



## 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, 15 June 2020 at 7.00 pm. The meeting will be held virtually and webcast live through the Council's website in accordance with the Coronavirus Act 2020 and The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (S.I.2020 No. 392).

The agenda for the meeting is set out below.

RAY MORGAN  
Chief Executive

## **AGENDA**

### **PART I - PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT**

- 1 Apologies for Absence  
To receive any apologies for absence.
- 2 Minutes (Pages 3 - 8)  
To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 February 2020 as published.
- 3 Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes (Pages 9 - 10)  
To review and 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.
- 6 Community Infrastructure Levy Update (Pages 11 - 12)  
Reporting Person: Ernest Amoako

- 7 Work Programme OSC20-012 (Pages 13 - 40)  
Reporting Person: Councillor D Hughes
- 8 Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group Report OSC20-011 (Pages 41 - 50)  
Reporting Person: Councillor D Hughes
- 9 Chief Executive Comments on Woking Football Club Task Group Report OSC20-011A (Pages 51 - 60)  
Reporting Person: Ray Morgan
- 10 Annual Report OSC20-010 (Pages 61 - 74)  
Reporting Person: Councillor D Hughes
- 11 Exclusion of the Press and Public
- 12 The Chairman will move and the Vice-Chair will second:-  
“That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of item 13 in view of the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the press and public were present during these items, 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).”

## **PART II – PRESS AND PUBLIC EXCLUDED**

- 13 Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group - Part II Report OSC20-013 (Pages 75 - 114)  
Reporting Person: Councillor Hughes

AGENDA ENDS

Date Published – 5 June 2020

For further information regarding this agenda and arrangements for the meeting, please contact Hanna Taylor, Democratic Services Officer, Ext 3056, Email [Hanna.Taylor@woking.gov.uk](mailto:Hanna.Taylor@woking.gov.uk)



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

held on 24 February 2020

Present:

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

Cllr S Hussain	Cllr M I Raja
Cllr R Mohammed	Cllr G G Chrystie
Cllr C Rana	Cllr J R Sanderson

Also Present: Councillor D Harlow, Adam Thomas (Family Support Programme Manager), Nicola Norman (Family Centre's Team Manager), Louise Strongitharm (Director of Housing) and Jacqui Dixon (Private Sector Housing Manager).

Absent: Councillors J E Bond

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bond.

**2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 20 January 2020 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Following the last meeting of the Committee that included the recommendation of the Community Lottery Scheme to the Executive, it was reported that the recommendation was approved at the Executive meeting on 6 February 2020.

**4. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business to discuss.

**5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Officer Procedure Rules, the Housing Director, Louise Strongitharm, declared an interest in any items under which the Thamesway Group of Companies are discussed, arising from her position as a Director of the Thamesway Group of companies. The interest is such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor D Harlow will declare a non-pecuniary interest in any items under which the Thameswey Group of Companies is discussed, arising from her position as a Director of the Thameswey Group of Companies. The interest is such that speaking was permissible.

**6. WORK PROGRAMME (OSC20-005)**

The Work Programme was reviewed and noted the items that were on the agenda for the final meeting of the Committee in the 2019/20 municipal year.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be noted.

**7. CHILDREN AND FAMILY CENTRES UPDATE FOLLOWING CONSULTATION**

The Chairman welcomed Adam Thomas, Family Support Programme Manager, and Nicola Norman, Family Centres Team Manager, to the meeting, who previously attended a Committee meeting on 17 June 2019, following the Surrey County Council consultation of the closure of Children's Centres.

The consultation ended in February 2019, and resulted in Surrey County Council agreeing to endorse the re-modelling of the remaining Children's Centres in the Borough to create Family Centres as part of a wider Family Service to support families with children ages 0 to 11 that were thought to be the most vulnerable. The Executive agreed that Woking Borough Council would take lead on the Family Centres in question moving forward.

Together, they provided a presentation on the changes that had been implemented since the consultation and information on the new team, that went live on 1 November 2019. The changes included embedding a new team and training them, encouraging flexible working throughout the borough, moving to an electronic casefile system and a new service delivery plan, with the next service review scheduled to take place in April 2020.

