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Overview and Scrutiny Committee 20 March 2023

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 20 March 2023

Present:

Cllr A Azad (Chairman)
Cllr J R Sanderson (Vice-Chair)

Cllr H Akberali	Cllr A Caulfield
Cllr K M Davis	Cllr C S Kemp
Cllr A Kirby	Cllr R N Leach
Cllr J P Morley	Cllr M I Raja

Also Present: Councillors J Brown and E Nicholson.

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, 20 February 2022 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES OSC23-015

The Vice-Chairman introduced the report on matters raised at previous meetings of the Committee, drawing the Committee's attention to actions undertaken subsequently.

Subsequent to publication of the agenda, Affinity Water had provided an apology for not attending the meeting in February and offered to attend a future meeting.

RESOLVED That

the report be noted.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to discuss.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were made.

6. ENTERPRISE M3

The Committee welcomed Stephen Martin, Joint Managing Director of Enterprise M3, to the meeting.

Stephen Martin provided Members with a presentation covering the activities that Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) had carried out over the past year both in the Borough and the wider region. A total of £726 million had been injected into the region over the past ten years.

The LEP had contributed significant funding to transport infrastructure in the Borough in previous years. However, with the introduction of the Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the LEP had not provided such funding recently. The LEP regularly liaised with Woking Borough Council departments to ensure the work of the Growth Hub dovetailed with that of the Council's Woking Works Initiative. The Growth Hub had provided one to one support to thirty Woking businesses over the previous several years. Part of work of the Growth Hub provided specialist advice for businesses on how to reduce their carbon footprint and taking advantage of opportunities in the low carbon sector.

Enterprise M3 continued to provide loans and equity investments to small businesses with high growth potential that otherwise struggled to access conventional funding from the commercial sector. Following a question from a Member of the Committee, Stephen Martin confirmed that the loans were typically for a period of two or three years.

Stephen Martin provided a summary of several sectors that the LEP was focused on for the next several years. Members were particularly interested in how Woking could foster those sectors including the environmental and digital sectors. These aligned with priorities of both the Council and Enterprise M3.

Enterprise M3 had recently formed a 'Jet Zero' cluster. As it had only recently formed there were no timescales attached and Stephen Martin was focused on allowing it to foster naturally.

The LEP had provided significant support to the videogames industry, focused primarily in Guildford. Stephen Martin undertook to confirm if any Woking videogames companies had benefitted from the support of Enterprise M3 outside of the meeting.

Another Local Authority had approached Enterprise M3 to develop a strategy for targeting the rural economy. Both Members and Stephen Martin were keen to see such a strategy expand to include Woking Borough.

Stephen Martin encouraged Members and the Council to contact Enterprise M3 for all sectors identified as potential to grow in the Borough.

The Committee was pleased by the focus placed on supporting youth with the creation of several initiatives by Enterprise M3. One scheme connected employers and schools as well as provided schools with professional contacts that helped ensure the careers provision matched the careers market. Enterprise M3 continued to provide support for teachers to understand the careers opportunity for pupils and students in the Green sector. A separate fund had been created that supported further education institutions to promote provision of relevant skills needed in the Green sector.

The LEP had organised a careers fair that connected pupils and students with industry professionals and promoted multiple avenues of further education.

In conjunction with Surrey Chambers of Commerce, Enterprise M3 was developing a local skills development plan to map a set of actions to encourage relevant post-sixteen technical skills that met the needs of the local economy. The Plan was a Department for Education initiative.

The LEP continued to run a skills advisory panel to connect industry with skills providers with an aim to make skills provision more reactive to market needs. The advisory panel considered all sectors but keen focus was on areas where a lack of skills had been identified.

The LEP was working with local authorities to construct a fibre spine between Basingstoke and Guildford that would increase the connectivity of businesses along the route. Members were disappointed that Woking would not benefit from the fibre spine and were keen for the Council and Enterprise M3 to discuss introducing a similar scheme into the Borough. Stephen Martin agreed to hold discussions with the Council to scope such an infrastructure project.

