



TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on Monday, 29 January 2024 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking, Surrey GU21 6YL.

The agenda for the meeting is set out below.

JULIE FISHER
Chief Executive

NOTE: Filming Council Meetings

Please note the meeting will be filmed and will be broadcast live and subsequently as an archive on the Council's website (www.woking.gov.uk). The images and sound recording will also be used for training purposes within the Council. Generally the public seating areas are not filmed. However by entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed.

AGENDA

PART I - PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT

- 1 Apologies for Absence
To receive any apologies for absence.
- 2 Minutes (Pages 5 - 18)
To approve the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 20 November 2023 and 11 December 2023 as published.
- 3 Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes OSC24-002 (Pages 19 - 24)
To review any outstanding items from the previous minutes.
- 4 Urgent Business
To consider any business that the Chairman rules may be dealt with under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 5 Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other interests from Members in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting.

Performance Management

- 6 Financial Monitoring Report - Budget Monitoring and Forecast 2023-24 - Quarter 3 OSC24-006 (to follow)
Reporting Person – Eugene Walker

Matters for Scrutiny

- 7 Capital Programme 2023-24 to 2027-28 OSC24-003 (to follow)
Reporting Person – Eugene Walker
- 8 General Fund Budgets Update 2024-25 OSC24-004 (to follow)
Reporting Person – Eugene Walker
- 9 Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2024-25 OSC24-005 (to follow)
Reporting Persons – Eugene Walker and Louise Strongitharm

Matters for Determination

- 10 Work Programme OSC24-001 (Pages 25 - 36)
Reporting Person: Councillor Josh Brown

Working Group Updates

- 11 Economic Development Working Group Update OSC23-059 (verbal update)
Reporting Person: Councillor Anila Javaid
- 12 Finance Working Group Update OSC24-007 (to follow)
Reporting Person: Councillor Tahir Aziz
- 13 Housing Working Group Update OSC24-008 (to follow)
Reporting Person: Councillor Tahir Aziz

AGENDA ENDS

Date Published: 19 January 2024

For further information regarding this agenda and arrangements for the meeting, please contact Toby Nash, Scrutiny & Democratic Services Officer, Ext 3056, Email toby.nash@woking.gov.uk



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MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 20 November 2023

Present:

Cllr J Brown (Chair)
Cllr A Kirby (Vice-Chair)

Cllr H Akberali Cllr J Morley
Cllr K Davis Cllr L Rice
Cllr R Leach

Also Present: Councillors A-M Barker and D Roberts

Absent: Councillors A Caulfield, A Javaid and M Sullivan

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Caulfield, Javaid and Sullivan.

Apologies for absence had also been received from Councillor Nicholson who had intended to attend as Portfolio Holder for items on the agenda.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 16 October 2023 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES OSC23-055

The Matter requesting that a report on complaints be brought to the November meeting was discussed. A view was expressed conveying disappointment at Officers for not being able to bring the report. It was noted that some complaints had been incorporated into the Performance Monitoring Information, item nine of the agenda. Officers confirmed that indicators, including summaries of complaints, were continuing to be incorporated into the Performance Monitoring Information.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair ruled that the Review of Fees and Charges 2024-25 item that was considered by the Executive on 16 November 2023 was to be taken as urgent business.

The reason for the urgency, at its first opportunity, prior to the recommendations from the Executive being formally debated by Council on 30 November 2023.

Eugene Walker, Interim Finance Director and Section 151 Officer, introduced the item. The proposed changes to fees and charges had been developed within the framework of the Council's review of providing discretionary and statutory services. The Council had embarked on a paradigm shift on its approach to budget, including charging for services. Two underlying principles for each service had been applied; either cost recovery or cost neutrality.

The Committee discussed the format of the report recognising that it was very information dense and lacked consistency which inhibited effective scrutiny.

Councillor Roberts noted that the Council had historically not prioritised management accounting which had caused insufficient reporting and those reports that were generated not including all information that would be beneficial to Members. This was an area that Officers were actively addressing.

Several suggestions to improve the report in future years were made.

- The rationale for each increase be included in future years to aid Members in determining whether to approve the fees and charges.
- How proposed increases could impact parts of the community.
- Categories for fees and charges. An example set was given; inflation, removal of subsidies, improved accounting, cost awareness, catch-up (where there had been no increase for several years), outliers, and other factors.
- If proposed changes from the previous year were realised.
- Evidence of where benchmarking had been performed.
- Evidence of where fees and charges were increased to reflect increased costs incurred by the Council.

The Committee considered it most appropriate to instruct the Finance Working Group to explore with Officers improvements to the Fees and Charges 2025-26 report. It was recognised that the Council was embarking on multiple streams of improvement across all financial and commercial activities and that many elements of best practice already in development should be incorporated into the work.