It was noted that the two remaining centres were at Parkview in Sheerwater and The Bungalow at Sythwood School. However as part of the service delivery, specialist support was also provided to families in the form of one to one personal visits at the family's home, and an outreach service available in other community centres: The Vyne in Knaphill, Moorcroft in Westfield and St Marys in Byfleet. These centres also provide universal support services for families including health visiting, midwifery, citizen's advice and support with housing and employment.

Following a question from a member it was reported that approximately 130 families were benefitting from the family support services and that the length of time families require the service for varies from a matter of weeks, up to a year and a half; the centres were coping well with the demand at present. The flexible service provided various benefits including centralised locations for families using multiple services and the option for home visits which are preferred by mothers/parents.

Mr Thomas reported that the team were confident the budget was sufficient to provide the services required to meet the demand.

The Chairman thanked Mr Thomas and Ms Norman for their presentation and time, and regular updates would continue to be brought to the Health & Wellbeing Task Group as well as feedback from the review scheduled in April.

## **8. EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY REPORT (OSC20-003)**

The Chairman welcomed Louise Strongitharm, Housing Director and Jacqui Dixon, Private Sector Housing Manager, who provided a presentation on the Empty Homes Strategy. The presentation reported that there were 769 empty homes (as of 27 January 2020) within the borough, and explained the various reasons why a property could be empty and how they were identified.

A breakdown of the 769 properties was provided and noted:

- 97 of which are Long Term Premium empty (>2 years)
- 259 are Long Term empty (6 - 24 months)
- 126 are empty due to the Sheerwater regeneration scheme and will be brought back in to use through the Project.

There were three priorities from the existing Empty Homes Plan 2015-2018 that were still relevant;

- **Priority 1** – To minimise the number of empty homes through the Council's interventions
- **Priority 2** – To maximise the opportunities for returning empty homes back into use through initiatives and incentives
- **Priority 3** – To use innovative interventions to bring empty back in to use.

The current performance was discussed noting a dip in performance when the Selective Licensing Scheme was introduced however there had been an improvement since. The Housing Team were looking of ways to spread positive messages and engage with the public via Woking Magazine and social media.

After finalising the Allocations Policy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy within recent months, it was noted that future work would include updating the Empty Homes Plan and the overarching Housing Strategy.

Members suggested the empty homes plan include provision for more stringent action (e.g. CPO) if a property was left empty for five years and over, which had the support of officers however could be dependent on the reason why the property was empty, such as a vulnerable person or sensitive circumstance. There would also be a council tax premium cost for the owner as the property was empty for longer than five years.

The Chairman thanked Ms Dixon and Ms Strongitharm for the information provided.

## **9. OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW (OSC20-006)**

Members reviewed the Overview of Complaints Received – Annual Report, noting that fewer complaints had been received since the previous year, 65 received in 2019 vs 93 received in 2018.

There were no obvious trends identified.

**10. FOI REQUEST ANNUAL REPORT (OSC20-004)**

Members noted the FOI Annual Report, which detailed the total amount of FOIs received between January – December 2019, broken down by month and department. It was suggested that a future report would include example of the FOIs received in the two departments that received the most – Democratic Services and Benefits, Revenue and Customer Services.

It was explained that as the Democratic Services Team manage the FOI system, they would often co-ordinate responses if answers were required from multiple departments, and would liaise with Joint Waste Solutions and Thameswey on their FOIs and also refer applicants to other organisations, such as Surrey County Council if the response did not fall within Woking Borough Council's remit.

It was reported that no ICO decisions were made in 2019.

**11. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION**

The January Green Book was reviewed and discussed, with members noting the refuse collection indicator link with previous reports in regards to what was believed for waste collection, this would be identified to Cllr Davis, as Portfolio Holder for environmental services to review and possibly amend the KPIs reported in the green book.

Members were pleased to see the low figures reported for abandoned vehicles.

**12. TASK GROUP UPDATE**

The Chairman provided an update on behalf of the Finance Task Group that had recently reviewed the budget and investment strategy, and members noted the useful update on the HIF terms and conditions.

The Chairman then provided an update from the recent meeting of the Woking Football Club and Associated Developments Task Group, that had concluded their planned meetings, and the report would be reviewed at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 March 2020. Thanks was given to the officers working on the task group and the guest who had attended the meetings.

The draft recommendations from the group were mentioned however discussion would not take place as members did not have the report from the task group yet.

**13. THE CHAIRMAN WILL MOVE AND THE VICE-CHAIR WILL SECOND:-**

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of item 14 in view of the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the press and public were present during these items, 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).

**14. EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY REPORT (OSC20-007) - REPORT TO FOLLOW**

Ms Dixon referred to the Part II report, that documented all the empty homes within the borough, as requested by the Chairman.

Members were able to inform the Housing Team of the situation of some properties, and issues raised by residents for officers to investigate, such as an empty property preventing the sale of a neighbouring house and the change of use of a property.

Officers informed members that it was difficult to engage with some owners of the empty properties and were working hard on trying to get as many empty properties back into use as possible.

It was agreed that officers would circulate the list of empty homes to members, organised by ward, to see if any further information could be identified.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and ended at 9.04 pm

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

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





Jonathan Lord MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Email: [jonathan.lord.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:jonathan.lord.mp@parliament.uk)

Our Ref: BC2019/00191

6 August 2019

Dear Mr Lord,

Thank you for your email of 4 July to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs enclosing correspondence from Cllr Ian Johnson at Woking Borough Council about the mandatory display of food hygiene ratings. This was recently passed to me for reply as the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has responsibility for the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS).

As your constituent notes, businesses in Wales and Northern Ireland are already required by law to display their ratings and we are committed to extending this to England where display of rating stickers at premises is currently voluntary. At the FSA, we firmly believe that this will be better for consumers and better for those businesses that achieve good standards. It will also be an added incentive to those businesses with poorer standards to improve. We have widespread support for mandatory display from local authorities, consumers and businesses.

We have built a strong case using evidence from Wales and Northern Ireland. The number of businesses with a rating of 5 in Wales, for example, has increased by 23 percentage points since the introduction of mandatory display, compared with an increase in England of 15 percentage points over the same period (November 2013 to November 2018).

The delivery of a statutory food hygiene rating scheme for England is a key priority for us and we were delighted that, in its report on [Ensuring food safety and standards](#), the National Audit Office supported this aim. We wish to progress this at

the earliest opportunity and we are finalising the evidence case for Ministerial consideration and, ultimately, for cross-government approval. A statutory scheme will require new primary legislation so given the extraordinary demands on Parliamentary time because of the UK's exit from the EU, it is difficult to be definitive about when a statutory scheme could be in place.

Please be assured that in the interim, we will continue to work with our local authority partners to do as much as we can to improve the impact and benefit of the FHS as it currently operates. The success of the scheme to date is in no small part due to the commitment and support of local authorities such as Woking Borough Council, and we are grateful to them for their ongoing support of the scheme.

