

That the Final Peer Review Action Plan be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

63 HALF YEARLY REVIEW ON TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2020/21

Members considered the Council's treasury management activities and performance during the first half of the 2020/21 financial year (April-September).

The S151 Officer clarified some points on:

- Members workshops will be running on 3rd and 8th December to get a better understanding of what treasury management is and understand the different options available to us not yet explored.
- There is confidence that Hart will achieve the £200K forecast based on what is due to mature in the second half of the year.
- The numbers used to calculate the Capital financing requirements come from the approved capital budget each February.
- The capital finance figures to be emailed to Members.

DECISION

That the report be noted and the Committee's observations be considered by Cabinet.

64 2021/22 BUDGET & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Members were given an early consideration of the emerging budget for 2021/22 and the draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Members considered:

The Strategy assumes that if the new homes bonus is in place the Council can balance the budget with an assumed £5.00 Council Tax increase, keeping fees and charges as they are. If there are any further issues or shocks that will be a challenge to the Council's Financial Strategy.

The MTFS will remain prudent until further funding information is available from Central Government.

An appendix to the document with a breakdown of other budget pressures will be prepared for Cabinet for greater clarity.

(Councillor Makepeace-Browne left at 9.11pm during this item)

The Joint Chief Executive confirmed the point that the Edenbrook development would provide income to the Council by way of affordable market rent.

DECISION

That the issues around the emerging budget for 2021/22 and MTFS be noted.

65 IT SECURITY AND ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Members were asked to consider the Policy and recommend to Cabinet that it be adopted.

A quick guide to make the policy guidance easier to follow will be submitted to Cabinet as Appendix 1 on the back of the document.

DECISION

That the report be noted and the Committee's observations be considered by Cabinet.

66 2020/21 BUDGET MONITORING - TO END OF SEPTEMBER

Members were advised of the position on revenue and capital expenditure at the end of September before consideration by Cabinet.

Members noted:

An updated position statement will be brought to the next O&S Committee to make Members aware of some of the additional challenges the Council has faced this year as a result of Covid-19 which are not reflected in this statement.

A question was raised around the ongoing Leisure Centre arrangement and it was confirmed that the report does not include revised figures relating to a second lockdown.

A breakdown of budget pressures for 2021/2022 to be provided by the Head of Corporate Services.

DECISION

1. That the revised projections and reasons for the main revenue variations be noted.
2. That the current spending position for Capital be noted.

67 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2020/21

The Committee was updated on the Council's performance indicator results for the second quarter of 2020/2021 (1 July 2020 – 30 September 2020).

DECISION

That the information be noted.

68 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was considered and noted.

69 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was considered and amended as follows:

- Financial updated statement to be added in December
- Discussion on Member training in December or January.
- Update on business grants.

The meeting closed at 9.28 pm