The Working Group was requested to provide an update to the Committee by the end of the Municipal Year including a timeline of when the improvements would be delivered in time for the next review of Fees and Charges. Work began on the report in conjunction with the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy in the Summer months.

Specific query was raised on the management fee for Homelink, a service shared with other Councils, and whether the Council incurred any additional costs as the lead Council for the scheme. Officers undertook to provide information outside of the meeting.

The pop-in visits service was intended as ad hoc and to be used in exception when individuals would not be able to visit those they support for a period. The Council had not particularly promoted the service but intended to keep it.

Increases to community meals charges were primarily due to inflationary pressures. Efficiencies had been made in the service by reducing the number of rounds each meal was delivered in, from six to five. The breakfast option was cold, pre-prepared and delivered at the same time as a hot meal.

Although St Mary's kitchen had closed, it was not due to lack of success from the model and a similar project was continuing at Westfield. Officers considered the model worthy of expanding..

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

6. IMPROVEMENT AND RECOVERY PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE OSC23-057

Julie Fisher, Chief Executive Officer, introduced the item. Significant progress had been made against each of the four action plan themes adopted by Council in August 2023. Each of the four themes were interconnected and as such each benefited and required improvements from the other themes.

The Council was in the early stages of developing its new vision. It was commented that simultaneous to its development should be ensuring the Council articulated its purposes which would in turn help shape the vision.

The Council was due to begin consultation on phase two of its corporate restructure which would place positions at risk across the Council.

The release of Part II documents, a workstream of the Governance and Assurance theme, was well underway but did not yet have a release window. Redactions were primarily of personal information.

The Green Spaces consultation would begin in due course, once the discovery work on all 44 play areas, five skate parks and five multi-use games areas was complete. The consultation would engage both the public and key stakeholders. Officers confirmed that Members would have sight of the consultation prior to its publication to provide comment.

The engagement performed in the Summer of 2023 had not been directly compared with the recently concluded consultations due to their different nature. The Summer engagement had been conducted to gauge public opinion on the Council's services. The consultations were performed to understand the impact of changing specific services.

Risks existed throughout the four themes; Officers confirmed that the red flags were connected primarily with the Financial theme. There were significant issues with capacity

within the Finance team, while systems, processes and procedures were being revised to meet the current and future needs of the Council.

Significant legacy issues remained within the Governance theme which were being addressed. Officers emphasised the need to ensure the Council was applying best practice to its fundamental functions.

It was confirmed that Officers were working with other Local Authorities and staff had expertise from transformations in other organisations to ensure that the Council was effecting changes efficiently.

The recruitment process for a new Section 151 Officer was underway. Officers cautioned that the exercise had been carried out previously without success. Officers stated it was premature to present contingency should the Council not be able to recruit a permanent post again.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW OSC23-056

Eugene Walker introduced the item. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA) had updated its guidance that Local Authorities should report quarterly rather than six-monthly. Officers would amend the schedule to meet CIPFA's guidance.

The Capital programme had been suspended at the start of the Municipal Year. Two business cases had been submitted to Government to enable completion of the Victoria Square development and a modified Sheerwater Regeneration scheme. These were the only capital expenditures.

Development of a debt reduction plan was in train. The Council was only borrowing from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB).

Discussion was ongoing with Government on how the Council could set a balanced budget for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

An element of the report was queried for over-simplifying; it was reported that £43 million would be received in interest payments from bodies that the Council had loaned money to but that the vast majority was at risk of not being paid. Eugene Walker confirmed that Officers were working on the reporting of this information for it to predict return at year-end and that only a small proportion to be received was from external organisations and not Council companies.

Interest payments had been suspended from ThamesWey companies and Victoria Square Woking Limited to allow the companies to continue operating. However, both made a small pre-tax and interest profit and Officers were beginning to engage the entities on making modest payments.

The Council was continuing to ensure as best it could collection of payments from external organisations.

In response to a query, the Section 151 Officer noted that debt restructuring was very rare for Local Authorities as it seldom provided any benefit, the PWLB charging a premium or discount that cancelled out any potential positive impact.

The Council would need to develop a comprehensive programme of asset disposals which would then allow discussion with Government on which debts the Council would be required to repay.

The Committee discussed the Council previously having a credit rating, which was highly unusual for a Local Authority. It was questioned why there was reference to country limits and Eugene Walker agreed that it would be reviewed at the next opportunity.

It was requested that the Executive Summary of the report be revised for future editions of the report by capturing the information in the main body.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and compliance with the Council's approved strategy be noted.

8. GENERAL FUND AND HRA OUTTURN REPORT 2022-23 OSC23-062

Eugene Walker introduced the item. The report had been produced in part as the statement of accounts was due at the Standards and Audit Committee but had been delayed.

