

## **COUNCIL - AGM**

**DATE OF MEETING: 20 MAY 2021**

**TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF THE WORK OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OVER THE PAST YEAR 2020/21**

**Report of: Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

**1.1** To review the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committee over the past year 2020/21.

### **2 WHAT IS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY?**

**2.1** Every local authority operating a Cabinet and Scrutiny model has a Cabinet made up of the Leader of the Council and up to nine other members. All executive decisions (i.e those needed to implement the Policy Framework and Budget approved by the Council) are taken by the Cabinet.

**2.2** Overview and Scrutiny bodies are not “decision making” bodies but are bodies which monitor and influence those that are. The Overview and Scrutiny role, carried out by non-Cabinet members, is designed to support the work of the Council in the following ways:

- Reviewing and scrutinising decisions taken by the Cabinet (acting as a “critical friend”)
- Considering aspects of the Council’s performance
- Assisting in research, policy review and development
- Involving itself with external organisations operating in the District to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working
- Providing a means of involving the communities in the Council’s work

The Committee also reviews and scrutinises decisions made, or actions proposed in connection with the Council functions, including that of budget monitoring and service delivery.

### **3 REVIEW OF 2020/21 AND THE ACTIONS TAKEN**

This year, despite the challenging constraints of the Coronavirus pandemic, has been an active period for the Overview and Scrutiny committee with support from Cabinet Members and Officers. The committee met in June 2020 after two meetings had to be cancelled due to the first lockdown of the pandemic. It was the first committee of the Council to meet during Covid-19 restrictions; all meetings since then have been held virtually.

Members held a mid-year review in January 2021 to track the progress of the committee and enlist Members' views on how meetings could either be improved or facilitate the introduction of new initiatives to facilitate more insightful scrutiny.

At the mid-year review, it was agreed that future agendas should include an informative external presentation each month on a subject of interest to the Council. The first of these, about the Census 2021, was presented at the March meeting and open to all Councillors.

Four members of Overview and Scrutiny volunteered to join a cross party working group to monitor the action plan for the Planning Performance Peer Review. Due to the acknowledged collaborative success of this approach, it was agreed that opportunities for other cross party working groups should be further explored.

Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee provides an excellent introduction for newly elected Councillors to gain an understanding of the policies and procedures of local government, enabling them to contribute effectively in debate and decision – making.

### **3.1 Regular reports -**

The Committee received quarterly monitoring reports on the following

- Service performance relative to Service Plan and Key Performance Indicators
- Budget monitoring to ensure that the Council is on track to meet and stay within Council agreed budget parameters
- The use of RIPA authorisations
- Civic Enforcement Officer use of handheld CCTV
- Hart Flood Forum

### **3.2 Regular annual one-off reports -**

The Committee also received:

- prior to consideration by Cabinet the draft Treasury Management Statement; 2019/20 Outturn Position, the Medium-Term Financial Statement (MTFS), the draft 2021/2022 Budget, and draft Service Plans,
- Corporate Risk Register update
- Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter.

### **3.3 Heads of Services**

Heads of Services rotated each month to attend and present Service updates relative to Service Plans.

### **3.4 Individual Items of Note**

#### **3.4.1 June 2020**

##### **COUNCIL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND NEXT STEPS**

Members reviewed the speed and effectiveness of the Council's COVID-19 pandemic response and decisions made, in particular, in relation to Business Grants.

### **3.4.2 July 2020**

#### COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

The Committee welcomed the proposal to introduce CIL and asked to review the draft CIL Charging Schedule before it is consulted upon.

#### COMMERCIALISATION STRATEGY – REVIEW OF ASSETS-BASED PROCUREMENT PROCESS

The Committee reviewed the processes for the procurement of assets-based investment and expressed the view that it was a good example of a Commercialisation Strategy. The database framework was complimented.

#### PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PEER REVIEW AND ACTION PLAN

The Committee received a Peer Review report on the Council's Planning Development Management service and agreed to set up Member Working Group comprising four members: Councillors Farmer, Makepeace-Browne, Smith and Wildsmith to review the Plan.

