

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 7 June 2021

Present:

Cllr J R Sanderson (Chairman)
Cllr S Hussain (Vice-Chair)

Cllr J Brown	Cllr R Mohammed
Cllr S Dorsett	Cllr E Nicholson
Cllr A Kirby	Cllr M I Raja
Cllr R N Leach	

Absent: Councillors K M Davis

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Davis.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 22 March and Monday, 24 May 2021 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Chairman addressed the matters arising from the previous minutes and noted that the following items would be incorporated into the Work Programme, these items included:

- Safer Working Partnership Programme, which had been delayed due to Covid-19
- Family Centres – Service Delivery Plan
- Climate Change Update on Position – which had come to the Committee previously.

The above items would be taken into consideration when planning the Work Programme for the coming municipal year.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to discuss.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor S Dorsett declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 8 – Work Programme arising from him being a member of the

Cards Trust (the supporters' club for Woking Football Club). The interest was such that speaking and voting were permissible.

6. INTRODUCTION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OSC21-014.

The Head of Democratic Services introduced the item and associated reference documents. It was explained that the item had been included on the agenda for the first meeting of the municipal year to ensure that Councillors sitting on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee understood the roles and responsibilities of the Committee, focusing on the scrutiny element.

The Councillor Call-In and Call for Action processes were also explained in detail, and were supported by the reference documents. Attention was then drawn to the Scrutiny Toolkit that had been shared, which focused on the functions of the Committee.

The Work Programme was highlighted as an important resource of the Committee and focused on setting the topics for review that would benefit the public whilst taking into consideration officer time and resource.

The background to the three task groups that reported to the Committee (Economic Development, Housing and Finance) was shared and Members were advised that the Committee would receive regular reports from each task group and the task groups would also participate in scrutiny topic reviews and other planned tasks.

Councillors then asked whether there was an update for the Scrutiny Officer position following the recommendations from the Independent Review. The Members were informed that the draft job description was currently being reviewed.

Following a question raised on budgets, officers advised that, when originally established, the Committee had been provided with an annual budget to support its scrutiny work. The budget had not been used and after several years the Council had taken the decision to remove the budget allocation; requests for funding, if needed, would be proposed on a case by case basis.

7. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY: NOTICE OF MOTION FROM CLLR LYONS OSC21-016

The Chairman introduced Geoff McManus and Emma Bourne, who provided the background to the report on the Notice of Motion from Councillor Liam Lyons on Construction Site Noise Limits.

Ms Bourne explained the process of how developers and contractors applied for noisy works and that there was a 28 day deadline for officers to respond with a decision. Examples of the large scale projects that required approval for noisy works were shared with the Committee, noting that out of hours works were sometimes essential for various reasons including health and safety of the public and contractors.

The Committee discussed the process and it was suggested that ward councillors were consulted on the out of hours noise applications. It was noted that there were drawbacks to this proposal which could potentially cause a delay to officers work. It was felt that further delays would be incurred if decisions were to be made by the Planning Committee, and the Members were not supportive of this recommendation. The current process of delegated authority by the Environmental Health team was explained.

The number of complaints for noisy works in 2020/21 was 105. Officers advised that multiple complaints could be for the same site, and varied from conservatory extensions to large scale developments. Members requested further details of the complaints and it was agreed that a quarterly report would be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which detailed the complaints received. The reporting function would allow members the chance to monitor the complaints rather than being heavily involved in the application process. The categorisation of the data in the report would be discussed outside of the meeting however figures for dust complaints was also welcomed by councillors.

Members were passionate about informing residents and in order to ensure that they were informed of any upcoming disruptions, it was agreed that the information would be posted on social media platforms, which could easily be shared by ward councillors. Officers would strive for consistency when informing residents and ensure that door knocks, letters and information on the website were actioned.

Members of the Committee were supportive of the officer report with the added quarterly reporting, and suggested to amend the wording of the final recommendations to allow more flexibility for officers but highlighted the importance of a political influence in the decision making process. The Committee noted the importance of clear two-way communication with officers and ward councillors on the disruptions within their ward.

The Chairman summarised the following points after the discussion:

- i) Where a Prior Consent Notice has been submitted requesting noisy works outside of usual hours, Ward councillors are consulted, to the extent this is practically possible, before a decision is made.
- ii) A quarterly report is prepared and submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee providing further details of noise complaints received.
- iii) Improve the communication to local residents for upcoming noisy works by the use of the council website and social media and ensure consistency of the use of direct communication to local residents such as letters and door knocks.

RESOLVED

That the comments of the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be reported to the Executive.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Work Programme was introduced and reviewed by the Committee. Councillors raised the following suggested topics to add to the Work Programme:

- Review on subsidiary companies to ensure openness and transparency
- Review of the joint working decision making process on projects such as Victoria Arch
- Freedom Leisure - Service Delivery & Contract Review
- Lessons learnt from Covid-19
- Review of the Housing Infrastructure Fund / Victoria Arch

The Chairman thanked members of the Committee for their suggestions and would finalise the Work Programme prior to the next meeting on 12 July 2021.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be noted.

9. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Committee reviewed the February version of the Green Book, and attention was drawn to the recent Election data, and further confirmation was required on the percent of those registered to vote by post and the percent of postal votes received. The information would be followed up outside of the meeting.

The Chairman requested when the statistic's on Victoria Square would be added to the Green Book.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 8.55 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____