

MINUTES  
OF A MEETING OF THE  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

held on 16 September 2019

Present:

Cllr D E Hughes (Chair)  
Cllr M A Whitehand (Vice-Chair)

Cllr S Hussain                      Cllr G G Chrystie  
Cllr C Rana                        Cllr J R Sanderson  
Cllr J E Bond

Also Present: Councillors B Hunwicks

Absent: Councillors R Mohammed and M I Raja

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M I Raja and R Mohammed.

**2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 15 July 2019 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Surrey County Council Children's Centres Consultation

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee put forward recommendations to Council and the Frameworks and recommendations would be followed up by Cllr Kemp, Cllr Hughes and Adam Thomas, Family Support Manager, and reported to the Committee at a later meeting.

During the transition of responsibilities of Family Centres from Surrey County Council to Woking Borough Council it was reported that it would be added to the Health and Wellbeing Task Group Agenda as regular item, and had been included in the Work Programme to seek an update in 2020.

Environmental Health – Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

The Committee reviewed the positive letter received from the Food Standards Agency. It was explained that food premises with concerning food ratings would not display their score, therefore it would be clear to the public which eateries could potentially have a low rating. An update would be sought at a future meeting of the Committee.

It was requested that the previous reports would be distributed with the minutes.

#### Housing Infrastructure Conditions

The conditions attached to the HIF bid were not ready to be viewed publically and therefore would not be reviewed at the moment, however an update would be provided to the Committee when appropriate to do so.

Ray Morgan, Chief Executive, confirmed that the Woking Borough Council's time scales and viability of the project were on track for completion in Spring 2024. There were ongoing discussions with Network Rail to ensure minimal disruption to the train schedule during the widening of the bridge works and demolition of the triangle.

The Chair requested that the conditions of the bid be reviewed by the Finance Task Group.

#### Appeals at Planning Committee

The Committee previously raised concerns over the number of appeals reported in the Green Book over decision at Planning Committee. An update would be sought from Cllr Chrystie and provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

#### Flood Risk Management Update

The Chairman praised the team and presentation which was sent to all Cllrs for information.

#### **4. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business to discuss.

#### **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, the Deputy Chief Executive, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in Agenda Items 7 and 8 arising from his position as a Director of the Thamesway Group of Companies and Victoria Square Limited.

#### **6. WORK PROGRAMME (OSC19-022)**

The Chairman introduced the Work Programme, noting the recent Survey on the Pool in the Park and Leisure Centre which was conducted between Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August and Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September at the Food Festival in the Town Centre. The results would be shared at the next meeting of the Committee.

Details and documents required for the upcoming site visit to Pool in the Park would be re-sent and hard copies provided to those attending, the invite was extended to all Cllrs. The deadline for the Committee to submit questions for Freedom Leisure to answer would be confirmed via email following the meeting. It was updated that David Loveless would be the reporting person for the item instead of Michelle Melia. Ray briefly updated the Committee on the areas within the contract covered by Woking Borough Council (Asset/Structure) and Freedom Leisure (day to day operations).

Cllr Chrystie raised a historical point mentioned in 2011, regarding a lease that was granted between Woking Borough Council and Greenwich Leisure on a recreational park however the outcome was unsure, it was requested an update be provided at the next meeting.

The Chairman updated the Committee on the upcoming topics, and had attended some recent Finance Scrutiny Training where it was advised the Forward Plan should provide information for the coming 12 months rather than the four months set out in Woking Borough Council's Forward Plan. However Ray confirmed that the Forward Plan was in keeping with Woking Borough Council's Constitution and was completed correctly.

**RESOLVED**

That the Work Programme be noted.

**7. VICTORIA SQUARE PROJECT UPDATE**

Ray provided a presentation to the Committee that included artist impressions of Victoria Square, updated plans and aspirations for the future. The key figures to note included the total floor space of the project was 1,617,754 sq. ft with 429 residential units.

The update included information on the access to and security of the residential apartments, the importance of greenery incorporated into the design features to promote air quality, the vision of an area to work, live and play for the future generations. The space would be a mix of retail and leisure units, including restaurants, bars, shops, banks and services such as opticians and dentists etc.

There was an upcoming art competition at the Lightbox that would see local artists submit paintings, photographs and sculptures. The winners' work would be duplicated and used in the hotel. It was confirmed that the Hotel would be owned by Victoria Square but operated by Hilton.

The Committee appreciated the detailed presentation on the project, questions were raised around the subject of financial monitoring which was previously addressed in the Finance Task Group by Leigh Clarke, Head of Financial Services. Councillors raised concern over the impacts of Brexit, which could result in long term delays or unplanned financial costs. It was highlighted that there may be shipping delays and residential rental changes, but it was difficult to know the extent of Brexit however all was being done to minimise risks. It was reported that approximately 95% of the design packages had been procured and fixed, and 65% of management contracts were procured and fixed.

Ray informed the Committee that there was a revised opening date for all areas of Victoria Square due to the rebuild of the red car park. The opening date was anticipated to be Spring 2021. The Victoria Square Oversight Panel would be updated and amendments would be made to the advertising on various "#WeAreWoking" hoarding.

Following a question raised whilst discussing the empty units in the town centre, Ray confirmed that only 4% of the units were currently unoccupied however there were new businesses looking to move in shortly. There were also plans for Sainsbury's to be refurbished within the next year.

Councillor Hussain thanked Ray and noted the importance and enjoyment of the site visit to the Site Mock Up in Send.

The need for development in West Byfleet was briefly discussed noting the delay with the investor, due to Brexit, after Councillors voted against Woking Borough Council to undertake the redevelopment.

## **8. SHEERWATER REGENERATION PROJECT UPDATE**

Ray moved onto the Sheerwater Regeneration presentation, and informed the Committee there would be a Member's Briefing on the financial aspects of the Sheerwater Regeneration in early October. The Purple Phase that was currently under construction would produce 92 residential Units and was due for completion in Summer 2021.

Councillors requested details of the amount of properties that were likely to be included in the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) subject to authorisation by Council on 5 December. However tenants would be advised of the process of the CPO and vulnerable tenants would have assistance from Hazel Craig-Waller's team.

It was agreed that another Sheerwater Regeneration update would be brought back to the Committee in Autumn 2021.

## **9. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION**

The Committee reviewed the July version of the Green Book and noted the following:

- The number of time taken when processing claims has increased (page 9)
- Fly-tipping incidents and enforcement actions were similar to last summer (2018) (page 11)
- Appeals allowed against the decision to refuse planning applications had improved slightly (page 13)
- An increased number of properties brought back into use through LA intervention (page 7) however it was recorded as disappointing to see that the affordable housing target would not be met.

Following a question regarding Peacocks, Ray informed the Committee that the pre-conditions to the contract with Debenhams was in the final stages and aspired to complete shortly. The other matter that was deemed confidential, but had been discussed at the Finance Task Group, would look to complete at the end of October.

## **10. TASK GROUP UPDATES**

The Chairman introduced the reports which were reviewed by the committee and no questions were raised.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and ended at 9.51 pm

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_