### **3.4.3 August 2020**

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CORPORATE VEHICLE FOR PROPERTY HOLDING PURPOSES

Members were asked to consider a report by the Joint Chief Executive recommending, in principle, the creation of a local authority company to allow commercial trading in property. The Officer recommendation to support the creation of the Company was supported.

### **3.4.4 September 2020**

#### FUTURE PROVISION OF CCTV SERVICE

This paper sought Members' views on Runnymede Borough Council monitoring CCTV in the future, on behalf of Hart District Council. Members could not support Officer recommendations in its totality due to lack of information but agreed that further information would be circulated and that this information together with this Committee's concerns, be addressed at Cabinet.

#### 5 COUNCILS (5Cs) CONTRACT (Exempt Report)

Members discussed the alterations to the contract for Corporate Services and agreed the recommendations contained with the report.

### **3.4.5 October 2020**

#### UPDATED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

Subject to some minor adjustments, the Committee supported the draft Revised Financial Regulations and draft update to Contract Standing Orders.

#### CORPORATE RISK REGISTER REPORT

The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed with assurance that appropriate arrangements were in place to mitigate identified risks.

#### CIVIC QUARTER REGENERATION UPDATE

Members received an update from Councillor Quarterman on the regeneration of the Civic Quarter.

### **3.4.6 November 2020**

#### FLEET ROAD PEDESTRIANISATION UPDATE

Councillor Cockarill gave an oral update to confirm his decision to seek the removal of the Fleet Road pedestrianisation scheme.

#### 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 new national COVID-19 restrictions.

#### COMMERCIALISATION STRATEGY PRESENTATION – DIGITALISATION

Councillor Ambler and the Digital Manager gave a presentation on the impending launch of Mod.Gov (digitalisation of the Committee Services).

#### 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 and recommended to Cabinet that it should be approved.

#### IT SECURITY AND ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

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

### **3.4.7 December 2020**

#### COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

The Head of Place provided an update on setting a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule in Hart and confirmed that the Committee will be consulted on draft CIL charging schedule in mid-year 2021.

#### COMMUNITY SAFETY TRANSITION

The Head of Community updated Members on the transition of the shared Community Safety Service which returned to Hart in October 2020. Members requested targets and budgets to be brought through Overview & Scrutiny as part of the process of commenting on the Community Services' Service Plan 2021/2022.

#### CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE

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

#### CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

Councillor Oliver 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.

#### 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

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

### **3.4.8 January 2021**

#### CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that a summary of the discussions held at the mid-year Overview & Scrutiny review on 6 January 2021 was to be circulated

#### CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

Councillor Oliver updated members on the progress made by the Climate Change Working Group and outlined the three ways of how this cross-party working group can work together with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

#### CAR PARKING CHARGES

Members were updated by Councillor Oliver on the current situation on the car parking charges review, which concluded in November 2019, and on the proposals sent to all Parishes who have an HDC Public Car Park, to include the proposals HDC intended to implement in May 2021.

#### CIVIC REGENERATION WORKING GROUP

Councillor Quarterman and the Commercialisation Manager updated Members on the progress made with the Civic Quarter regeneration project, work undertaken, findings and recommendations for next steps. Members considered and confirmed that the Working Group will continue to investigate possible opportunities for potential redevelopment alongside its position with the town and any potential impact on Fleet town as a whole and were happy with the balance of questions and level of detail.

#### TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Members were presented with the draft Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2021/22, which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy and Prudential and Treasury Indicators and recommended to Cabinet that it be agreed.

#### **DRAFT BUDGET 2021/2022**

This report provided a summary of the revenue and capital budget proposals for 2021/2022 and the Committee was invited to forward its comments on the proposed draft budget and Council Tax levels to Cabinet.

### **3.4.9 February 2021**

#### **MEMBER TRAINING – A REVIEW**

The Joint Chief Executive provided Members with an overview of the Council's Member training and discussed the support and requirements for Members moving forwards. It was recognised that not all Members would require all areas of training offered, but importance of clarity is required on mandatory topics and discretionary events.

