

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 21 March 2022

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: Councillors K M Davis and A-M Barker

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 21 February 2022 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Committee discussed the matters arising from the previous meeting and it had been noted that actions relating to the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book) had been closed and would be addressed under Performance and Financial Monitoring Information Review item being presented at this meeting.

The outstanding matters arising related to the compilation of trends for the Annual Overview of Complaints report which had been presented at the last meeting and it was noted that the work was on-going to provide this to Members.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to discuss.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Neighbourhood Services, Geoff McManus, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-

pecuniary) in any items concerning the Thameswey Group of Companies of which he was a Council-appointed director. The interest was such that Mr McManus could advise the Committee on those items.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman briefly went through the work programme, noting that it was forward-looking to the next municipal year and that there were suggested additions to the work programme for the next Committee to consider.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be noted.

7. TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE LOCALLY OSC22-018

The Committee was received a comprehensive report written by Lara Beattie, Senior Policy Officer, and a presentation by Tracey Haskins, Green Infrastructure Manager. Through the presentation and report a number of topics were covered such as Woking ranking 10th in the league table compiled by Climate Emergency UK which ranked district council's on the effectiveness of their climate emergency plans and living green walls and work that had been done on supporting greener solutions for transport such as the electric vehicle ChargePoint pilot scheme.

The presentation highlighted to the Committee work which would be carried out in the future, such as the continued focus on community engagement through the Planet Woking Programme and other partnership events and a review of Woking 2050 (the Council's current Climate Change Strategy) during this Municipal Year to ensure that the Council's net zero commitments were front and centre.

Following several points of discussion around engagement on social media, tree planting and the role of renewable energy in the future plans of the Council, it was agreed that further information would be provided outside of the meeting to Members.

The Committee was unanimous in their thanks to Officers for the work that had been carried out. Thanks were also extended to Councillor Davis and Councillor Howard for driving forward the work on climate change.

RESOLVED

That the Tackling Climate Change Locally report and presentation be noted.

8. QUARTERLY NOISE COMPLAINTS REPORT OSC22-019

Emma Bourne, Environmental Health Manager, introduced the quarterly report on noise complaints, highlighting the process around construction noise complaints before elaborating on some of the data in the report which included information on complaints, section 60 notices and PCNs.

Following a question on Network Rail engineering works, it was noted that Network Rail was permitted to carry-out engineering works out of hours. Any complaints could be forwarded onto the Environmental Health team who would look into them.

Following a discussion on air quality and noise complaints due to the Sheerwater redevelopment, it was stated that developers were monitoring air quality and that the reports were presented to another Committee. It was added that the Environmental Health team monitored air quality across the Borough. It was noted that the pandemic had meant that analysing trends was difficult due to the disruption that was caused to development.

RESOLVED

That the Quarterly Noise Complaints Report be noted.

9. SAFER WOKING PARTNERSHIP - COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN OSC22-020

Camilla Edmiston, Community Safety Manager, and PC Inspector Kit Moc presented the draft Safer Woking Partnership Plan 2022-2025. The Members were advised that the five key priority areas were: Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime, Drugs and Alcohol, Reducing Re-Offending and Preventing Violent Extremism. It was noted that there had been increased instances of fraud and domestic abuse since the start of the pandemic as well as a reduced tolerance of anti-social behaviour. It was also apparent that there was a significant impact of organised crime in the Borough, particularly in the context of drugs.

The Committee discussed a number of topics such as encouraging people to take sensible precautions, tackling re-offending and the difficulties in communicating to the public with regards to crime hotspots. Members took part in a further discussion on what they as Ward Councillors could do to support the work of the Police and the Woking Partnership Plan. It was stated that Members could engage with and manage the expectations of the public and provide the public with information on what could be addressed as well as the timeframe for any action that could be taken. The Members noted that they were grateful of the offer from PC Inspector Kit Moc for a 'walk-about' for either themselves or any member of the public in order to increase community engagement.

The Committee thanked the Police and Officers involved in the work and endorsed the Safer Woking Partnership Plan with a request that the Police looked at methods of communicating with the public in instances where a crime has been reported whilst ensuring that it did not interfere with an investigation.

RESOLVED

That the Safer Woking Partnership – Community Safety Plan be noted.

