

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Tuesday 17 October 2023 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

Dorn (Chairman), Axam, Butcher (arrived 7.24), Butler (Vice-Chairman), Coburn, Farmer, Harward, Smith, Thomas (arrived 7.03) and Vernon

In attendance:

Officers: Mark Jaggard, Executive Director Place
Kirsty Jenkins, Executive Director - Community
Daniel Hawes, Planning Policy and Economic Development Manager
Joanne Rayne, Finance & Property Manager
Christine Tetlow, Programme Manager
Claire Lord, Committee and Members Services Officer

51 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of September 19th 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Proposed Cllr Dorn, Seconded Cllr Smith
Unanimous (Cllrs Axam and Butler abstained as not at meeting)

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from

Cllr Davies – Cllr Axam attended as a substitute.
Cllr Engström.

53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations made.

54 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that the Butterwood Homes report would be a verbal report.

The Chairman commented on the recent Treasury Management training. He thanked the trainer for a informative evening and asked members to direct any further questions they had to Mr Clark the section 151 officer.

55 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)

None.

56 BUTTERWOOD HOMES SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT

The lead officer declared an interest in this item and left the room during it.

It was explained to the members that although the scrutiny committee had met at the end of September there was no update to give as Butterwood Homes had not provided any financial reports prior to or at the Scrutiny Panel meeting. It was confirmed that papers had now been received, but there had not been time to scrutinise or discuss them. The members of the Scrutiny Panel said that they could not at the current time comment on the management of Butterwood Homes, but agreed to bring a report to the next meeting.

Concern was expressed that the financial reports had not been produced as a matter of course, given that Butterwood Homes manages £7 million worth of assets for the Council.

It was stressed that the scrutiny of the financials reports was an important part of the governance process and so it was essential that the information was provided in a timely manner.

RECOMMENDATION

That O&S contact the directors of Butterwood Homes to express their concern that the financial data was not provided prior to the Scrutiny Panel meeting and that the situation should be rectified as soon as possible.

Proposed Cllr Dorn, Seconded Cllr Coburn
Unanimous

57 CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Lead Officer re-entered the room.
Cllr Butcher arrived during this item.

It was explained that this item was an update on how the recommendations made by the Task and Finish group were progressing.

It was confirmed that a template both in Word and Publisher had been produced, and the accessibility guidelines which had been shared with the Parish and Town Councils were attached at Appendix 3 in the agenda.

A query was raised around the parishes being allocated a named officer to help them with the process. It was confirmed that the 3 parishes currently going through the process had now had a named contact Officer.

A query was raised around the topic of the use of consultants. It was confirmed that, for procurement policy reasons, Hart District Council could not recommend an individual consultant. However, it could recommend a type of consultant and suggest where to go to ask for help in selecting one. . It was highlighted that the action plan recommends speaking to other Parish or Town Councils, and it also recommended that the IHBC (Institute of Historic Building Conservation) may be able to provide advice.

It was suggested that within the guidance notes there should be some information about setting milestones, as these were an important aid to keeping projects on track. It was agreed that this would be a helpful addition to the guidance notes.

The meeting commented on the fact that some of the items in the report were still in draft form, it was queried when they would be completed and whether it would be useful to bring this item back to O&S once it was completed. The members were told that all elements should be finished by the end of the year. It was therefore agreed to bring the report back to O&S in February 2024.

58 Q2 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT AND FORECAST OUTTURN FORECAST

A presentation was given to the meeting from Finance. It was explained that the current forecasted surplus was £899k which is a decrease to the surplus forecast in Q1. The decrease is mainly due to a reduction in income from planning applications mitigated by an increase in income from recycling waste. The meeting was told that Finance continues to manage the cash flow according to the Treasury Management Strategy and as interest rates remain high this has returned a large Treasury surplus versus budget.

Members asked whether there was a better way to budget for planning income. The meeting was told that although the council was in regular contact with developers it was very hard to predict when large planning applications would be submitted.

