

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Tuesday 15 December 2020 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices

Present:

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

In attendance: Cockarill, Forster and Radley

Officers: Elson, Hughes, Jenkins, Phillips, Foy, Jaggard, Vincent and Summersell

70 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 17 November 2020 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

71 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

72 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Farmer declared an interest to Item 83 as he is the Chairman of the Hart Swimming Club. Councillor Forster declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 79 regarding his involvement with an EV charging company.

73 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced to Committee Members that the Overview and Scrutiny mid-year review will be held on Wednesday 6 January 2021 at 5.30pm to 6.15pm with an agenda to follow shortly.

74 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)

None.

75 SERVICE PERFORMANCE - HEADS OF SERVICE ATTENDANCE

The Head of Place, Mark Jaggard, attended to discuss service performance across Business Support & Facilities Management, Development Management & Building Control, Environmental Health & Licensing and Planning Policy & Economic Development.

Members were informed of the following:

- COVID safe offices.
- Roll out of equipment and furniture for home working.

- Improved system for virtual meetings and Web Casting.
- Service Targets and Planning performances have been reported in time with major sites being approved.
- Improving the pre-application service.
- Environmental Health issues with fly tipping and bonfires.
- First virtual licensing hearing and committee were held in November.
- Planning white paper implications.
- Economic recovery report commissioned and received.

Members considered:

- Who the local developers were who challenged the Local Plan and the Hook Neighbourhood Plan.
- Longer consultation periods given for taxi businesses and regulations to operate.
- Changing how we reach out to members of the Community to respond to consultations.
- Wider feedback for DM Service and peer review and setting up an Agent's forum.
- An automated response for end of process application rating service delivery.
- Annual survey for feedback from residents for received quality of service.

Members asked for:

- Further work to redefine the measures and performance of activities of the Working Group by March 2021.
- A summary of the work covered by the Place service.
- What the headcount change has been in the last 12 months.
- A list of stakeholders from the Stakeholder Forum for the Garden Village Programme which includes all Parish Councils and some Community Groups.

Members thanked Mr Jaggard for the comprehensive information.

76 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

The Head of Place provided an update on setting a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule in Hart.

Following the meeting in July 2020, work has commenced on the CIL charges and since then, the Government has changed the Used Classes Order. Further clarity of the project plan and the key stages will run for approximately 18 months for completion in July/August 2022.

Members discussed:

- Cost implications to be funded through CIL receipts.
- CIL can be used for Local Plan requirements.
- Planning Inspectorate is quickest and cheapest and most beneficial.
- Change of Used Class Charge brought in to aid the High Street.
- Consultations will help with Infrastructure requirements and costs.

- Viability schemes, profit levels and level of CIL will be in respect of our value in our infrastructure.
- Infrastructure funding statement will be finalised in January 2021.

It was agreed that Overview & Scrutiny Committee will continue to consider the draft CIL charging schedule prior planned public consultations mid-year 2021.

DECISION

That the report be noted.

77 COMMUNITY SAFETY TRANSITION

The Head of Community updated Members on the transition of the shared Community Safety Service which came back to Hart in October. The Council recruited two Officers whose priority has been promoting and making visible the new in-house service. The transition has been better than expected and some elements of the joint Community Safety work will remain.

The Community Safety Partnership continues to be shared across the 3 boroughs and will meet quarterly. The local authorities are one of the partners and others include the Police, Fire, Clinical Commissioning Group and the military.

DECISION

Members requested targets and budgets to be brought back to Overview & Scrutiny through a framework of costings within the Community Service Plan target in April 2021.

78 CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE

Councillor Axam updated the Committee on the progression of the scrutiny work of this joint Committee.

He informed Members that as a shared service it was formally dissolved in October 2020 and at the last meeting, it was agreed, despite this development, that the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) would continue to operate and exist. The idea behind the CSP is commendable but sadly, as reflected through the minutes, with a number of partners not being represented most notably HCC it is failing to produce a return. As mentioned in the minutes of the last meeting, the data on which the committee comments are out of date and has no relevance in terms of influencing current issues within individual authorities.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Axam for the update and agreed to pass on any suggestions for improvement direct to the Officers.