10. FAMILY CENTRES - SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN OSC22-021

Nicola Norman, Family Centres Manager, provided a comprehensive presentation, supplemented by a brief report, which highlighted the provision of Family Centres and the Family Support Programme. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was discussed, in particular the impact it had had on children's mental health and wellbeing, social isolation

and domestic abuse. It was also noted that the Family Centres adapted their ways of working to meet the challenges that had emerged as a result of the pandemic.

The presentation provided case-study examples of how vulnerable families had seen their situation improve as a result of the work that had been done through Family Centres and the Family Support Programme. Attention was also drawn to the partnership work that was taking place with external organisations such as Woking Mind and Mindworks and how this partnership work was crucial in providing these positive outcomes for vulnerable families and individuals.

The discussions with Members focussed on how to identify vulnerable families, the impact of lockdowns on young children and how the Family Services team was working on a practical basis. Members were unanimous in welcoming the improved outcomes for families supported by the Family Services team and in particular welcomed the positive stories that the presentation touched on. Thanks was extended to Nicola Norman and her team for the positive work that they had been carrying out.

RESOLVED

Family Centres Service Delivery Plan be noted.

11. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION REVIEW OSC22-023

Adam Walther, Head of Transformation and Digital, presented the report on the review of the performance and financial monitoring information, noting that the review had emerged from the recommendations set out in Dr Gifty Edila's report. The review would encompass the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information ('Green Book') and other performance monitoring, including governance, decision making and the use of technology. The Committee was presented with a timeline of how the work would progress and, following a question from the Chairman, it was stated that the planned engagement with Members would commence following the May 2022 Local Election.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive an interim report at its meeting on 11 July 2022 on which comments would be invited. A final report would be presented to the Executive recommending changes upon completion of the work, which was anticipated to be September 2022.

RESOLVED

That the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information Review be noted.

12. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OSC22-027

The Chairman introduced the draft annual report of the Committee, outlining the key elements of the report and noting that it covered all the items discussed at the Committee during the municipal year up. The report also contained summary reports from the four task groups of the Committee.

Following a question on whether it was possible to present an amended version of this report to full Council on 31 March 2022, it was stated that the Chairman and the Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer would work to accommodate this request.

Committee Members, Officers, external guests, Members of the Executive and in particular Councillor Davis were all thanked for their work, support and attendance at the Committee over the course of the year.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be noted.

13. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Committee welcomed the progress that had been made in respect of the provision of affordable homes.

Following a question on the trend in car parking, it was noted that the scenarios that were modelled were roughly in-line with actual numbers and that car parking would be monitored. Updates would be provided to Members going forwards.

RESOLVED

That the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information (December 2021) be noted.

14. FINANCE TASK GROUP UPDATE OSC22-024

The Chairman presented the update of the Finance Task Group. The Task Group had looked at the draft reports of the medium-term financial strategy and had held discussions around Victoria Square. The Committee shared the concern of the Task Group in respect of the delay of the publication of the previous years' audits.

Following a question on the delay of the audits, the Committee Members were advised that the delay related to the resources of the auditor and that Woking Borough Council was not the only Authority in this position.

RESOLVED

Finance Task Group Update be noted.

15. HOUSING TASK GROUP UPDATE OSC22-025

Councillor Barker, Chairman of the Housing Task Group, presented the report of the Task Group and highlighted key points of the report. These included the good work that had been made on addressing empty homes in the Borough, the progress that had been made on the New Vision Homes contract being brought back in-house, and the work on affordable homes. It was noted that delays in affordable homes coming forward on Council owned sites was disappointing.

Following a discussion on the retention of staff, it was stated that it was hoped that the processes would be improved to ensure more oversight on what teams were doing and to have stronger performance management processes in place to address any issues that could arise.

RESOLVED

That Housing Task Group update be noted.

16. HIF HOUSING OUTPUTS TASK GROUP INTERIM REPORT OSC22-026 - ORAL UPDATE.

Councillor Kirby, Chairman of the HIF Housing Outputs Task Group, provided an update on the work of the Group. The Task Group had met three times and, in line with the terms of reference, had reviewed the housing output and the associated risks. It was stated that further work would be carried out on mitigations of the risks, timescales and implications of the Masterplan, reflecting the intentions of the original Council motion.

It was intended to present a full report at the meeting of the Committee on 6 June 2022 following checks by Officers and comments from the Members of the Task Group.

The appreciation of the Committee was extended to Task Group Members and the Officers for their support in the on-going work of the Task Group.

RESOLVED

That the HIF Housing Outputs Task Group Interim Report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 10.05 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____