A query was raised about the increase in the forecast spend in “Supplies and Services”; it was explained that this should be read in conjunction with the increase in “Income” – an additional grant was received for Homes for Ukraine (shown in Income) with the corresponding spend in “Supplies and Services”. There is also an increase in print and postage due to an unanticipated increase in the price of stamps plus and an inadequate budget.

Discussion took place around the effect the solar panels had had on the electricity bill. The meeting asked for information on how much electricity was being sold back to the grid. Members were informed that there wasn't that much data at present as the panels had not been in place for that long. However, it was confirmed that the primary purpose of the panels was to power the offices not to sell back to the grid. It was agreed that figures would be provided in future.

Following on from the Treasury Management training it was asked if the Council had the correct Prudential Indicator levels. It was confirmed that Link, who delivered the training were correct to flag the discrepancy, but this is not an imminent problem for Hart due to the value of Reserves. The position will be reviewed as part of the annual Treasury Management Strategy.

59 VIABILITY APPRAISALS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Executive Director - Place was thanked for producing a very detailed and technical report. It was remarked that the document was very comprehensive and raised questions relating to timings and VAT. However, it was agreed that these issues could be discussed outside of the meeting.

Cllr Dorn confirmed that he had raised some detailed points prior to the meeting to the Planning Policy team. The Executive Director – Place said that these contained some helpful points which could be reviewed before the SPD was considered by Cabinet in November.

60 FEEDBACK FROM SERVICE PANEL MEMBERS

Place

Feedback from the Service Panel meeting was given. The committee was told that it had been a very positive meeting.

- It was confirmed that many of the staff issues had now been rectified. It was acknowledged that it was important to understand how this issue had occurred, so that it could be avoided in future. It was commented that the time it took to process planning decisions was so significantly down in Q2 that it would take impressively good performances in Q3 and 4 to attain the annual target. It was explained that the “perfect storm” had been created by 2 of the Team Leaders leaving the Council and the replacement contractors not performing up to standard, plus early maternity leave. It was stated however that the council was performing above the government benchmark for intervention.

Discussion took place around the KPI for works to trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). The meeting was told that the KPI only relates to works to Trees covered by TPOs. However, the tree work also

includes proposed works for trees in Conservation Areas, and requests for new TPOs. The meeting was reassured that when there was a safety issue TPOs were dealt with, within 5 days.

Community

Feedback from the service panel meeting was given. The members were informed that the service was making good progress.

- It was reported that the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) statistics were ok but, not a true reflection as members of the public did not always report incidents of ASB. The meeting was told that incidents in the Hart centre were on the increase and that sadly the disc system that was being introduced to help combat this had not been taken up as much as was hoped. Fleet BID, the meeting was told, will be promoting the scheme.
- It was noted that, sadly, the engagement with schools had decreased. It was felt that this maybe due to a change in head at one of the local schools and it was hoped that it would improve again in the near future.
- An update on the tendering for Fleet Pond was given. It was reported that, after the lack of response to the initial tender request, smaller tender requests would be sent out.
- The meeting was told that there had been a large increase in the requests for footage from the CCTV centre, most of which were from the police. It was agreed that this was a positive sign that communication between the new centre and the police was in place.

A query was raised about whether the issue with the Homeless Out of Hours number had been resolved. It was confirmed that it had been.

Discussion took place around the Military Covenant Silver Award; it was confirmed that the council was on track to achieve the award in March and that the HR policies and staff training required were in hand.

61 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the planning Enforcement Plan which was on the Cabinet work programme had been added to the O&S work programme.

62 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The meeting was told that Hampshire County Council had replied to the committee's request to provide statistics and attend a meeting. It was stated that the email received would be circulated, however it had not provided the information requested. The members were asked, having read the email from Hampshire County Council, to reply to the chairman whether they were happy with the reply or still wanted more information from Hampshire.

It was commented that the work programme showed that there were a lot of items being brought to the November meeting. It was agreed to look to see if anything could be moved.

It was raised that there wasn't a date for Task and Finish group to bring their findings before the committee. It was commented that the T&F group were not yet ready to commit to a date to bring their findings to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.23 pm