

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 18 June 2018

Present:

Cllr I Johnson (Chairman)
Cllr D E Hughes (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Mrs H J Addison	Cllr K Howard
Cllr J E Bond	Cllr R Mohammed
Cllr G G Chrystie	Cllr C Rana

Also Present: Councillors K Davis, S Ashall, A-M Barker, Mrs B Hunwicks, and C Kemp, County Councillor Mike Goodman, Phil Dominey and David Willby from South Western Railway, and James Waight from Network Rail.

Absent: Councillors S Hussain and M I Raja and S Hussain

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Hussain and Councillor M I Raja.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 26 March 2018 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received under this item.

5. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Chairman referred the Members of the Committee to the March 2018 'Green Book'. Councillor Bond drew attention to a number of areas where the agreed service targets had not been achieved. These included the number of rising 18 year olds on the Electoral Register, empty properties, affordable housing and fly tipping which had increased by 65%. Councillor Bond referred to the unoccupied Emerald House in Byfleet, which could be used for a more suitable purpose, and could help to improve the affordable housing figures.

In respect of fly-tipping Councillor Mike Goodman from Surrey County Council advised the Committee of the significant work the Council and Surrey Waste Partnership (SWP) were

doing to prevent fly-tipping in the area, noting that a £10,000 investment programme to strategically reduce the issue had been adopted. As part of the strategy, a definition of fly-tipping would be adopted across the County to ensure each authority recorded incidents in a consistent approach.

Councillor Chrystie noted that the Sheerwater information page from the Green Book was missing and needed to be reinstated as soon as possible. *(Note: It was subsequently noted that the Green Book did have an updated page on the Sheerwater Regeneration Scheme – page 23.)*

RESOLVED

That the Green Book be noted.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman introduced the Work Programme for the Committee and drew attention to the list of suggested matters for scrutiny in the coming year. It was noted that various items, such as the Review of Play Areas, Ground Maintenance and Closure of Children's Centres, required Officer work before they could be allocated to a specific Committee date. There would however be an update on the Sheerwater Regeneration Scheme at the next Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 16 July 2018.

Councillor Bond advised the Committee that a 1,000 signature petition to restore the play area in West Byfleet was being drawn up, and referred to further concerns at Byfleet Park. Councillor Bond requested that the review of Play Areas should be brought forward as soon as possible. The Chairman advised that the Committee would be given an opportunity to review the draft strategy once it had been drawn up.

Councillor Chrystie considered that the Council should release Part II (Confidential) documents once the need for confidentiality had passed, and encouraged the Council to release such documents in a timely manner.

The Chairman encouraged the Members of the Committee to suggest proposals for future topics for scrutiny, drawing attention to the report later on the agenda which outlined the Council's approach to topic selection.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be noted.

7. NETWORK RAIL

The Chairman welcomed James Waight, Head of Strategic Planning (Wessex Route) of Network Rail who gave a presentation which included information on public sector funding, integrated industry planning, developing the network and current and future enhancements.

The Councillors had various questions following the presentation on timescales for future projects and their availability to the public, potential disruptions caused by the digital railway, accessibility, effects on local transport and environmental factors such as the removal of trees alongside the stretch of railway in St Johns.

James Waight addressed the points raised, explaining the responsibility of Network Rail to keep the tracks free from leaves in order to reduce the risk of trains failing to get traction on the rails. It was noted that timetable changes could take up to 18 months to introduce and that organisations such as Bustler transport services would be involved in the planning of any changes to Woking Station. He confirmed there was not currently a programme available for the flyover works at Woking Station as Network Rail were at the early stage of developing options. It was anticipated that the project would be delivered within the coming five years.

Accessibility at Brookwood Station was discussed and the Committee was advised funding for such work would be awarded directly by the Department of Transport. He advised that he was unaware of any plans to undertake work at the Station, though undertook to confirm the position.

Douglas Spinks, the Deputy Chief Executive, made the Committee aware of the positive relationship the Council had developed with Network Rail since working alongside James Waight and the Chairman also thanked James Waight for his presentation.

8. SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

(NOTE: - Reference was made to Brookwood Cemetery and in accordance with Officer Procedure Rules, Douglas Spinks declared an interest in the item arising from his position as a Director of Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited, Brookwood Park Limited and Brookwood Cemetery Limited. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.)

