

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Tuesday 14 November 2023 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

Dorn (Chairman), Butler (Vice-Chairman), Butcher, Davies, Engström, Farmer, Harward, Smith, Thomas, Vernon and Forster

In attendance:

Cockarill, Radley

Officers:

Kirsty Jenkins, Executive Director - Community

Graeme Clark, Executive Director, Corporate Services & S151 Officer

Mark Jaggard, Executive Director - Place

Daniel Hawes, Planning Policy and Economic Development Manager

Christine Tetlow, Planning Policy - Strategic & Corporate Projects Manager

Rachael Wilkinson, Community Safety Coordinator

Claire Lord, Committee and Members Services Officer

Emma Evans, Committee and Member Services Officer

63 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of 17th October 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Proposed Cllr Dorn, Seconded Cllr Butler

Unanimous (Cllrs Butler and Forster abstained as not at the meeting)

64 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Coburn, Councillor Forster attended as a substitute.

65 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Forster declared an interest in item 11 as a Hampshire County Councillor.

66 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman updated the meeting on 3 on going issues.

Butterwood Homes – an email was sent to the housing company as discussed at the last O&S meeting. It was confirmed an update would be given in item 12 of the agenda.

On Street Parking – The meeting was told that an email had been sent to Hampshire County Council and an informal reply had been received. The meeting was told that it was Hampshire County Council Policy not to be scrutinised by other bodies within the Local Government system., however the members were encouraged to send their questions to the Hampshire Universal Services elect committee. The Chairman informed the meeting that he had been advised that Hampshire are keen to work with Hart on this matter.

The meeting was informed that the Hampshire control room was monitored so any parking issues should be reported and then if there was a CEO in the area they could be dispatched to investigate.

CCTV – The meeting was reminded that the report being produced by the O&S Task and Finish group was a different report to the one being produced by the Hart Officers, however one would feed into the other.

Cllr Thomas arrived during this item.

67 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)

None.

68 PRESENTATION BY CORE GRANT RECIPIENTS

A presentation was given by Citizens Advice Hart (CA). In it they reported that in the last year they saw 4,231 clients dealing with 6,684 issues, benefits and tax credits being the main issue. The meeting was told that there had been a dramatic increase in people seeking help as well as a shift in the demographic (from clients mainly being in the 50+ age range to being 35+). This increase had meant there had been a requirement to take on more staff.

The meeting was told about the various projects in the community that the CA was involved with including “Advice First Aid in the community” and about the difference the service makes to people’s lives.

A question was raised about how the CA was engaging with young people. The meeting was told that currently young people were not necessarily aware that the CA was there and available to them. However, this was something the team was looking into and had diversified the team to employ younger people to make the service more accessible for young people.

The CA was thanked for all the work that they do.

69 INTERIM REVIEW OF MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The item was introduced by explaining it was an Interim review and it was building a picture for the budget that would be presented in January, and that it showed how the actuals were tracking against budget for this year.

The meeting was told that provided the Government grant rolled forward the council should be able to again produce a balanced budget in 24/25.

It was highlighted that the main areas for concern were the high levels of inflation, the higher costs of waste and the potential for Central Government to review the amount of the grant.

It was confirmed that although there was currently a forecast surplus of £1m for 23/24 and there was the potential to have a balanced budget 24/25, financial year 25/26 and subsequent years will prove to be more challenging and a significant budget shortfall is showing in the latest MTFS projections. The meeting was reassured that saving measures were already being considered and a firm plan will be formulated once the government grant position has been confirmed and 2024/25 budget has been agreed.

A query was raised about the £250k saving and adjustments. It was explained that these were mainly made up of: -

- An increase in the Everyone Active Management fee
- Rental Income from Farnborough College
- The potential loss of income of planning and building control fees.

70 FEEDBACK FROM SERVICE PANEL MEMBERS - CORPORATE

The committee was told that it had been a very positive meeting.

It highlighted the positive financial situation and outlined the Electoral changes that were in the pipeline as well as the effect that the Waste Act will have on the service.

It was felt that the issues under Hart's control were running well and those not under Hart's were being mitigated against.

It was commented that now that the Climate change team was fully staffed that the action should be changed and a costed plan and timeline produced.

Concern was expressed around the risk relating to Waste/Recycling. It was queried as to whether the council should be formulating a plan to look at alternatives and possible cost reductions.

71 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT - CYCLE AND CAR PARKING IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The report was introduced by the Executive Director. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was an evolution of the informal guidance contained in the Technical Advice Note which had been endorsed by Cabinet last year. An SPD carries significant weight as a material consideration in the determination of a planning application.