The report showed a £9 million overspend for the year.

A common theme between the item and the report at item ten, of overspend, exemplified the need for the Council to live within its means. The Section 151 Officer exemplified the size of the Council's commercial estate, which had an income of £22 million which was larger than the income from Council Tax and Business Rates. Eugene Walker noted that proportionality needed to be considered going forward due to the dependence on volatile income sources.

The report also showed issues with the sustainability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Work was being performed to ensure historic recharges to the HRA were correct and remained correct going forward. Recent decisions by Council over Sheerwater would also help ensure sustainability of the HRA by reintroducing properties for rental.

Clarity was sought on the NVH contract termination. Officers explained that an accounting error occurred in the 2021/22 year where a figure was reported incorrectly but then corrected in the 2022/23 year.

Officers confirmed that a review of how rental drops from tenancy changes and incentives offered to commercial tenants were amortised was underway.

It was recognised that the Council lacked the processes required to accurately forecast performance of its commercial estate and needed to be addressed.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9. PERFORMANCE MONITORING INFORMATION

The Committee reviewed the Performance Monitoring Information. The report was of a new format and included many different metrics from previous iterations of what was commonly called the Green Book.

Management indicators had been included at the end of the report but kept separate from indicators that were subject to more regular change.

Councillor Brown requested that Officers report back on why Byfleet and West Byfleet ward had -£4000 balance in its CIL account and what steps would be taken to remedy it.

Risk 2 of Section 7, Key Corporate Strategic Risks, was questioned as to its inclusion, given that it had been realised and was being experienced by the Council.

The Committee enquired how staff were being supported given the impending corporate restructure. Julie Fisher recognised that staff sickness was likely to rise in the short term.

Staff were being offered formal training on aspects of restructure, the consultation and key job skills. The Chief Executive and Corporate Leadership Team gave regular all-staff briefings and met monthly with senior managers and included discussions on support for staff.

The Council provided access to an independent, confidential Employee Assistance Programme, available for all staff as required.

Julie Fisher also recognised that the organisation restructure put pressure on all levels of management and they too were being supported.

It was requested that information on voter registrations be included in future editions.

Officers undertook to provide clarification over the total expenditure on Voter ID.

The Committee praised the new format for the increased readability and usability as well as the more relevant performance indicators.

The report used a red, amber, green system to indicate performance against targets. Members noted that this was not applied universally to figures which introduced uncertainty as to the meaning of the value. The Committee requested that this be reviewed.

The Committee raised several areas for improvement which Officers confirmed was either being worked on would be considered for future editions.

RESOLVED

That the Performance Monitoring Information (Q2 2023) be noted.

10. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - BUDGET MONITORING AND FORECAST 2023-24 - QUARTER 2 OSC23-063

Eugene Walker introduced the item, noting that there was an overspend of £7.6 million for the year. £6.5 million of the overspend was due to legacy issues which would require

structural solutions. The remainder of the overspend was from service variance. Managers were undertaking mitigation activity to address the £1.1 million overspend. It would not be possible to address the whole overspend in the current financial year and some would be incorporated into the budget setting for the following year.

The Council had continued to operate the Financial Control Panel (FCP) that had been instituted on service of the Section 114 Notice. Any expenditure above £500 was required to be submitted to the FCP for consideration for approval.

The Committee discussed the £148,000 overspend on electricity for Red Car Park. Electricity consumption had not been budgeted for. It was known that the electric vehicle charging stations had not been linked to the Council's car park charging system due to compatibility issues and it was surmised that at least a portion of the overspend was due to this. Members registered their concern that this issue remained as it had been discussed in previous Council meetings over the past two years. It was suggested that the Council should disable the charging points across car parks until payments could be taken. It was suggested that a breakdown of the costs could be provided.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

11. **WORK PROGRAMME OSC23-054**

[Note: By the Council's Constitution, Council meetings are required to end after three and a half hours unless members of the Committee agree to extend the meeting. At 10:19pm the Committee held a vote to extend the meeting which was agreed by majority.]

Councillor Brown informed members that there would be an extraordinary meeting of the Committee to be held on 11 December 2023 to perform pre-decision scrutiny of items on the Executive agenda. It was agreed to consider the:

- Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and General Fund Budget 2024-25
- Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget Update 2024-25
- Asset Disposal

The asset disposal would need to be considered without public or press presence due to commercial sensitivity.

In response to a Scrutiny Topic Proposal form submitted by a representative of Citizens Advice Woking, the Committee reaffirmed its agreement from the meeting held on 16 October 2023 to delegate arrangement of their invitation to the Committee to the Chair and Vice-Chair. Preference was given to Citizens Advice Woking attending at the extraordinary meeting to be held on 11 December 2023.

