

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Date and Time:** Tuesday 15 June 2021 at 7.00 pm

**Place:** Council Chamber

**Present:**

Axam, Collins, Crookes, Davies, Dorn, Drage, Farmer, Harward, Smith, Wildsmith and Worlock (Chairman)

**In attendance:** Bailey, Forster, Quarterman, Radley

**Officers:**

Daryl Phillips	Joint Chief Executive
Patricia Hughes	Joint Chief Executive
Emma Foy	Head of Corporate Services and S151 Officer
Kirsty Jenkins	Head of Community Services
Louise Lyons	Senior Environmental Health & Housing Officer
Lee Rome	Committee Services Officer

### **1 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Smith was elected Vice-Chairman.

### **2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 20 April 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record. It was noted that in point 134 a request for the Head of Place was made to 'circulate a summary of the performance statistics on the Development Management Service' and that this had not yet been received. The Joint Chief Executive agreed to ensure that these were circulated as soon as possible.

### **3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None received.

### **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Farmer declared he had a non-pecuniary interest as the Chairman of the Swimming Club based at Hart Leisure Centre and Councillor Forster declared he had a non-pecuniary interest as a Hampshire County Councillor.

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

None.

## **6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman announced that Portfolio Holders were joining the meeting to assist with several agenda points.

## **7 FIT & PROPER PERSON TEST PREPARATIONS (F&PPT)**

The Head of Service for Community Services gave a summary of the Fit & Proper Person Test (F&PPT) report on the proposed policies.

Councillors discussed the following areas of the report:

- The chasing of incomplete initial applications
- How failed applications are dealt with
- The drafting and wording of the policies in accordance with Government guidance
- Whether fees are charged for renewals and the term 'initial application fee'
- Circumstances around Council appointed site managers
- Electronic form submissions
- Potential legal challenges

## **DECISION**

Members supported in principle the report and delegated the confirmation of the final Overview & Scrutiny Committee comments to the Chairman to finalise for the Head of Community Service to address and forward on to Cabinet.

## **8 CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT COMMERCIAL PROPERTY INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

The Portfolio Holder and Head of Service for Corporate Services gave a summary of the proposed policy and the updates it gave to current policy to focus on revenue income generating priorities but also to include assessment of the social and economic benefits. Further updates reflected upon the Climate Emergency recently declared by the Council, the project approval process, the lack of future access to Public Works Loans Board financing and the focussing policy to help achieve wider corporate goals.

Councillors discussed the following areas of the policy:

- The approval process and project scrutiny
- The drafting and wording of the policy
- Commercial partnerships and co-investment vehicles
- Carbon reduction and the Council's declared Climate Emergency
- The balance between commercial investment, local and taxpayer benefits
- The area subject to the scope of the acquisition search recognising that the economic benefits gained by investment may benefit residents of Hart even if the acquisition was from outside the administrative area of Hart
- Regeneration, project location and the impact on local businesses
- The level of delegated authority and the speed of decision making
- Commercial sensitivity and the need for confidentiality

- Funding sources, leverage, return targets and risk levels
- Instant return projects and long-term investments
- The scope of the policy and future strategic review
- Projects had been both approved and rejected to date

The overall conclusion was that the approach was supported but perhaps could at this time be more simply focused on the immediate priority of secure long term financial revenue until such time as the necessary income generating targets had been met.

## **DECISION**

That, subject to consideration of adjustments, the draft refreshed Commercial Property Investment Strategy be recommended to Cabinet.

## **9 CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT CORPORATE DEBT RECOVERY POLICY**

The Portfolio Holder and Head of Service for Corporate Services gave a summary of the proposed policy. Updates to the policy reflect the recommendations of an internal audit and seeks to take an approach to debt collection that improves current processes and considers the whole debts that individuals and businesses owe, as opposed to treating them separately.

Councillors discussed the following areas of the policy:

- The drafting and wording of the policy
- Timescales, amounts triggering court action and write-off authority
- Corporate debts and insolvency

## **DECISION**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that the policy be recommended to Cabinet.

## **10 PROVISIONAL 2020/21 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN POSITION**

The Portfolio Holder and Head of Corporate Services gave a summary of the report. Attention was drawn to the projected outturn position after auditor adjustment, the charges related to withdrawing from the 5 Councils agreement, revenue and spending fluctuations due to the COVID pandemic and related grant income. Variance analysis was still pending but would be presented to Cabinet.

Councillors discussed the following areas of the report:

- The underspend in COVID grants and current commitments on these
- Accountancy adjustments to the outturn figure
- The adding of a COVID impact figure to the report
- Ending the 5 Councils contract and resulting unexpected costs
- The internal and auditor timetables for completion
- Court recovery and hard debt collection

## **DECISION**

- A. The provisional outturn position of an overspend of £784K after Covid-19 compensation (before accounting adjustments and transfers) was noted.
- B. The capital outturn position as at 31 March 2021 was noted.
- C. That unspent capital budget was to be carried forward into the Capital programme for 2021-22.
- D. That Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet the contributions to earmarked reserves as detailed in Table 6.1 be approved.

## **11 NEXT STEPS IN COVID-19 RECOVERY**

The Joint Chief Executive gave a summary of the report, which was the fourth report to Members providing an update on the work undertaken in response to the COVID pandemic. Members discussed the cycling provision between Fleet Railway Station and Fleet Town Centre.

## **DECISION**

- 1. The updates on the Recovery Plan as outlined in Appendix 1 were noted.
- 2. The final decisions taken by the Joint Chief Executive under emergency provisions within the Constitution were noted.

## **12 OUTSIDE BODIES**

Members discussed the summary of Members work as representatives on outside bodies in 2020-21, with particular focus on Blackbushe Metals and the Hampshire Partnership. The allocation of representative roles based upon skills and Ward location were highlighted as areas to be considered, along with the current reporting systems. Members were also asked to consider further Outside Bodies for inclusion in future.

## **DECISION**

- A. The report and appendix 2 were noted.
- B. That continuing representation on different Outside Bodies are best decided upon by the Members attending.
- C. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that Cabinet consider the allocation of representatives based on skills and Ward location and consider current reporting systems.

## **13 RECOVERY FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT OF MEMBERS**

Members discussed the re-engagement of Members with the Council and Officers in the following areas:

- Communication methods and the difficulties in contacting specific Officers, and the clarification of protocols around this process

- Councillor Enquiries with reference to its effectiveness, difficulties with complex issues, frequently asked questions, and the future of this method of contact
- Automated response systems
- Officer workloads due to the pandemic and resulting contact difficulties
- Ward surgeries
- The use of TEAMS and Councillor mentoring
- The sharing of recorded training materials with Parishes
- Keeping the best of what happened before and after the pandemic

The setting up of a group to discuss was suggested by the Joint Chief Executive and interested members were asked to contact him if they wished to participate.

#### **14 SERVICE PLANS AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

Members discussed the monitoring of service plans and service performance in the following areas:

- KPI's and their effectiveness, and the use of SMART targets
- The role of Overview and Scrutiny in service level performance and monitoring, and the purpose of monitoring
- The need for reviews to be public facing, and the expectation of the public that services should be appropriately scrutinised
- The format of reports, and the merits of Service Panels
- The attendance of Members at previous Service Panels and the benefit virtual meetings would bring

It was decided that Members comments would be summarised by the Chairman and Joint Chief Executive in a briefing note and circulated.

#### **15 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The Cabinet work programme was noted.

#### **16 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Overview and Scrutiny workplan was noted. An extract from the AGM report by the Chairman on items proposed to be included in the workplan will be circulated for comments.

The meeting closed at 10.39 pm