The Cycle and Car Parking SPD will assist in place making, by making sure there is adequate car parking provided and design into new developments to avoid the issues of insufficient car parking, or parking in the wrong places. At the same time the cycle parking requirements are to enable a modal shift as part of the Council's response to the Climate Emergency.

The Officers were praised for the quality of the report and how clearly the consultation responses were presented along with the Officer's response to them, and the amendment to the draft SPD in light of those comments.

Discussion took place around the residential car parking standards. It was questioned whether urban and rural areas should have different standards. It was explained that the SPD applies the same parking standard across the whole district, rather than the previous standard which had reduced parking near the train stations and centres.

72 OUTCOME OF TRIAL OF NEW PARKING MACHINES

The meeting was told that there had been a 3 month trial of a new touch screen parking machine in Victoria Road Car Park and that the trial showed that 96% of the residents surveyed found the new machine easier to use. The recommendation was being made to upgrade 22 of the parking machines to have the new touch screen.

Discussion took place around the cost of the new screens and their robustness, against the issues with the current machines and the cost of repairing them.

A query was raised about what machines were being used by adjacent councils and what payment methods were being used by them. The meeting was told that

some councils have moved over to payment by app only. However, the local demographic made this approach unsuitable for Hart. It was confirmed that the new machines would still take cash and card payments.

It was felt that before the new machines were ordered an equalities assessment to include suitability for the visually impaired should take place.

73 LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LCWIP)

The report was introduced and it was explained that the LCWIP is jointly commissioned between Hart District Council and Hampshire County Council. The LCWIP is a high-level strategic document which provides a strategy that will enable the Councils move into the design stage.

The LCWIP would also assist in delivering the targets in the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in facilitating a modal shift and support more walking and cycling as an alternative to some car journeys. It had identified origins and destinations and was offering radical solutions.

The Committee noted that:

- the strategic elements of the LCWIP were good, provided a high-level framework of the key areas across Hart district where interventions could have the greatest impact on demand.
- it picked up matters relating to the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency
- in general terms the key origin and destination for the cycle routes was well supported
- the waling zones were accepted, and in most cases the areas covered were correct.
- there was an understanding that this was a high-level document, and the details were 'a potential solution' or 'an indication of the type of solution' which could be implemented.
- it was noted that the LCWIP did build on previous work such as the green grid and the Fleet Town Access Plan (FTAP).

The meeting expressed the following concerns about the document:

- That the document contained many specific design details. This led to concern that it was only these details that would be considered going forward and that many other good and more practical solutions would be overlooked.
- That some of the routes suggested, although attractive would be discounted as impractical once they were presented to the Highways Authority. It was confirmed that the County Council as joint commissioners of the work had reviewed all of the content of the LCWIP and were satisfied.

- It was not clear how the feedback from the consultation stages had been taken into consideration. It was agreed that an analysis of the feedback received would be beneficial.
- That when funding was being sort that, it would only be sort for the items in the report, some of which the members felt were either impractical or undeliverable.
- That if the funding and focus was on the larger more impractical items the smaller more deliverable items in the report may be overlooked.

A Councillor summarised the discussions that the strategic part of the document, the vision and context were good. It was the detailed solutions to the core walking zones and cycle routes which were concerns were being raised.

It was noted that if the document was to assist in promoting a modal shift to help deliver of the Council's Climate pledges, that the document needed to be aspirational, but at the same time realistic and deliverable.

A Councillor questioned whether there may be an opportunity for further engagement with Ward Members to feed into the detailed solutions for the cycling and walking zones.

It was agreed that a clear statement should be added to the report stating that the routes contained in it were not the final decision and that there would be an opportunity in the future to have input into the various routes.

DECISION

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee had concerns about the detailed design sections of LCWIP report in its current form and that it would encourage a review of the document in conjunction with feedback. There should be consideration of what further work is required and by whom.

74 BUTTERWOOD HOMES SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT

Ms Jenkins left the room at this point as she is a director of Butterwood homes.

The Scrutiny Panel explained that since the last meeting, financial figures had been received. The original figures provided for the company were not the ones required and the required figures had only been received last week. Therefore, although the report had been written it had not been reviewed by the whole panel and so was not ready to bring before the members.

The Panel expressed disappointment in the financial reporting at the last meeting. However, it was confirmed that the situation had been resolved and the S151 Officer informed the committee that the directors of the company have now agreed arrangements for the company's future admin and reporting, so future Panel meetings should receive full information.

75 CCTV TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The members of the group stated that they still had more work to do and would report back to O&S next month.

76 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

Members were reminded that the feedback from the O&S Task and Finish group on CCTV would have to be ready to go, to feed into the report going to Cabinet in January.

77 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

It was confirmed that the Butterwood Homes report should be added to the work programme in December.

The meeting closed at 9.19 pm