The Chairman welcomed Phil Dominey, Senior Regional Development Manager for South Western Railway, who gave a presentation on the future service aspirations of the Company. The presentation covered aspects of improvement including investment in the travel experience (increased seating, rest rooms, Wi-Fi, charging sockets and car parking), and the ticket process (smart cards, apps and barcodes). South Western Railway had an extensive apprenticeship programme in the UK and was focusing on social development at stations by using spare space for community purposes. The Company was seeking to ensure that, working in partnership with Network Rail, Woking Station would be improved with minimal disruption.

South Western Railway (SWR) was looking to implement a “delay repay” policy which would entitle passengers who had experienced more than a 15 minute delay to a refund. The issues faced by passengers when a train stopped between stations was raised and Phil Dominey advised that the policies had recently been changed to allow such trains to move forward to the nearest station to enable passengers to disembark. The company had invested heavily in smart phones for employees to be able to access the latest travel information and update the public on delays or incidents when required.

Local concerns over Brookwood Station were raised by Councillors, including the need improved accessibility, the increase in local traffic following improved parking facilities and the pedestrian subway which was prone to flooding. It was understood that barriers were being considered for the station, which had caused concerns amongst local residents seeking access to Brookwood Cemetery. It was agreed that David Wilby from South Western Railway would look into these matters with an update to follow.

Ward Councillor Davis would meet SWR to discuss the concerns at Brookwood Station as he was a regular user of this station himself. West Byfleet station was also brought to the attention of the Committee as the subway walls were deteriorating and accessibility

between platforms was limited. The car park at West Byfleet Station was also mentioned, with the aspiration for a multi-storey car park being expressed.

It was noted that air pollution would not be a concern with the future developments, as companies mainly use electrical energy for a power source. James Waight noted that in 2013 Network Rail had purchased 1% of all electricity generated in the UK with $\frac{3}{4}$ of that being deemed as sustainable. The diesel fleet in South Western Railway had all been modified to reduce emissions and new trains would be built using environmentally friendly resources and be CO₂ efficient.

Douglas Spinks, the Deputy Chief Executive thanked Phil Dominey for the presentation and praised the improved working relationships with Woking Borough Council. The Chairman thanked Councillor Mike Goodman from Surrey County Council for his input and attendance; and agreed with the comments in respect of the positive working relationship with South Western Railway.

9. PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTIONS

The report before the Committee summarised the proposals from the Effective Scrutiny Review Task Group, established to review the findings of a Parliamentary Select Committee review of Overview and Scrutiny. The Chairman invited the Members to consider the recommendations in light of the comment by Officers.

The Task Group had proposed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should not be appointed from the same political party. However, it was felt that the Council should retain the freedom to appoint the most appropriate persons to undertake the roles, irrespective of their political group. It was further agreed that the proposal that the Council, rather than the Committee, should appoint the Chairman of the Committee, would not be referred to Council. The recommendation to establish a budget for the Committee to secure impartial advice was discussed but was not supported, with members noting that the option to obtain specialist advice already existed. The recommendations in respect of Enterprise M3 were welcomed and it was noted that it was intended to bring the annual report to the September meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- That (i) The recommendation in respect of the appointment of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and the introduction of budget be not supported;
- (ii) Enterprise M3 be requested to submit an annual report on its activities to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- (iii) Enterprise M3 be invited to make a presentation to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10. BRIEFING PAPER NO. 1 - SUBMITTING SCRUTINY REVIEW REQUESTS

The Chairman introduced a briefing paper on the Council's process for the submission of topics for scrutiny review through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The paper was the first of a series of briefing papers that would be brought to the Committee under the Council's programme for Member learning and development.

The Members noted procedures for the submission and consideration of topics for scrutiny review.

RESOLVED

That the Briefing Paper be noted.

11. SHEETS HEATH SITE VISIT

The Chairman advised the Committee of the arrangements for a visit to Sheets Heath on 30 June 2018 to see the work that was being undertaken to protect the important habitat.

The Chairman encouraged Councillors to attend the visit noting that a proposal to establish a formal programme of maintenance for Woking's Heaths was due to be submitted to the Committee later in the year.

12. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK GROUP UPDATE

The report on the most recent activities of the Economic Development Task Group was introduced by the Chairman. In view of the gap before the next meeting at the end of October 2018, the Chairman would consider an additional meeting to discuss retail development in the interim.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 8.55 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____