#### **DRAFT BUSINESS CASE FOR HOUSING COMPANY**

The Committee were presented with the Business Case to set up a new Company limited by shares as a vehicle to hold the Council owned Edenbrook development of 41 apartments. Members were advised of the two reasons for this business case, these being to secure more affordable housing for residents and to generate long term steady revenue for the Council. The Committee supported the proposals and forwarded its more detailed comments to Cabinet.

#### **DRAFT BUDGET 2021/2022**

Members considered the report which provided a summary of the revenue and capital budget proposals for 2021/2022 approved by Cabinet and recommended to Council. The report included the statutory statement of the Head of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) to Council on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves.

The Chairman advised Members that no additional papers had been received since the last meeting of the committee and the Budget Book would be available before going to the next full Council. Members were advised that all questions should be forwarded to the S151 Officer, who would respond within 24 hours.

#### **NOMINATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANNING IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN MONITORING**

Members nominated were Councillors Farmer, Makepeace-Brown, Smith and Wildsmith to join a cross party working group to monitor the action plan for the Planning Performance Peer Review. The Chairman commended the working group on the tremendous job they did last year, and the Monitoring Officer requested the working group also include looking at performance and complaint handling.

### **3.4.10 March 2021**

#### **PRESENTATION BY THE 2021 CENSUS TEAM**

Jeremy May, the Census Engagement Manager from the Office of National Statistics, presented the implementation of the 2021 Census. The presentation explained how the Census is a snapshot of a time in society and covers housing, healthcare, education, and transport, with 2021 being the first year that the Census is done digitally. Members were advised how the Office of National Statistics has been raising awareness of the Census using local news, radio and local authorities covering deadlines, support centres and field staff help that is available.

#### **TO NOTE SECTION 4 OF THE MINUTES OF 2ND MARCH CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP MEETING – UPDATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN**

Councillor Oliver updated the Committee on the action plan from the Climate Change Working Group and the Council's corporate objective to build pathways to net zero omissions. As there is no budget at present for funding the actions and it was suggested that the action plan is incorporated as a consideration into service plans. The Working Group was working on making conscious decisions on how best to achieve carbon efficiencies and on its long term plan. Members asked for clarification on:

- Energy efficient waste vehicles being trialled by Serco in urban areas.
- Working closely with Everyone Active to minimise emissions.
- Specific targets with firm dates.

#### **FLEET ROAD PEDESTRIANISATION: COSTS**

Members noted the costs incurred by the Council in implementing and then securing the removal of the Fleet Road pedestrianisation scheme. The Joint Chief Executive explained that the report is a factual statement of costs incurred. The report was not intended to be a commentary on the merits of the scheme or how it was implemented and then removed. The report was for noting only.

#### **DRAFT SERVICE PLANS 2021/2022**

The Committee considered the draft Service Plans for 2021/22 and recommended to Cabinet that, subject to more detailed information being provided in the resourcing charts for both Place and Environmental & Technical Services, the draft Service Plans 2021/2022 be adopted.

#### **DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & LICENSING ENFORCEMENT PLAN**

The Committee considered and reviewed the draft Environmental Health & Licensing Enforcement Plan and endorsed the Plan for adoption by Cabinet.

#### **EQUALITY OBJECTIVES 2021 - 2023**

Members were presented with highlights of the progress made against the Council's Equality Objectives 2017-2021 and comments were requested on the proposed Equality Objectives for 2021-23. The Committee supported and endorsed the objectives and recommended to Cabinet that the Equality Objectives for the period 2021-2023 be adopted.

#### **QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2020/21**

Members were updated on the Council's performance indicator results for the third quarter of 2020/2021 (1 October 2020 – 31 December 2020); the report was for noting only. It was agreed that a small informal cross party working group of Committee be set up to review the number and purpose of KPIs.

#### CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

Members were asked to review the Corporate Risk Register which is reviewed by management on a regular basis and reported to members to provide assurance that appropriate arrangements are in place to mitigate identified risks. The report was for noting only.

**Contact Details:** Councillor Dr Jane Worlock, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee