

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Tuesday 14 February 2023 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

Dorn (Chairman), Smith (Vice-Chairman), Axam, Butcher, Coburn, Davies, Engström, Farmer, Wildsmith and Woods

In attendance:

Officers:

Graeme Clark, Executive Director, Corporate Services & S151 Officer
Christine Tetlow, Programme Manager
Claire Lord, Committee and Members Services Officer

79 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed that the following clarifications and alterations were made to the January minutes

- Item 72 - the increase discussed was the increase in stage 2 complaints.
- Items 72 – when comparing the level of complaints to neighbouring councils it should be noted that the authorities varied in size.
- Item 74 – the query raised was about who was responsible for the decision of ‘what was exempt from the procedural rules’
- Item 75 – the Government Grant should show as a £700,000 improvement not surplus
- Item 75 – the capital receipts should show as being £480,000

Proposed Cllr Farmer, seconded Cllr Butcher

Recorded vote

For: – Axam, Butcher, Coburn, Davies, Dorn, Engström, Farmer, Smith

Abstain: -Wildsmith, Woods

With these changes the minutes of 17th January 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record. Councillor Farmer provided the detailed wording for these amendments to Mr Clark prior to the meeting who will now pass to the Committee Officer to incorporate.

80 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Butler

81 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations made.

82 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements.

83 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)

None.

84 QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING

The Quarterly Budget was outlined to the meeting. It was highlighted that

- The forecast outturn is within the overall approved budget
- Capital overview remains similar to the previous quarter with the exception on Communities as 1 project has not been taken forward.
- The capital Spent is under budget as the Grant for affordable housing has not been taken forward and the SANGS schemes have been paused pending a Cabinet review
- Tier 2 savings are improving but there will still be a short fall over the year, however, they are included in full in the draft 2023/24 Budget.
- Corporate revenue is under budget partly owing to a short fall in and building control planning income, this is referred to in the Place Performance Panel report elsewhere on the agenda.

Confirmation on when the Leisure Centre Management contract was renegotiated was sought and Mr Clark agreed to provide this information. It was also noted that the downturn in management fees for the last 2 years had been covered by reserves. It was felt that a different solution should now be sought and the position should be monitored closely in future years.

A question was raised about why the Developer Contributions were so significant when planning fee income is falling. It was explained that there could be a time lag of a few years between the approval and payment of the planning fees and the S106 contribution becoming due. Mr Clark was asked for a breakdown of the £1.7m S106 income quoted in the report.

It was noted that there was a £36,000 overspend on Housing needs, it was explained that the Council had not received some funding that it was expecting.

The £63,000 overspend on Internal Audit was queried. It was explained that this was due to an interim appointment and that a new contract had now been signed which would reduce the spend in 2023/24 to the target budget amount.

85 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

It was confirmed to the meeting that Hart District Council had received from Central Government £1 million.

Following on from workshops carried out in 2022 this money would be spent across 6 projects. These projects would be managed by Hart, working with project leads.

It was explained the projects would be planned in 23/24, working with Here for Hart, Cabinet and O&S.

It was clarified that Hart would receive £1 million, based on the investment plan not on goals being met. A query was raised as to how flexible the investment plan was and whether monies could be moved from one project to another. It was confirmed that any major divergences from the proposed investment plan would require approval from Central Government.

A question was raised about how inflation would be taken into consideration given that the £1m grant is fixed and costs will increase. It was asked that Cabinet be alerted to this in the report.

Discussion took place around resources for the projects and their funding. Members felt that it was important to detail exactly what resources would be required to fulfil the projects before they started so that the scope for project management could be well defined, with details of what resources would be required and how they would be funded. The Committee felt that it was important to outline these parameters at the start of the projects so that resources would be available throughout the project.

Concerns were raised over Governance and Compliance. The committee felt that, given there would be additional guidance on Governance given in Spring and that details of the project planning would then be forwarded to Cabinet, it wanted to request that Cabinet consider **“How will Governance work”**. It was agreed that the projects involved should be subject to the Councils usual Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet procedures and that **“In terms of**

Governance the report needs to be clearer in terms of the definitive process and the roles of particular individuals and committees within the process.”

A query was raised about the Climate Implications of the projects. It was confirmed that although climate was not one of the criteria used when selecting the projects, any alteration to make the projects more in line with Council policy would be considered.

86 SERVICE PANEL REVIEWS

Place

A report from the meeting was read out highlighting

- On going staff issues
- Changes to the department after the Traffic Management passes back to Hampshire
- Places contribution to the new website
- The Local Plan review

Discussion took place around the staffing issues and the difficulties getting a reply from the Planning department. It was explained that there was a national shortage of planning officers.

