

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 12 July 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	

Also Present: Councillor D Harlow.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 7 June 2021 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny – Training

It was noted that a training session by South East Employers for all Members, exploring the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, had been held on 28 June 2021.

Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny – Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer

The Chairman confirmed that the position of Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer had been advertised.

Pre-decision Scrutiny – Notice of Motion from Councillor Lyons

The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the notice of motion by Councillor Lyons on construction noise had been submitted to the Executive. The Executive had welcomed the comments and had included them in the recommendations to Council.

Performance and Financial Monitoring Information

Councillor Kirby advised that he had received a detailed response from Officers in respect of his enquiry on election figures.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to discuss.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor Leach declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 6 – Health and Wellbeing Strategy arising from his position as a volunteer for the Surrey Care Trust, a local organisation referred to in the report. The interest was such that speaking and voting were permissible.

6. HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY OSC21-015.

(NOTE: In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor S Hussain declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item – Item 6 – Health and Wellbeing – arising from his role as a Governor of the NW Surrey Short Stay School, an establishment referred to in the discussion by Councillor Leach. The interest was such that speaking and voting were permissible.)

The Group welcomed to the meeting Julie Mémé, the Health and Wellbeing Manager, and Councillor Debbie Harlow, Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing. Julie set out the process followed in developing the Strategy, the consultations undertaken, how the priorities had been identified and how, going forward, the impact would be measured and the achievements tracked. It was emphasised that the ten year Strategy was a living document and would evolve over time.

The report put the role of Woking Borough Council in context, within the much wider support environment for health and wellbeing, and the extensive partnership working with agencies and charities across the County, including hospitals, GPs, and the County Council. By analysing the data gained through extensive consultation and feedback from partner organisations, the Council had identified five priority areas where the Authority could achieve the biggest impacts. The five priority areas were mental health, isolation and loneliness, obesity, independent living, and the wellbeing of carers. Councillor Harlow spoke in support of the Strategy, noting the extensive work undertaken by Officers to ensure the Strategy supported local communities in addressing the most pressing areas of health and wellbeing.

The Committee welcomed the report and the proposed action plan. The action plan would develop over time, and would pick up on the points raised by the Members of the Committee. It was noted that some of the forthcoming target dates for actions could need to be updated in response to the impact of lockdown restrictions.

The importance of communicating the services available through the Council to all residents was emphasised, noting that some communities were hard to reach and difficult to engage with, particularly on those matters of health which still had a stigma attached to them. To this end, the Council was exploring all possible avenues of engagement,

including hosting an annual Dementia Awareness Week, engaging with the homeless, working with partner organisations, arranging courses and working on specific areas of concern such as hoarding, domestic abuse and suicide. The Committee was advised that ongoing public consultation and involvement would be arranged as the Strategy evolved, noting that Covid had limited the amount of public consultation in the drafting of the strategy.

The Members discussed the important role of the two Council Support Officers placed at St Peter's Hospital. The Officers reported to the hospital each day and attended ward rounds and consultants' briefings, working with the patients returning home to ensure they received all the personal support necessary to enable them to live independently.

The role of Councillors in promoting the services available was discussed and Julie undertook to arrange a briefing for all Members to explain the services available and the ways in which referrals could be made. The Committee Members emphasised the importance of the educational aspects to tackling issues such as obesity, being able to provide information in an understandable way in a variety of different mediums.

The particular impact on young people and their mental health was discussed and Councillor Leach suggested that Officers could explore close working with groups such as Outline and the NW Surrey Short Stay School. Councillor Leach further suggested the possibility of working with the Youth Council to explore options to support young people struggling with their mental health. Julie undertook to take forward the suggestions, welcoming the reference to the Youth Council and noting that the Council had already established strong relationships with local schools.

The Chairman summarised the key points raised during the discussion and thanked Julie and Councillor Harlow for their presentation, noting the challenges faced and the extensive efforts being made to address them. The Strategy was warmly welcomed by the Committee and, following the presentation, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Executive the endorsement of the Strategy and associated action plan.

RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE

That the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2031 be endorsed for recommendation to Council.

7. WORK PROGRAMME OSC21-017.

The Chairman presented the Work Programme to the Committee, noting that the report included the forward plan of Executive decisions for the remainder of the Municipal Year to enable the Committee Members to identify areas for pre-decision scrutiny during the year. It was noted that two additional items of business would be brought to future meetings of the Committee. The first report, to be presented in September, would set out for information the proposals contained in the Government's recently published Elections' Bill, noting that part of the Bill built upon the experiences of the Council in running a voter identification pilot. The second report would review the overview and scrutiny guidance published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, highlighting any gaps in the Council's approach. The report would be presented to the Committee in September or October 2021.

The Chairman drew the Members' attention to the suggestion within the agenda that consideration be given to any topics which could be considered for a detailed review in

accordance with the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit, potentially from amongst those items already identified on the Work Programme. The Chairman proposed that one area that could be explored in more detail was the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) project. Whilst it was noted that the Council had established a cross party HIF Oversight Panel, it was suggested that a scrutiny review group could be established to explore whether the Council would be able to manage the future risks of the project and what governance arrangements were in place.

Further to the training provided recently, it was noted that any topics for scrutiny should seek to be forward looking and be clear on what such a review would deliver in terms of benefits for the residents. To this end, it was suggested that a scrutiny topic selection form could be completed to enable the Committee to assess whether a review of the HIF project would meet the criteria for successful scrutiny.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be noted.

8. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Members of the Committee considered the Council's Performance and Financial Monitoring Information for March 2021, commonly referred to as the 'Green Book'. It was noted that the financial monitoring was normally undertaken by the Finance Task Group.

Councillor Kirby referred to the receipt of payments to support the Council with the costs incurred through its activities around managing the Covid pandemic within the Borough. Councillor Kirby suggested that the Committee should monitor the extent to which the payments would continue and suggested that the Green Book could include a table identifying which of the sums received were temporary, with a net total shown without the temporary sums included.

Councillor Nicholson suggested that a briefing on the Green Book would be helpful for the new Members of the Council and drew attention to the staffing figures, noting that BME communities were under represented in the top 5% of earners and that there was no indication of the number of staff within the category with a disability. Councillor Nicholson asked for a more detailed breakdown of the figures. Officers undertook to arrange a briefing on the Green Book and for the information on staffing to be provided to Councillor Nicholson.

The Chairman noted that the trend in the percentage of household waste arising which had been sent for reuse, recycling, composting or anaerobic digestion had been falling in recent months, continuing to be affected by the impact of Covid on households.

RESOLVED

That the Green Book (March) be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 8.38 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____