79 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

The Sustainability Officer gave an update on the interface between the Climate Change Working Group and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and explained the changed action plan, work programme and delivery times of the working group which had been delayed by 6 months due to COVID restrictions.

Members discussed:

- Setting up a staff working group to push forward delivery of the Action Plan.
- Delays in demands on tree officers for tree survey.
- Progression with sustainable transport for staff.
- Grant funding to promote green home grants.
- EV charging points in car parks.
- The Portfolio Holder to update the Committee on the progressing strategies and bring to Committee in January.

80 COVID-19 PANDEMIC UPDATE

The Joint Chief Executive updated the Committee on the implications for the delivery of Council services arising from the new national COVID-19 Lockdown 2.0.

The Committee were updated on:

- The Council's work with Leisure Centre funding and the short timescale financial settlements available.
- Vaccination commencement at sites in our district for the most vulnerable.
- Wet Pub funding and Tier 2 funding.
- Meetings with voluntary groups and Christmas Plans taking place this week.
- Emergency contacts and guidance has been published on our website of services available over Christmas.

Members thanked the Joint Chief Executive for the regular updates with the fast paced changes.

81 CONFIDENTIALITY OF INTERNAL COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS

The Joint Chief Executive provided Members and Officers with an update on the approach to confidentiality with respect to internal communications within the Council.

Members were advised of:

- The new traffic light system being the most effective and simplest approach for levels of confidentiality.
- The default is green for all information which can be shared.
- Amber is for information within the council only and not to be shared outside of the Council.

- Red which will be clearly marked as Confidentiality.
- Working groups have parts that are limited to public domain which needs to be more visible.
- Member briefings will be open unless otherwise stated.

Members discussed:

- Updated confidential information should be relevant to live issues.
- Scale of confidentiality can be contended.
- Colour coding ragging to be written for clear visibility.
- A Policy Statement will be circulated to all Councillors and Officers to set out guidelines and Members asked for a review of the wording at 4.1 regarding the commendation of printing amber coded material.

Councillors Dorn and Forster were thanked for their assistance with this report.

DECISION

That the report be noted.

82 2020-21 BUDGET MONITORING - POSITION STATEMENT AT 31 OCTOBER 2020 FOLLOWING LOCKDOWN 2.0

Members were advised of the position on revenue expenditure following Lockdown 2.0. Members were informed of significant changes to expenditure on a timely basis and which may be outside the standard quarterly budget reporting cycle. This was previously discussed at Overview & Scrutiny on 17 November and at Cabinet on 3 December.

The S151 Officer clarified some points on:

- Additional reduced income streams from leisure and car parking charges and bulky waste.
- Additional IT Costs.
- 85 year rule for the state retirement age contribution.
- Provisional potential over spend.

Members discussed:

- Figures reflect compensation for fees and charges in the first Lockdown which is just under £700,000 already received with further claims in for just over £300,000. This scheme will run until March 2021 so this will reduce the forecast over spend.
- Parishes fees and charges were approved by members in February 2020 and any new charges will be agreed at the next budget.

DECISION

Members noted the revised projections and reasons for the main revenue variations show in this report.

83 UPDATE ON BUSINESS RATES GRANTS SCHEMES LOCKDOWN 2.0

Members were updated on the process and performance regarding the two Lockdown 2.0 Business Rate Grant Schemes that the Government had introduced.

The Closed Scheme for businesses who had to remain closed which is fully administered by Capita have received 313 applications, 252 have already received payment, 22 in query with 23 duplicates or rejections.

The numbers of applications received for the Discretionary Grants Scheme is 130, of which 105 have been paid with a further 16 to be paid and 9 still to be checked. This scheme has been extended for a further week to attract more applications.

Members considered:

- It was confirmed that those applications which are not valid declarations for the Closed Business Grant Scheme, would be moved over to the Discretionary Grant Scheme.
- Any funds received that haven't been paid will be used in the third tranche next year and carried over which can be allocated to missed applications.
- Wet Pub Compensation applications have to be received by 29 December 2020 for premises who sell 50% less of income from food.

DECISION

The report was noted.

84 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was considered and noted.

85 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

- Community Safety transition update to be pushed back to April 2021.
- The Portfolio holder to update the Committee on the progressing strategies of the Climate Change Working Group and bring to Committee in January.

The meeting closed at 9.28 pm