During the recent Government budget it was announced that the work of Local Enterprise Partnerships was being considered for absorption into local authorities and a consultation questionnaire had been circulated to LEPs and local authorities. Nevertheless, Stephen Martin confirmed that this would have no impact on the work of Enterprise M3 for the 2023-24 year. Members were keen to know if Enterprise M3 could become an independent company should funding from Central Government be withdrawn. Due to the recency of the announcement Stephen Martin was not in a position to answer the question. Stephen Martin confirmed that Enterprise M3 wanted to make any such decisions in consultation with local authorities.

Following a question from a Member on support for businesses based in homes, Stephen Martin agreed to provide more information from the Growth Hub outside of the meeting.

Stephen Martin confirmed that the Leadership Panel, by which representatives of local authorities met with Enterprise M3, continued to be held regularly.

Councillor Azad and all Members of the Committee thanked Stephen Martin for attending the meeting.

7. SAFER WOKING PARTNERSHIP - COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN OSC23-018

The Committee welcomed Inspector Nell Rodriguez, Borough Commander of Surrey Police, and Camilla Edmiston, Community Safety Officer.

Camilla Edmiston provided a summary of the report for Members. It was a statutory requirement for the Community Safety Plan to be reported yearly.

The Community Safety Task Group received a quarterly report covering progress on the Community Safety Plan. The Woking Joint Committee was due to end and future updates would be given to the Safer Woking Partnership Group, once it was set up.

Statutory Guidance covering serious violence duty was introduced by Central Government at the end of 2022. The Police Commissioner and Surrey County Council had produced

related guidance and all was being incorporated into the Community Safety Plan. A new county-wide strategy focusing on violence against women and girls had been released and this was being actively developed into the Community Safety Plan.

A community safety consultation was held in January and February 2023 which showed an increase in confidence from residents in the handling of crime and anti-social behaviour by the local police force compared with 2021.

Woking had recently been deemed one of the safest places in the Country and Members thanked Surrey Police, Community Safety team and partners for their continued work.

The Committee discussed anti-social behaviour and the difficulty in defining it. Legislation defined anti-social behaviour as causing harassment, alarm, or distress, which was a very broad scope within which to work. The nature of anti-social behaviour was cross-cutting between organisations and formed part of discussions at regular inter-agency meetings held. It was not always appropriate to report anti-social behaviour to the Police as many enforcement powers were held by the Local Authority. Both Camilla Edmiston and Inspector Rodriguez asked Members to reinforce to residents to report anti-social behaviour. Although it was not always appropriate or possible to take action against an individual incident, repeated incidents could be used against offenders.

Following a question, Camilla Edmiston urged Members to contact Officers in Housing if they were concerned that anti-social behaviour in Council-resident properties was not being addressed.

Members were encouraged to contact the Community Safety team if uncertain whether a matter reported to them was considered anti-social behaviour.

The Borough experienced relatively lower levels of county-lines crime compared with neighbouring districts and boroughs. Inspector Rodriguez confirmed that the Police continued to work in conjunction with British Transport Police on county-lines.

Councillor Azad reminded Members that it was necessary, as public figures, for Councillors to urge residents to report any incidents to the correct authority. If residents were concerned they could be identified, Crime Stoppers provided an anonymous way to report incidents.

[Post-meeting Note: The number for Crime Stoppers is 0800 555 111]

Inspector Rodriguez emphasised that, due to well publicised resource issues within the Police, coupled with the changed nature of crimes from previous generations, foot patrol was not always the most effective use of Police Officer time. Similarly, following concerns raised by several Councillors, Inspector Rodriguez explained that, though an immediate response was often desired from residents when a crime was reported, in actuality it was not always the most effective method to deal with an issue and there was greater value in crime prevention, in understanding and resolving the sources of the crime. It was particularly less effective to attend where a succession of lower-level crimes was occurring. A rapid response was always prioritised where people were deemed to be in danger. Surrey Police used a matrix to assess threat, harm, and risk to prioritise attendance.

Transparency regarding work undertaken by Police Officers, and managing the expectations of residents, was a key issue for the Police at a national scale. The Borough

Commander was in the process of identifying specific needs of each Ward to improve effectiveness of the Police and crime prevention.

Members were pleased to hear that the Police were engaging directly with young people and schools.

Councillor Brown, in attendance at the meeting, was invited to contribute by Councillor Azad. Councillor Brown wished to understand what criteria gave rise to the installation of CCTV and whether Byfleet village would be considered an appropriate place for installation of CCTV. Although the Borough did possess CCTV cameras, the Borough Commander explained that the footage from cameras did not always meet the evidentiary threshold to be used in a case as identification of individuals was required. Additionally, Camilla Edmiston explained that the installation of CCTV was both expensive and frequently not always the most effective tool. Although CCTV was sometimes useful at capturing the crime being committed or those that have committed a crime, it was generally more effective to devote resources to preventing the crime occurring.

An approach to preventing crime that had previously seen success was 'design out crime' whereby an area was inspected to identify what infrastructure could be installed or changes made to an environment to prevent a crime occurring.

Inspector Rodriguez and Camilla Edmiston invited Members to meet with them outside of the meeting to discuss any concerns.

Councillor Azad and the whole Committee thanked Inspector Rodriguez and Camilla Edmiston for their time and presentation.

RESOLVED That

the Safer Woking Partnership Plan 2023-26 be noted.

8. NOISE COMPLAINTS UPDATE OSC23-017

Councillor Azad provided a summary of the report for the benefit of Members.

Councillor Davis suggested that the report was redundant and should be considered for inclusion in the Annual Review of Complaints Received. Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services, agreed to consider the change.

RESOLVED That

the report be noted.

9. OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED ANNUAL REPORT OSC23-010

Councillor Azad invited Members to raise any queries on the report to Joanne McIntosh, Director of Legal and Democratic Services.

A category for Legal Services had been included in the complaints summary, an addition from previous editions of the report. The inclusion reflected the team responsible for handling Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information requests complaints.

Members noted that there was no summary of complaints from Joint Waste Solutions.

[Post-meeting Note: Due to an ICT issue, Woking Borough Council was unable to receive the summary of Amey's, Joint Waste Solutions' contractor, complaints received. For convenience, the summary has been included with the minutes].

Joanne McIntosh considered it necessary for housing service complaints to be kept separate due to their nature and different timescales.

Councillor Davis shared concern over the Housing-related complaints that involved gas. The Councillor requested that the Council be confident these did not constitute a material risk of harm to the resident from the perspective of gas safety.

Joanne McIntosh agreed to work with Louise Strongitharm, Strategic Director of Communities, to identify the nature of housing complaints connected to gas.

Officers recognised that some residents preferred to use the formal, corporate complaints procedure as captured in the Report. Other residents equally preferred registering complaints directly with the service.

RESOLVED That
the report be noted.

10. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN OSC23-016

The Committee welcomed the Report and were pleased that the previous recommendation to publicise the work of the Committee was being acted upon.

Councillor Kirby suggested that all items brought to the Committee should be categorised for the benefit of residents. The proposal was accepted by Members.

RESOLVED That

- (i) the recommendations in the report, namely to create a webpage on the Council website and utilise digital communications to inform residents of the activities of the Committee, be agreed;
- (ii) Officers be instructed to proceed with the work in time for the new Municipal Year; and
- (iii) items scrutinised by the Committee be included on the webpage and include themed topics.

11. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 2022-23 OSC23-019

Members recognised the breadth of work undertaken by the Committee in the current Municipal Year. Due to the diverse remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it could be difficult to communicate with residents the functions of the Committee. The report provided a practical demonstration of the work of overview and scrutiny.

The Committee agreed that the report should be included on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee webpage, once created.

[Post-meeting note: No summary of the work of the Housing Task Group for the year was provided.]

RESOLVED That

- (i) the report be agreed; and
- (ii) the report be submitted to the next meeting of the Council.

12. REVIEW OF UPDATED TERMS OF REFERENCE OSC23-020

Councillor Azad provided a summary of the report for Members.

Councillor Davis noted that two of the four Working Groups that reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee included a clause requiring the Chairperson to be a Member of the opposition party; the other two made no reference. It was the Councillor's view that the provision should be uniform. Following discussion, the Committee agreed to the proposal that the provision mandating an opposition party member be chairperson should be stripped from all terms of reference, save where required in the Constitution.

RESOLVED That

the comments of the Committee be referred to the Executive.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE FOLLOWING WEACT PRESENTATION OSC23-021

The Committee reviewed the Executive Summary of the WEAct presentation report:

"Following the presentation made by representatives of WEAct at the meeting of the Committee held on 20 February 2023, Members agreed to provide recommendations to the Executive in support of Climate Change action to be taken, accelerated, or otherwise furthered by the Council. During the evening the Committee and WEAct discussed WEAct's recommendations: the Council strengthens the Climate Emergency Action Plan to reflect the recommendations of the Anthesis carbon footprint assessment; officers consider the feasibility of joining the UK100 network of councils (giving due consideration for the financial and resource implications); the Council continues to be a 'High Ambition' council on climate action; further support on embedding the Council's net zero ambition across the organisation; and the Council continues its leadership role in encouraging community climate action."

The Committee agreed that several specified proposals arising from discussions with WEAct at the February meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be submitted as a recommendation to the Executive.

RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE That

the proposals for action in the report's Executive Summary be referred to the Greener Woking Working Group for consideration.

14. WORK PROGRAMME OSC23-014

The Chairman introduced the report on the updated Work Programme, drawing the Committee's attention to the key changes since the document had last been received.

Members again agreed to offer Affinity Water the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A suggested addition to the Work Programme, included at a previous meeting of the Committee, was to invite Thames Water to another meeting. Members agreed a timescale in principle for the end of the 2023-24 Municipal Year, once renovations had progressed at local sewage treatment works.

A request was made for the Committee to consider the Master Plan that had received resident feedback. Giorgio Framalico, Strategic Director of Place, agreed to discuss with Members outside of the meeting to identify specific strands of the Master Plan that would benefit from scrutiny by the Committee.

Councillor Kirby, Chairman of the Housing Infrastructure Fund Housing Outputs Task Group, which had remained on hiatus through the 2022-23 Municipal Year, enquired whether its remaining work could be added to the remit of the Local Development Framework Working Group. Councillor Kemp, Chairman of the Housing Infrastructure Fund Task Group, informed the Committee that the Group had not met recently as the HIF process was under review nationally, thus impacting any remaining work of the HIF Housing Outputs Task Group.

It was requested whether the Committee could receive an update from the South East Coast Ambulance Service and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service at a future meeting.

The Work Programme contained a minor inconsistency. The Council was to consider that the names of several Groups be changed from Task Group to Working Group. As such, the Work Programme should reflect such change.

RESOLVED That

the Work Programme be noted.

15. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Members of the Committee were invited to raise any points in respect of the recently published Performance & Financial Monitoring Information.

Councillor Kirby registered scepticism of the reported refuse collections, 99.2%, which had not changed for several months. It was the Councillor's view, formed in part by Joint Waste Solutions not providing complaints data for the Annual Review of Complaints Received report, that the work of the Committee was being hobbled in attempting to scrutinise refuse collection.

Councillor Sanderson was pleased that fly-tipping continued to trend below that reported in the previous year.

RESOLVED That

the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information (December 2022) be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 9.25 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

Count of UPRN	Column Labels												
Row Labels	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Grand Total
Assisted Collections	1	4	2	6	1	2	2	8	5		3	3	37
Bulky Collections	3	1	1	1	3	3	2	8	1	1	3	2	29
Crew Behaviour	6	8	4	9	9	12	12	6	10	14	8	8	106
Customer Service	25	21	2	10	17	13	13	17	27	20	34	23	222
Damage to Property	3	2	1		1	2	2	1	1	3	3	5	24
Deliveries / Removals	21	21		10	16	38	15	28	34	38	53	27	301
Invoicing / Payments	10	12	2	2		1	1	3	12	18	22	10	93
Missed Collections	142	105	18	50	72	67	96	129	73	56	66	81	955
Waste Spillage	2			1	6	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	19
Compliment	5	1	4	6	4	1	3	1	2	1	7	2	37
Grand Total	218	175	34	95	129	140	149	203	166	152	200	162	1823