Community

The meeting was told that it had been a positive session, which indicated that everything was on track. There had been a loss of staff on the housing team, but this was due to natural attrition. It was commented that there had been a good take up on the Sustainable Warm Grant funding.

A comment was made about the ASB figures, it was felt a better breakdown of the figures would give a clearer picture and better understanding of what was happening and why.

Discussion took place about the move of the CCTV camera service to Runnymede. It was acknowledged that the plan to move was tracking to the revised date and that the contract had now been signed. It was noted that there were no statistics in the report relating to CCTV. The meeting was informed that this absence had been highlighted in the service panel meeting by the Director. It was confirmed that the statistics and there breakdown would be available at a later date.

Corporate

It was reported that even though the service was going through a period of change there were no real concerns.

It was highlighted that there continued to be a lack of clear statistics on waste collection from Serco, however it was stated that there had been clarification since the Service Panel meeting.

It was confirmed that there continued to be a resource constraint on delivering the Climate Change Action Plan, however the Director was confident that he would be able to staff the department soon and the report elsewhere on the agenda sets out a resource proposal.

87 RESOURCES TO DELIVER THE CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

It was confirmed that a report outlining the strengthening of resources was being sent to Cabinet.

A query was raised about the current staffing level. It was confirmed that we currently had only 0.7 FTE after the loss of the Sustainability Officer. It was also stated that the staffing level was going to be increased from 1.5 to 2.2 FTE and that a temporary resource is being sought in 22/23 funded from vacancy savings. There were no concerns expressed about the proposal included in the report.

88 BUTTERWOOD HOMES SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Scrutiny Panel reported back to the committee on the recent meeting. The report included details on:

- The makeup of the new board
- The movement of the book-keeping function to a local agent
- Voids
- The Website
- The performance of Bridges the management agent.
- Finances, including details of the £14,000 profit, which is reduced partly because of the introduction of the agreed Directors Fees and the increase in service charges.

Discussion took place around the Website and the difficulties in finding it. It was confirmed that the Website was currently only to establish an on-line presence and that there was a snagging issue with how the website appeared in on-line searches but this was being fixed.

A question was raised about the voids figure. It was explained that the figure had risen in the middle of last year, however had settled back at the lower level of 0.7% and so the assumption was that this level would continue.

Any potential investment growth by the council in affordable homes, to be operated by Butterwood Homes and how it was going to be financed was discussed. It was confirmed that any such investment would be likely to come from S106 reserves.

It was agreed that a report to Cabinet was not needed at this time.

89 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The meeting discussed whether the Risk Management Strategy should come to O&S before it went to Cabinet. It was decided that since the report was also going to Audit then it didn't need to come to O&S.

Comment was made on the lack of date for the Climate Action Plan to be reviewed by either Cabinet or O&S. It was confirmed that this was due to lack of staff and that some of the work was going to be outsourced, meaning that the revised action plan should be available in March or April.

90 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Discussion took place around inviting the Portfolio holders for Community and Environment to the next O&S meeting to give an update on the CCTV and to outline future plans for Off Street Parking. Members had been emailed earlier in the day by the Chairman with suggested scope of the reports that the Portfolio Holders should be asked to give to the Committee.

CCTV.

It was debated as to the value of asking the Portfolio Holder for Community to come just before or just after the move to Runnymede and whether or not it would be better to wait until the service was embedded following the move, and then invite the Portfolio holder. The point of view was raised that it would be better for the Portfolio Holder to come before and after the transition, to give the Committee a base line and then statistics to compare to it.

It was confirmed that moving the date of the invite to the Portfolio Holder would not affect the visit to the CCTV control room that had been agreed by the Committee at the last meeting.

Off Street Parking

It was debated as to the value of asking the Portfolio Holder for Environment to come to an O&S meeting, given that the car parks were unlikely to change. It was confirmed that this item had been on the work programme for many months. The view was expressed that members would welcome the opportunity to raise issues with the Portfolio Holder as well as helping to shape ideas for the future.

Decision

It was proposed "That the update visit from the CCTV Portfolio Holder be moved to a quarter after the implementation of the new service at Runnymede and to remove the Off-Street Parking item from the work programme until such time as there was something more solid to discuss."

Proposed by Cllr Wildsmith; Seconded by Cllr Axam

A recorded vote was taken

For:- Cllrs Axam, Davies, Engström, Wildsmith, Woods

Against:- Cllrs Butcher, Coburn, Dorn, Farmer

Abstain:- Cllr Smith

The motion was carried.

Cllr Farmer asked for it to go on record that he had concerns about Committee voting against a decision that was agreed at the last meeting 4 weeks ago.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm