

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 19 APRIL 2022

TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF THE WORK OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OVER THE PAST YEAR 2021/22

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 2021/22.

2 CHAIRMAN'S RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Members note the report and the subsequent actions taken.

3 WHAT IS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY?

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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.

4 REVIEW OF 2021/22 AND THE ACTIONS TAKEN

4.1 This year, despite continuing challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with support from Cabinet Members and Officers have had a productive year and all meetings in the year have taken place.

4.2 Notable actions include the successful implementation of Service Panels which has given Members the opportunity to take ownership and also have time to carry out relatively 'deep dives' into service performance.

A number of specific task and finish groups were set up which included:

- A TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY (Councillors Axam, Farmer and Harward)
- A TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR THE REVIEW OF PROJECT OPTIONS FOR HOUSING CAPITAL SPEND (Councillors Axam, Collins, Harward, Farmer, Wildsmith and Worlock).
- A TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO UPDATE AND REFRESH THE CORPORATE COMPLAINT POLICY (Councillors Davies, Drage, Dorn and Smith)

4.3 The Committee also received presentations from outside bodies which included:

- FARNBOROUGH COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY FUTURE PLANS UPDATE
The Committee received an update on the College's future plans by Virginia Barrett, Principal CEO, Farnborough College of Technology
- PRESENTATION BY INCLUSION HAMPSHIRE
Cheryl Edwards (CEO) and Marie Greenhalgh (Head of Inclusion College) from Inclusion Hampshire gave an update on their charity's work and new Inclusion Centre in Hook.

4.4 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.

4.5 **Regular reports -**

The Committee received quarterly or bi-annual 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
- Hart Flood Forum – twice a year.
- Corporate Risk Register update – bi-annual

4.6 **Regular annual one-off reports -**

The Committee also received:

- prior to consideration by Cabinet the draft Treasury Management Statement; 2020/21 Outturn Position, the Medium-Term Financial Statement (MTFS), the draft Budget, and draft Service Plans,
- Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter.

4.7 **Heads of Services**

Heads of Services attended most meetings and presented Service updates relative to Service Plans.

5 **INDIVIDUAL ITEMS OF NOTE**

JUNE 2021

FIT AND PROPER PERSONS TEST PREPARATIONS

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

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT COMMERCIAL PROPERTY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Members discussed several areas of the policy and subject to consideration of adjustments, the draft refreshed Commercial Property Investment Strategy was recommended to Cabinet.

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT CORPORATE DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

The Portfolio Holder and Head of Service for Corporate Services gave a summary of the proposed policy. Members agreed that the policy be recommended to Cabinet.

PROVISIONAL 2020/21 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN POSITION

The Portfolio Holder and Head of Corporate Services gave a summary of the report. The Committee noted and agreed with all the recommendations.

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.

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 Committee recommended that Cabinet consider the allocation of representatives based on skills and Ward location and consider current reporting systems

RECOVERY FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT OF MEMBERS

Members discussed the re-engagement of Members with the Council and Officers in certain areas including communication methods, Councillor Enquiries, the use of TEAMS and Councillor mentoring.

SERVICE PLANS AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Members discussed the monitoring of service plans and service performance in several areas including, KPI's and their effectiveness, and the use of SMART targets and the role of Overview and Scrutiny in service level performance and monitoring

JULY 2021

REVISED SAFEGUARDING POLICY & PROCEDURE AND PROPOSED MODERN SLAVERY TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT

The Committee welcomed the draft revised Safeguarding Policy & Procedure and Modern Slavery Transparency Statement and subject to the inclusion of a contacts card, recommended the Strategy to Cabinet.

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COMMUNITY TRIGGER POLICY

The Community Safety Manager gave a summary of the policy. The Committee reviewed the policy and procedure and asked Cabinet to Consider several points involving awareness of complaints, accuracy, and anonymity.

CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

The Committee questioned the practical implications of restricting access to officers if a complaint persisted in acting unreasonably.

HART HOUSING PROPERTY MANAGEMENT COMPANY

Councillors Davies, Farmer, Harward and Smith volunteered to comprise the Hart Housing Property Management Company's Scrutiny Panel.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2020/21

The Committee heard from the Head of Corporate Services and S151 Officer who summarised the annual review report.

Questions from members included Interest Rates and why we have money invested in other borough councils and how Internal Borrowing is represented.

AUGUST 2020

WEBSITE REDESIGN PROJECT

The Committee recommended to Cabinet that the report contained more detailed timescales.

2022/23 BUDGET & MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The Committee noted the timetable for 2022/23 budget setting and the reserves policy in Section 6 of the report.

QUARTER ONE - REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee noted the Quarter One forecast for the General Fund Revenue budget and the key reasons for projected variations between actual expenditure and budgeted expenditure.

SEPTEMBER 2021

CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

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

Members of the Committee made the following recommendations:

- Changes could be highlighted on the document to make them clearer.
- Including more detail on these changes - for example what has gone up and gone down would provide more scope and insight.
- Extracting the top five and going into more detail about these would be beneficial.

NOMINATIONS TO A TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

Councillors Axam, Farmer and Harward volunteered to be part of the Task and Finish group.

REFRESHMENTS CONCESSION OPPORTUNITIES AT EDENBROOK AND BRAMSHOT FARM COUNTRY PARKS

Members supported the idea to explore this option.

FOOD RECOVERY PLAN 2021/22

Members considered the draft Food Recovery Plan 2021/24 with several recommendations; including some consideration on any potential risks there may be to the delivery phase.

OCTOBER 2020

PRELIMINARY DRAFT COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) CHARGING

Members reviewed the Preliminary Draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (PDSC) and recommended it for public consultation with several recommendations.

LOCAL PLAN ASSESSMENT

The Committee recommended to Cabinet that work should begin on the assessment as soon as Government guidance is received.

2022/23 BUDGET & MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

Members noted the current position to the proposed budget savings.

NOVEMBER 2021

WASTE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Members were given an update from Councillor Oliver on the progression of the client management function for the waste contract since the transfer back to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Members reviewed the draft strategy and recommended it to Cabinet.

NOMINATIONS TO A TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR THE REVIEW OF PROJECT OPTIONS FOR HOUSING CAPITAL SPEND

Councillors Axam, Collins, Harward, Farmer, Wildsmith and Worlock volunteered to be on this group.

NOMINATIONS TO A TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO UPDATE AND REFRESH THE CORPORATE COMPLAINT POLICY

Councillors Davies, Drage, Dorn and Smith agreed to be part of this group.

HOUSING CAPITAL FUNDING FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES IN NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Members wanted more information, evidence, and operational costs to be included in the report before it could be recommended to Cabinet.

HART INTERIM PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT ON FIRST HOMES

The committee noted the content of the report with the several comments, including, how this policy would affect the current Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans.

DECEMBER 2021

PROJECT INTEGRA JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee recommended to Cabinet the endorsement of a “twin-stream” approach to recycling, (not the “twin-stream” approach that is detailed in the report) to improve performance.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT HALF-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2021/22

The Committee endorsed the recommendation to Cabinet to increase the Barclays Counterparty limit to £10m until 31 March, to accommodate the investment in the Barclays Green Investment fund.

The Committee also endorsed the recommendation that following the acquisition of Centenary House, to increase the Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit as detailed in the report.

QUARTER TWO BUDGET MONITORING

Members noted and provided scrutiny over the revised projections and main revenue variances highlighted in the report.

JANUARY 2022

FARNBOROUGH COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY FUTURE PLANS UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the College’s future plans by Virginia Barrett, Principal CEO, Farnborough College of Technology

HOUSING CAPITAL SPEND UPDATE

The Strategy and Development Manager summarised that the group had met twice since November 2021, reviewed the list of projects and identified why they had been chosen.

Councillors Axam, Farmer and Worlock, who are members of the Task and Finish group, summarised that they had found the meetings very useful and productive.

HOUSING CAPITAL FUNDING FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES IN NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Members decided that the scheme fundamentally is a good idea however the report needed more detail and explanation. The Committee had concerns about how the benefits of the scheme could be measured and evaluated. The Committee did not recommend the report proceed to Cabinet.

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2022-27

Members recommended that the Strategy be adopted by Cabinet

DRAFT BUDGET 2022/2023 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Members made comments and agreed for the strategy to go forward to Cabinet

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Members recommended the report to Cabinet.

FEBRUARY 2022

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINT POLICY

The Change and Digital Manager summarised the report and work of the Task and Finish group, which was providing guidance and advice on how the Council's Corporate Complaint Policy could be updated and improved.

The Committee endorsed the new Corporate Complaint Policy and recommended its formal adoption to Cabinet.

The Committee also endorsed the anticipated website information that will be available for residents. It was also noted the intention, that once the new

policy and systems are in place, that high level trend data on complaints will be provided to Overview and Scrutiny as part of the corporate suite of data provided on a quarterly basis.

REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN POSITION

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided challenge over the report including the revised projections and significant revenue variations highlighted in paragraph 4.3 and Appendices 1 and 2.

ANNUAL ON-STREET PARKING REPORT 2020/21

This report was for information prior to submission to Hampshire County Council as required as part of the Civil Parking Enforcement Agency agreement. The Committee noted the report and provided suggestions and recommendations on how it should reflect Hart more specifically

ENERGY EFFICIENT DEVELOPMENT AND RENEWABLE/LOW CARBON ENERGY GENERATION

The Planning Policy & Economic Development Manager introduced the report and explained it was in two parts: reducing energy use and the provision of renewable and low carbon energy in new developments (including a draft Technical Advice Note), and proposals for large scale renewable energy generation such as solar farms. Members considered the issues raised in the report and provided their views on the draft Technical Advice Note.

RESIDENTIAL CYCLE AND CAR PARKING STANDARDS UPDATE

Members noted the report and progress with the Cycle and Car Parking Standards SPD and provided feedback in several areas including, general support for the revised approach to residential cycle and car parking, removing the zonal approach and the differences between the current and revised car parking standards

MARCH 2022

PRESENTATION BY INCLUSION HAMPSHIRE

Cheryl Edwards (CEO) and Marie Greenhalgh (Head of Inclusion College) from Inclusion Hampshire gave an update on their charity's work and new Inclusion Centre in Hook

DRAFT SERVICE PLANS 2022/23

The Committee considered the draft Service Plans for 2022/23 and recommended that, subject to small amendments to content the deadline dates they be recommended to Cabinet.

LEVELLING UP

The Joint Chief Executive and New Settlement Manager (now Programme Manager) gave a presentation that included an update on Levelling Up and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and how the Council can engage with it. It was agreed by the Committee and Joint Chief Executive that more work needs to be done to identify Hart's needs for these types of funding applications.

CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

Members reviewed 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