In response to a concern raised, the Chair suggested that York Road Project be asked to submit a Scrutiny Topic Request form. York Road Project was an organisation that held a Service Level Agreement with the Council and would receive reduced support.

Concern was raised that inviting only one organisation would amount to unequal treatment of partner organisations.

The Committee agreed to delay invitation of Thames Water to a future meeting until after the start of the next Municipal Year.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be noted.

12. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP UPDATE

In the absence of the Chair of the Economic Development Working Group the item was deferred to a future meeting.

13. FINANCE WORKING GROUP UPDATE OSC23-060

The Committee received the written report of the Finance Working Group. A typographical error was noted at (2) of the Meeting held on 19 October 2023. The subsidy over 5 years was £3.119 million.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

14. HIF WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Councillor Kirby, Chair of the Working Group, provided a verbal update to the Committee. The Housing Infrastructure Fund project had ceased operation and as such Councillor Kirby would seek to work with the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Forster, to hold a meeting to consider the future of the project and the outcomes so far. The work of the HIF Housing Outputs Task Group would also be considered.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 10.44 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 11 December 2023

Present:

Cllr J Brown (Chair)
Cllr A Kirby (Vice-Chair)

Cllr H Akberali	Cllr J Morley
Cllr K Davis	Cllr L Rice
Cllr R Leach	Cllr M Sullivan

Also Present: Councillors A-M Barker, W Forster, I Johnson and D Roberts

Absent: Councillors A Caulfield and A Javaid

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Caulfield and Javaid.

2. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair ruled that two items due to be considered by the Executive on 14 December 2023 were to be taken as urgent business: Update to Improvement and Recovery Plan and Asset Disposal.

The reason for the urgency, the only opportunity for the Committee to consider the items prior to the Executive resolving the items at its meeting.

Update to Improvement and Recovery Plan

Louise Strongitharm, Strategic Director of Communities, introduced the item and explained that the Council had considered greater corporate oversight was necessary. The Council wished to ensure that the Council's housing stock was suitably prioritised and there was a strategic emphasis on it.

Asset Disposal

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the Asset Disposal item in view of the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the press and public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, to the Local Government Act 1972.

Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor Rice declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 4 – Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Update – arising from his position as an observer to Woking Community Transport. The interest was such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor Johnson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 4 – Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Update – arising from his wife's position as an employee of Citizens Advice Woking. The interest was such that Councillor Johnson left the Chamber for duration of the discussion on Citizens Advice Woking.

4. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) UPDATE OSC23-064

Eugene Walker, Interim Finance Director & Section 151 Officer, introduced the item.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

Officers were benchmarking the Council's expenditures against other Councils with the support of Local Partnerships. Through benchmarking it had been revealed that the Council spent above average on the provision of sport and recreation.

Options analysis and the deliverability of savings were being worked on for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The work was being informed by the Equality Impact Assessments, financial modelling and the likelihood of delivering each saving.

Eugene Walker reiterated that the Council lacked any reserves following the issuing of the Section 114 notice.

The Government had not amended its cap on Council Tax increases and therefore stood at three percent for district councils. The Section 151 Officer noted that other Councils in intervention had seen increases in excess of the cap. Woking Borough Council collected Council Tax on behalf of not just itself but also the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Officers emphasised that there was no proposal as yet on whether Council Tax would be altered.

The Capital Programme would be reported on at February Council and was intended to focus on core Council spending including the Decent Homes standard which typically formed the biggest single element of a District Council's Capital Homes.

It was the opinion of the Section 151 Officer that so long as all proposed savings were able to be taken by the Council, if the Council could not set a balanced budget in February 2024, it would not automatically require the issuing of a second Section 114 notice.

Eugene Walker explained that the ordinary mechanism employed by Government for Councils that have been issued Section 114 notices was a letter of comfort from the Secretary of State which was linked to a capitalisation directive. However, discussions were ongoing with Government on what mechanism would be sufficient for Woking Borough Council.

Citizens Advice Woking

Lorraine Buchanan, Laurence Oates, and Jakki Mimms, representatives of Citizens Advice Woking (CAW), provided a presentation on the organisation's work in the Borough.

CAW did not charge for their services and informed that Committee that the national body did not permit its franchises to charge.

Citizens Advice had been applying for grants from other organisations but there was concern that the loss of Council funding could not be wholly replaced.

Citizens Advice advised that Council Officers routinely signposted residents to the organisation or engaged directly for its expertise.

In addition to the core funding received from the Council through the Service Level Agreement CAW also received financial support for its work with refugees, paid by the Council from government funding for resettlement programmes.

Lorraine Buchanan noted that the number of people seeking support from CAW had increased steadily over the previous several years.

Citizens Advice noted that the core funding from the Council had reduced by five percent in the previous year and had been due to be reduced by the same again in each of the next two years prior to the Council's proposal to remove funding.

Lorraine Buchanan considered that the organisation ran efficiently and with only the basics required to operate. It spend approximately £500-£1000 per year on each volunteer, of which there were 70. Onboarding of a volunteer cost approximately £3500. CAW employed four staff full time as well as a number of part time staff.

CAW only provided support to those in the Borough. Any person that sought its support who was resident outside of the Borough may be helped initially but referred to their local Bureau for ongoing or further support.

Officers clarified that the Council continued to provide statutory services as it was required to rather than CAW.

It was requested that a paper be provided that explained the costs to the Council should CAW cease operation.

Officers suggested that the Council could support CAW to uncover any efficiencies that it could make in its operations and where it could coordinate support with other organisations. Julie Fisher, the Chief Executive, re-emphasised that the level of support CAW received from the Council could not continue.

Citizens Advice Woking considered that there was no other organisation operating in the Borough that held the breadth of expertise to support residents in the Borough, particularly with complex cases.

Woking Community Transport

Guy Padfield-Wilkins of Woking Community Transport (WCT) provided a presentation on the history and work of the organisation.

There existed a service-level agreement between Woking Borough Council and WCT which required provision of seven vehicles per day, 52 weeks of the year.

WCT had been setup by Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council. The dial-a-ride and day care passenger services were only available to its 3986 members. The membership had increased by 1618 members over the previous seven years.

The service users of WCT included the elderly, disabled and vulnerable.

Due to the operating model used by WCT it was not permissible to cross-fund any service, each service provided needed to be able to fund itself.

Guy Padfield-Wilkins did not consider it possible for WCT to change its operating model as there were increased costs associated with the alternative.

The proposed removal of funding from Woking Borough Council would also include ending the office and garage leases. Guy Padfield-Wilkins estimated the required replacement funding to be £270,000 per year. WCT paid a peppercorn for the office space, business rates and a commercial rate for the garage.

Julie Fisher emphasised that there was no immediate need for WCT to vacate the premises and Surrey County Council had been engaged to find an alternative location.

Woking Community Transport had invested in electric charging stations for its buses at its offices.

If the support from the Council was removed Guy Padfield-Wilkins calculated that rates would need to increase from an average £4.80 per trip to £24. It was unlikely that taxis could act as replacement as the dial-a-ride service included supporting and transferring users to and from the vehicle and to and from their home or destination.

The Chief Executive noted that the Council was duty-bound to set a balanced budget and therefore had to consider very difficult cuts. Unless a discretionary service, which included the funding to WCT, could be provided as cost neutral the Council was not able to provide it.

In response to a question from the Chair, Guy Padfield-Wilkins expressed concern that the Council had effectively already decided that the support was to be withdrawn.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

5. DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET UPDATE 2024-25 OSC23-065

Louise Strongitharm, Strategic Director of Communities, introduced the item.

Officers were forecasting an ongoing deficit of £1 million on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) with no reserves available.

The September Consumer Price Index had been published. There had been no indication from Government of deviation from the CPI+1% policy for increasing rental prices for local

authorities. If that policy were to be employed, it was estimated that rental income would increase by £1.6 million.

Approximately 70% of Council tenants were in receipt of housing benefits or universal credit to pay for rents. The remaining 30% were self-funding.

Further work was required to be able to set the HRA budget but it was anticipated that it would be at a surplus. Capital investment for the housing stock required calculation.

The Council was to begin consulting on the closure of the Brockhill facility and how residents would be supported.

Councillor Johnson noted that the CPI for the previous year was 8.2% while the Council had increased rent by 7%. Additionally, the Government had stipulated that Councils were to reduce rents for several years previously. Funding was required to be able to effect housing stock repairs and investments.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.31 pm
and ended at 10.26 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29 JANUARY 2024

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on matters arising from the previous meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The details summarise the progress made on achieving the desired outcomes from decisions taken by the Committee and requests from individual Elected Members. Once an action has been closed and the outcome reported to the Committee it will be removed from future reports.

Actions arising from the Committee are managed through the Council's Action Management system which was developed to capture and monitor the actions arising from (i) meetings of the Council and (ii) Internal Audit Reviews.

This is a regular report that is brought the Committee and covers the actions identified at the previous meetings. The next version of this report, listing any actions previously identified together with the progress achieved shall be brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 February 2024.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the report be noted.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.
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Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Councillor Josh Brown
CllrJosh.Brown@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 19 January 2024

Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

Update on Actions Arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 November 2023.

