

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date and Time: Tuesday 8 October 2024 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

Worlock (Chairman), Butler (Vice-Chairman), Cockarill, Davies, Farmer, Harward, Highley, Jones, Taylor, Thomas and Vernon

In attendance:

Officers:

Graeme Clark, Executive Director, Corporate Services & S151 Officer

Steven Bennett, Digital, Customer & Change Manager

Helen Taylor-Cobb, Head of Contracted Residents Services

Ashley Wild, Waste and Recycling Manager

Sharon Black, Committee and Member Services Manager

46 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of 10 September 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Proposed by Cllr Butler; Seconded by Cllr Highley; unanimously agreed by all those in attendance at the September meeting.

47 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence had been received.

48 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

49 Chair's Announcements

The Chair had no announcements.

50 Public Participation (Items Pertaining to the Agenda)

There was no public participation.

51 Half-yearly Complaints Analysis

The half-yearly complaints analysis was outlined for Q1 and Q2 2023-24.

Members heard:

- There were four performance indicators set out by the Local Government Ombudsman, over four areas: number received; timeliness; complaint outcomes across stages 1 and 2; and learning from complaints and remedies
- In September a further four stage 1 complaints had been received, three in Corporate and one in Place; two further stage 2 complaints had been received, one in Corporate and one in Place.
- Capita staff had been offered training on the new Code and Hart's new Policy to ensure that everyone was consistent in their responses. Capita had also struggled to meet the 10 working day SLA for complaint responses.
- There had been 21 planning complaints in the half year period
- There had been an overall increase in stage 2 complaints
- On average 56% of stage 1 complaints were dealt with within the 10 working day response period, with an overall average time of 17 working days.

Members discussed the following areas:

- How Hart ensured that Capita was keeping to the necessary response times.
- Whether there was a difference for complaints against outsourced areas against complaints for in-house items.
- Whether consistently being outside of the 10 working day window would raise any concerns with the Ombudsman.
- What had been the longest time to resolve a complaint. A written answer has been provided in Appendix A (exempt)
- Whether it was felt the recording of telephone calls to the contact centre was felt to be of use
- The fact that through the 5 Councils meeting, data had previously shown that Capita's response times to Hart's complaints/queries was worse than others and officers were asked to raise this with their management team
- Whether, in the case of a member of a team being rude to a member of the public, this had been dealt with by the third party contractor or not. A written answer has been provided in Appendix A (exempt)
- Whether it was possible to benchmark our complaint rates with other similar Authorities.

Mr Bennett was thanked for his helpful report, which was noted.

Written Answer to Questions from Members

52 Council Risk Register October 2024 (Half-yearly review)

The Executive Director, Corporate introduced the Council Risk Register explaining that it was revised by management on a regular basis, and that the O&S Committee role was to review and provide assurance that appropriate arrangements were in place to mitigate the risks identified. The Committee was being asked to consider the report and pass comments to Cabinet.

Members discussed the following:

- What had allowed the residual rating of the recruitment and retention of key staff in Place directorate to reduce and what mitigations had been put in place to allow this reduction
- Why the risk rating for the workload for Planning/ Environmental Health had dropped.
- Why the risk rating of the proposed changes to the planning system item risk had significantly reduced from the previous level in April 2024, particularly in the light of the NPPF changes. Members of the Committee requested that Cabinet specifically reviewed this risk and asked for an explanation from the Executive Director, Place
- How investment required to support risk mitigation was identified and bid for, and whether this would require Cabinet approval
- With the loss of the homelessness prevention grant and affordable housing grant being reduced, why risks in these two areas had been reduced.

In conclusion, members of the Committee agreed to pass on to Cabinet the comment as above:

“Why the risk rating of the proposed changes to the planning system item risk had significantly reduced from the previous level in April 2024, particularly in the light of the NPPF changes. Members of the Committee requested that Cabinet specifically reviewed this risk and asked for an explanation from the Executive Director, Place”

53 Crime and Disorder Joint Committee Update

Cllrs Butler and Vernon, who were both on the Crime and Disorder Joint Committee, gave an update on the meeting held on 9 September 2024.

Members heard:

- This was an annual meeting, of Community Safety teams and Councillors from Basingstoke and Deane, Rushmoor and Hart. The Police District Commanders for both Basingstoke and Hart & Rushmoor were present, and everyone was able to ask questions during the meeting
- There was a plan to recruit another 90 police officers on top of those already promised
- There had been a focus on targeting prolific shoplifters, which had been very successful
- Hart had run a very successful Choices programme for students in Years 6 and 7, which aimed to help young people make good lifestyle choices

However, both Cllrs Butler and Vernon felt that whilst the meeting was useful, there was a significant amount of information shared that it was sometimes overwhelming for Councillors, and that therefore it should possibly be more focussed on highlights during the year, differences that had been made to

individuals' lives (including case studies), a breakdown of data about levels of crime across the different Authorities' areas and a separate question and answer session for the two District Commanders.

These comments would be passed onto the Community Safety Manager for discussion with the other Authorities.

Both Cllr Butler and Cllr Vernon were thanked for their observations and report on the meeting.

54 Waste Contract

This report sets out proposals to extend the current joint waste collection contract with Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council (BDBC) and Serco from October 2025. The report also set out the proposal for Hart District Council (HDC) to deploy a mandatory weekly food waste collection service from October 2025, ahead of the Government statutory date of 31 March 2026.

Members heard a summary from the S151 Officer which covered the following topics:

- The current contract and performance of the joint client team and contractors
- The external report commissioned to help determine the way forward
- The proposed increased cost of the contract extension
- Whether any additional funding would be available from the Government
- The most favourable option that emerged from the appraisal in terms of risk, cost and customer impact, which was to seek an extension to the contract with Serco on a joint basis with BDBC

Members discussed the following areas:

- What would happen if the proposed New Burdens Funding was not forthcoming from the Government
- What the expected levels of uptake for food recycling would be and whether Hart could just offer this to those residents who were interested
- What the costs of the new contract included
- How the potential issues with food waste collections would be mitigated, particularly for communal shared areas and for less able residents
- The number and type of new vehicles to be purchased
- Whether there was a break clause in the new contract
- Whether there would be any impact on the green waste service

In conclusion, the Committee were supportive of the proposed approach and had no specific comments to pass to Cabinet. Arrangements for a member briefing on the introduction of food waste collections would be made with the client team at BDBC in due course,.

55 Cabinet Work Programme

The Cabinet Work Programme was noted.

It was agreed that Overview and Scrutiny would like to add an item to their own work programme for their November meeting, to consider the report reviewing the performance of the Development Management Committee, before it was presented to the December Cabinet meeting.

56 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

Members noted that the Fly-Tipping options appraisal item highlighted in the Work Programme would now be reviewed by the Committee in November 2024. This change was agreed.

The meeting closed at 8.52 pm