

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Date and Time:** Tuesday 16 April 2024 at 7.00 pm

**Place:** Council Chamber

**Present:**

Dorn (Chairman), Butler (Vice-Chairman), Coburn, Davies, Farmer, Harward, Smith, Thomas and Vernon

**In attendance:**

**Officers:**

Daryl Philips, Chief Executive  
Kirsty Jenkins, Executive Director - Community  
Steve Bennett, Change and Digital Manager  
Emma Evans, Committee and Member Services Officer

### **129 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of 19 March 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **130 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies received. Councillor Thomas would be arriving late.

Councillor Coburn left the meeting at 19.01.

### **131 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations made.

### **132 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman thanked Councillor Engström for her service on the Committee and wished her well.

The Chairman thanked all members of the Committee for their efforts this year, including Councillor Butler in her role as Vice-Chairman.

An updated paper has been circulated relating to the Half Yearly Complaints Analysis.

Councillor Thomas arrived at 19.04.

### **133 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)**

None.

### **134 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER TEMPORARY PITCHES TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The Chief Executive introduced the proposed terms of reference (TOR's) for the Gypsy and Traveller Temporary Pitches Task and Finish Group. He advised it was important to engage with communities on this challenging issue, to find a solution that meets the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Members discussed the TOR's and suggested several changes, relating to scope, phrasing and structure. The Chief Executive agreed to include them, and an amended version will be returned to the Committee in June.

Councillor Coburn returned at 19.07.

### **135 HALF YEARLY COMPLAINTS ANALYSIS**

Mr Bennett introduced the half-yearly complaints analysis, the final report for this financial year. He stated that reports will be submitted to the Committee on a six-monthly cycle for 2024/25.

Mr Bennett highlighted:

- that quarter 4 had seen the highest number of complaints but that this remained below last year's level.
- The 10 days reply service level had dropped to 56%.
- Stage 2 complaints have increased to 3 this quarter.
- Additional information was provided on the corporate service complaints.
- The Place Service are working to address the issues identified.
- Hart has been asked to join the Local Government Ombudsman pilot to support Councils to adopt the new complaints code.

Members discussed:

- whether all complaints were recorded. It was confirmed ongoing complaints were not.
- the possibility of an automated response system being introduced
- clarification of learning points
- the reasons behind the Place Service challenges
- complaints relating to the waste contract
- the divide between service requests, councillor enquiries and complaints.

An issue related to a specific case would be taken forward with Councillor Dorn.

### **136 FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY SERVICE PANEL**

Councillor Butler stated that the Community Service Panel meeting had been positive. Members heard:

- Housing has experienced a significant rise in the number of acute interventions
- most projects are on track although the Bike Track has been delayed due to adverse weather
- a review of the Allocations Policy is due next year, and will be submitted to O&S in early 2025
- the CCTV system had zero downtime in quarter 4.

Councillor Coburn left at 19.47.

### **137 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER (HALF YEARLY REVIEW)**

The Executive Director, Community introduced the Corporate Risk Register explaining that is an extract of the highest risks as of 31 March 2024. The detail is reported at the Service Panels, the Committee is asked to review and pass comments to Cabinet.

Members discussed:

- the reasoning behind the increase in the waste recycling service risk rating
- welcomed an increase in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy risk rating
- the climate change risk rating remaining unchanged
- vacancy rates and policy on managed vacancies
- impact of potential planning changes on resources

The Executive Director stated that an update on Climate Change would be at the June O&S Committee meeting and that further detailed discussion on any risks could be had at Service Panels.

The Executive Director, Community, agreed to submit a written answer to members on the vacancy rates.

Councillor Coburn returned at 19.58.

### **138 FEEDBACK FROM COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIVES ON EXTERNAL BODIES**

Members discussed the submissions from Members on Outside Bodies, the importance of representation and feedback.

Concern was expressed over the lack of returns received and that this presented a challenge to assessing the value of continued attendance at this meeting.

Members praised the responses received and were happy to note the positive impact of member involvement in many groups.

Members were however keen that any missing responses be submitted by colleagues.

The Chairman agreed to write to Members that had not submitted a return to date.

## **139 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

The Chairman introduced the report.

The Deputy Chairman praised the report stating it reflected the breadth of work undertaken.

### **DECISION**

Councillor Butler introduced an amendment to the recommendation to bring it line with the Constitution.

“The Committee endorses the report prepared by the chairman on its behalf and recommends that the report's recommendations for the Committee's future work program be accepted by full council.”

Members debated the amendment.

The amendment was proposed by Councillor Butler and seconded by Councillor Dorn.

Agreed unanimously.

## **140 FUTURE SCRUTINY OF THAMES WATER ACTIVITIES**

The Chairman asked the Committee if they wished to invite Thames Water to a future O&S Committee meeting to discuss the significant issues affecting residents across the district.

Members agreed:

- Chairman to invite a senior representative from Thames Water to the June O&S Committee.

The issues to be addressed were agreed as:

- what are they going to do to rectify the problems
- when will these works be completed
- do they have the funds to rectify all of the issues in the district

- will the current infrastructure in Hart meet future expansion needs and what mitigation is in place
- improvement in communication
- a comprehensive map of where the issues are in the district
- to address all issues of concern across the district, identifying current risk status of each

#### **141 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The cabinet work programme was noted.

#### **142 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Overview and Scrutiny work programme was noted.

The meeting closed at 20.43.