Minute 3		Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes
3.1	Action	Biannual Review of Complaints
	Progress	<i>From the meeting of the committee on 20 November 2023.</i> Officers were requested to explore the possibility of bringing a report on complaints to the November Committee meeting. It has not been possible to bring a report to the meeting due to Officer resource and time constraints. Officers will endeavour to bring a report at the earliest opportunity and will engage with Members on its content.
	Responsible Person	Gareth John / Beverley Kuchar / Toby Nash
	Status	Ongoing
3.2	Action	The ThamesWey Group information to be updated to a more readable format, in line with that provided at Member briefings.
	Progress	As part of the company governance framework the performance indicators are being reviewed.
	Responsible Person	Pino Mastromarco
	Status	Ongoing
3.3	Action	Officers undertook to provide details on the cost of running Pool in the Park and subsidy from the Council.
	Progress	Figures for 2023/24 show total running costs of £2.79m and an expected subsidy from the Council of £641,000.
	Responsible Person	Eugene Walker / Louise Strongitharm.
	Status	Completed

Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

3.4	Action	Officers undertook to review the costs of pavilions.
	Progress	Each pavilion will require a condition survey to give accurate figures. Where there is interest from a community group in taking on one or more pavilion, this work can be pursued.
	Responsible Person	Corporate Leadership Team
	Status	Completed

Minute 4		Urgent Business
4.1	Action	Development of a new Fees and Charges report with more contextual information in was added to the work programme of the Finance Working Group. The Group was requested to provide an update, including indicative timescales to the February meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
	Progress	The item has been added to the Working Group's work programme.
	Responsible Person	Eugene Walker / Democratic Services
	Status	Ongoing
4.2	Action	Officers were requested to provide information on the running costs of the Homelink service.
	Progress	The service is externally funded by a £1.3m grant from central government that is distributed by Surrey County Council. All staff and expenditure is from the capital grant and external funding and consequently there is no cost to Woking Borough Council.
	Responsible Person	Louise Strongitharm
	Status	Ongoing

Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

Update on Actions Arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 December 2023.

Minute 9		Performance Monitoring Information
9.1	Action	Officers were requested to explain why Byfleet ward had -£4000 in its Community Infrastructure Levy Account and how this would be brought back to balance.
	Progress	A proportion of West Byfleet moneys received was unfortunately misattributed to Byfleet Ward. This error has now been picked up and corrections to the database made. As more CIL money is received for Byfleet it shall be recouped.
	Responsible Person	Beverley Kuchar
	Status	Completed
9.2	Action	Inclusion of voter registration information in future editions.
	Progress	Officers continue to review the content of the Performance Monitoring Information and can include such information in future editions.
	Responsible Person	Julie Fisher / Emera Chown
	Status	Ongoing
9.3	Action	Officers sought to clarify the expenditure of Voter ID funds provided by the Government.
	Progress	The costs related to the total forecast overspend in electoral services of which spend on Voter ID was part. The variance continues to be explored and will be reported in due course.
	Responsible Person	Julie Fisher / Emera Chown
	Status	Ongoing

Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

9.4	Action	The Committee recommended several areas for improvement and increased clarity for the Performance Monitoring Information including consistent use of red, amber, green for figures.
	Progress	Officers have taken on board all feedback from the Committee as well as continuing to review the information and would update the next edition.
	Responsible Person	Pino Mastromarco
	Status	Ongoing

Minute 10		Financial Monitoring Report – Budget Monitoring and Forecast 2023-24 – Quarter 2
10.1	Action	To provide a breakdown of electricity costs for Red car park.
	Progress	Since opening in April 2023 until the end of November 2023 a total of £30,020 +VAT of energy has been used.
	Responsible Person	Kevin Foster
	Status	Ongoing



Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

This Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme is published with the purpose of assisting the Council in its overview and scrutiny role. The Work Programme covers the following areas:

- Items for consideration at future meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Scrutiny Review Topics proposed by Members of the Council for inclusion on the Work Programme.
- Topics identified for pre-decision scrutiny.
- The draft forward programme of work for the Executive.
- Details of the current Task and Working Groups under the Committee’s remit.

The Work Programme is designed to assist the Council with its overview and scrutiny role by providing Members with an indication of the current work, topics to be considered for review, and items which the Executive expects to consider at its future meetings, so that matters can be raised beforehand and/or consultations undertaken with a Member of the Executive prior to the relevant meeting.

Any changes to the Work Programme since it was last published have been highlighted in green.

The Committee	
Chairman: Councillor Josh Brown	
Vice-Chairman: Councillor Adam Kirby	
Councillor H Akberali	Councillor A Caulfield
Councillor K Davis	Councillor A Javaid
Councillor R Leach	Councillor J Morley
Councillor L Rice	Councillor M Sullivan
2023/24 Committee Dates	
05 June 2023	10 July 2023
14 August 2023 (Extraordinary)	11 September 2023
16 October 2023	20 November 2023
11 December 2023 (Extraordinary)	29 January 2024 (was 22 January 2024)
19 February 2024	18 March 2024

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the report be noted.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Councillor Josh Brown
Email: CllrJosh.Brown@woking.gov.uk

Contact Person: Toby Nash, Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer
Email: toby.nash@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3056

Date Published: 19 January 2024

REPORT ENDS

Suggested Additions to the Work Programme

Following the last meeting of the Committee, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman provided Officers with a list of items for consideration over the coming year. Where possible, these have been added to the Work Programme. Set out below are any ideas which have been suggested or requested but are yet to be included against a specific meeting of the Committee.

Topic	Proposed by	Officer Comment
Biannual Overview of Complaints Report	Chair and Vice-Chair (2021/22)	Following the meeting of the Committee on 21 February 2022 it was expressed by Members that the possibility of having this report appear at the Committee twice a year, as opposed to once a year would be beneficial.
Invite Thames Water	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	In recognition of the Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year and the position of Thames Water the item has be delayed for consideration until the next Municipal Year.
Invite Commissioners	Chair and Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Invite the DLUHC-appointed Commissioners to a future meeting of the Committee.
Scrutiny of definitions of statutory and non-statutory services	Chair and Overview and Scrutiny Committee	The Committee is interested in considering how Officers determined statutory and non-statutory services.

The Work Programme 2023/24

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 19 February 2024

1 – Performance Management

1.1 Performance Monitoring Information. For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance Monitoring Information (Green Book).

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Councillor Brown

2 – Matters for Consideration

2.1 Work Programme. For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Councillor Brown

2.2 Freedom of Information Requests Annual Report.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Monitoring Officer

2.3 Annual Review of Complaints.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Monitoring Officer

2.4 Enterprise M3. To receive a review of the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Strategic Director of Place

3 – Working Group Updates

3.1 Working Group Update. To receive an update from any meetings of the Working Groups under the remit of the Committee.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Chair of each Working Group

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 18 March 2024

1 – Performance Management

1.1 Performance Monitoring Information. For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance Monitoring Information (Green Book).

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Councillor Brown

2 – Matters for Consideration

2.1 Work Programme. For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Councillor Brown

2.2 Annual Update on Climate Change.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Green Infrastructure Team

2.3 Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Councillor Brown

2.4 Safer Working Partnership – Community Safety Plan. The Police and Justice Act 2006 gave local authorities responsibility for considering crime and disorder matters. In 2010 the Committee agreed that the Safer Working Partnership Plan would be brought forward annually for scrutiny.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Community Safety Team

2.5 Improvement and Recovery Programme Update.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Lee Danson

2.6 Joint Waste Management Performance Review.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Neighbourhood Services

3 – Working Group Updates

3.1 Working Group Update. To receive an update from any meetings of the Working Groups under the remit of the Committee.

Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person/Team
None	None	Chair of each Working Group

The Draft Executive Work Programme

The following list sets out the draft forward programme of work for the Executive over the coming year. The programme is subject to additions and alterations and will be updated for future meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The purpose of the list is to enable the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to identify those items they would like to scrutinise under the Committee’s function of pre-decision scrutiny. The list includes those items for recommendation to Council as well as those for determination by the Executive.

Executive – 1 February 2024

Matters for Consideration

- 1) General Fund Budgets Update 2024-25
- 2) Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2024-25
- 3) Capital Programme 2023-24 to 2027-28
- 4) Future of Brockhill
- 5) Performance Management Report
- 6) Financial Monitoring Report – Budget Monitoring and Forecast 2023-24 – Quarter 3

Executive – 21 March 2024

Matters for Consideration

- 1) Fees and Charges 2024-25 Review for Car Park Tariffs
- 2) Climate Change Strategy
- 3) Working Environment Action (WEAct) – Recommendations and Responses
- 4) ThamesWey Milton Keynes Business Case
- 5) Channel Shift Project
- 6) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 – Annual Monitoring Report
- 7) Write off Sundry Report
- 8) ThamesWey Milton Keynes Business Case (PART II)

Executive – 13 June 2024

Matters for Consideration

- 1) Council Vision
- 2) Risk Management and Business Continuity Annual Report
- 3) Performance Management Report
- 4) Financial Monitoring Report – Budget Monitoring and Forecast 2023-24 – Quarter 4
- 5) Monitoring Reports - Projects

Executive – 11 July 2024

Matters for Consideration

- 1) Equalities Annual Report - 2024
- 2) Treasury Management Annual Report 2023-24

Executive – 12 September 2024

Matters for Consideration

- 1) Improvement and Recovery Plan
 - 2) Performance Management Report
 - 3) Financial Monitoring Report – Budget Monitoring and Forecast 2024-25 – Quarter 1
 - 4) Monitoring Reports - Projects
-

Executive – 17 October 2024

Matters for Consideration

1)

Executive – 14 November 2024

Matters for Consideration

- 1) Review of Fees and Charges 2025-26
 - 2) Calendar of Meetings 2025-26
 - 3) Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and General Fund Budget 2025-26
 - 4) Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget Update 2025-26
 - 5) Draft Capital Programme 2024-25 to 2028-29
 - 6) Performance Management Report
 - 7) Financial Monitoring Report – Budget Monitoring and Forecast 2024-25 – Quarter 2
-

Current Working and Task Groups Responsible to the Committee

The table below provides a list of current Working and Task Groups established by the Committee, including an indication of the resource requirements and the anticipated completion date. Any updates on the progress of individual Working and Task Groups are included elsewhere on the Committee's agenda.

Economic Development Working Group	
Remit:	<p>The Economic Development Working Group shall comprise seven Members of the Council representing all Groups on the Council based on proportionality. The Elected Members to be appointed annually by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in May.</p> <p>Members of the Working Group will be expected to gain the views of Councillors/ Officers/ other representatives with a view to reporting those views to the Working Group.</p> <p>Members of the Working Group may also be charged with specific areas to research and report back on to the Working Group.</p> <p>Members of the Working Group may be expected to present proposals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, where necessary, prepare written reports.</p>
Membership:	Councillors Barker, Davis, Javaid, Morley, Mukherjee, Oades, Roberts.
Resources:	Officer and Councillor time.
Date Established:	11.03.09

Finance Working Group	
Remit:	<p>The Working Group has been established as a Standing Working Group to review financial issues as identified either by itself or the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Working Group will receive financial information, including reports to the Executive, to enable it to undertake effective scrutiny of the financial performance of the Council.</p> <p>The Working Group will receive reports on areas such as Treasury Management, Budget Process and Financial Forecast, Statement of Accounts, Investment Programme, Review of Fees and Charges, General Fund Budget, Update on Commercial Rents, Update on Irrecoverable Debt, and matters arising from the Green Book. Its Work Programme will be received at each Working Group meeting.</p>
Membership:	Councillors Akberali, Aziz, Davis, Kirby, Oades, Rice, Roberts.
Resources:	Officer and Councillor time.
Date Established:	25.05.06

HIF Working Group	
Remit:	<p>The HIF Working Group has been established following the decision on 23 May 2022 to taking on the responsibilities of the Aggregates Site Working Group and the HIF Oversight Panel.</p> <p>The Working Group shall comprise seven Members of the Council representing all Groups on the Council based on proportionality. The Elected Members to be appointed annually by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Members of the Working Group will be expected to gain the views of Councillors/ Officers/ Portfolio Holder / External Advisors and other representatives with a view to reporting those views to the Working Group.</p> <p>Members of the Working Group may also be charged with specific areas to research and report back on to the Working Group.</p> <p>Working Group Members may be expected to present proposals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, where necessary, prepare written reports.</p>
Membership:	Councillors Akberali, Boote, Cosnahan, Dorsett, Johnson, Lyons, Sullivan.
Resources:	Officer and Councillor time.
Date Established:	23.05.22

Housing Working Group	
Remit:	<p>The Housing Working Group shall comprise seven Members of the Council representing all Groups on the Council based on proportionality. The Elected Members to be appointed annually by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Members of the Working Group will be expected to gain the views of Councillors/ Officers/ Portfolio Holder / External Advisors and other representatives with a view to reporting those views to the Working Group.</p> <p>Members of the Working Group may also be charged with specific areas to research and report back on to the Working Group.</p> <p>Working Group Members may be expected to present proposals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, where necessary, prepare written reports.</p>
Membership:	Councillors Aziz, Boote, Cosnahan, Dorsett, Johnson, Lyons, Sullivan.
Resources:	Officer and Councillor time.
Date Established:	25.05.06

Brookwood Cemetery HS2 Task & Finish Group	
Remit:	<p>The O&S Work Programme 11 December 2023 was established to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the purpose of the funding provided. • Determine the status of the funding that was provided through the HS2 scheme. • Review what funding is required to support the HS2 reburials at the cemetery. • Understand the obligations on the Council towards the HS2 reburials at the cemetery.

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the treatment of these funds under S114 status, if applicable.• Understand the steps taken to date to ensure that funding will be available for the full duration of the original period identified by HS2.• Seek views and make recommendations on the sustainable running of the HS2 reburials at the cemetery.
Membership:	Councillors Davis and Rice
Resources:	Officer and Councillor time.
Date Established:	16.10.23