Yours sincerely  

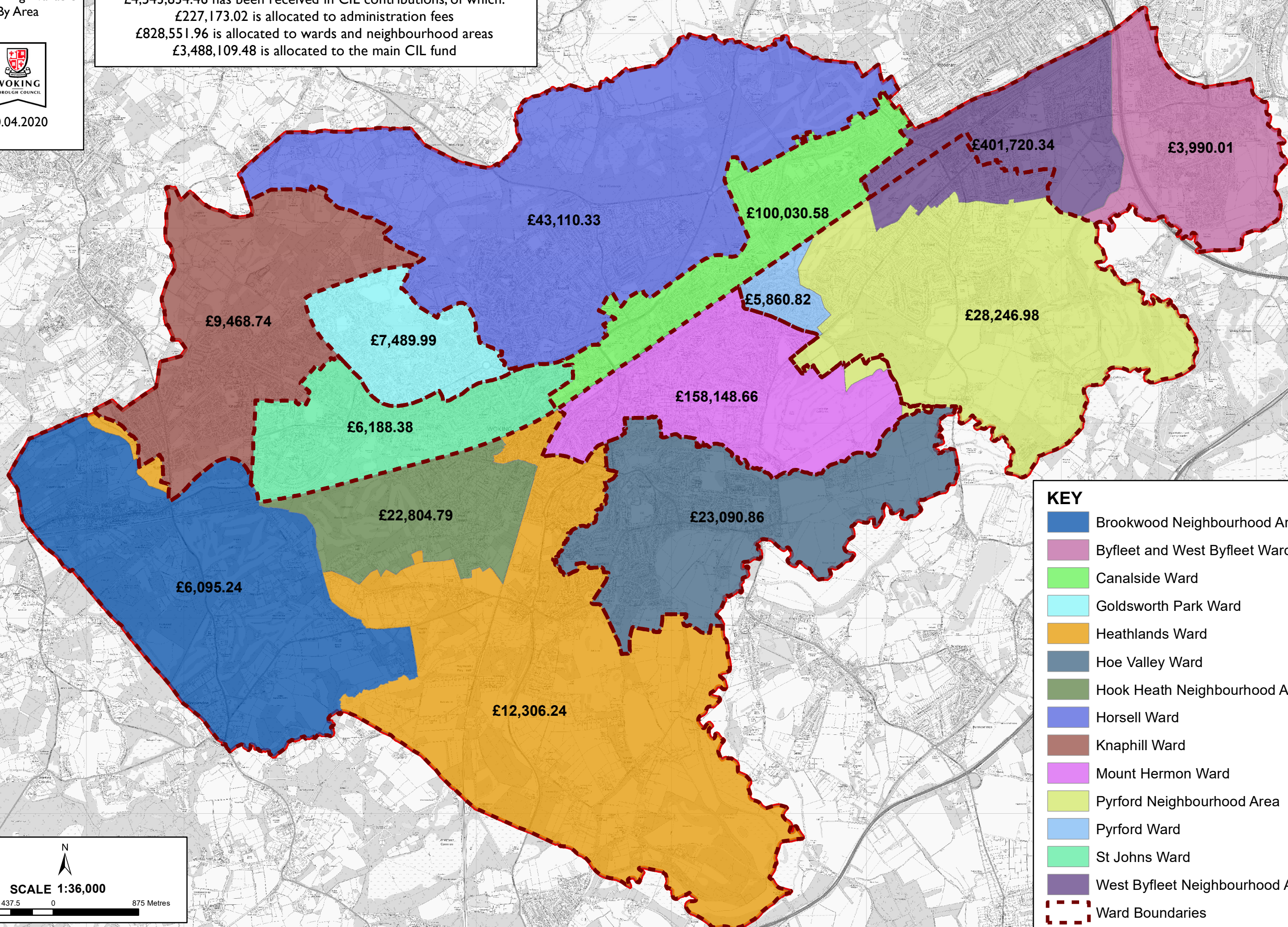

**Mrs H.J. Hancock LVO DL**

CIL Funding Available  
By Area



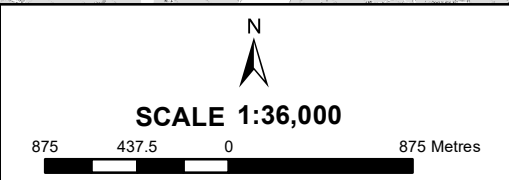
30.04.2020

£4,543,834.46 has been received in CIL contributions, of which:  
 £227,173.02 is allocated to administration fees  
 £828,551.96 is allocated to wards and neighbourhood areas  
 £3,488,109.48 is allocated to the main CIL fund



KEY

- Brookwood Neighbourhood Area
- Byfleet and West Byfleet Ward
- Canalside Ward
- Goldsworth Park Ward
- Heathlands Ward
- Hoe Valley Ward
- Hook Heath Neighbourhood Area
- Horsell Ward
- Knaphill Ward
- Mount Hermon Ward
- Pyrford Neighbourhood Area
- Pyrford Ward
- St Johns Ward
- West Byfleet Neighbourhood Area
- Ward Boundaries
- Borough Boundary



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# WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Overview and Scrutiny

### Work Programme

CIVIC OFFICES  
GLOUCESTER SQUARE  
WOKING GU21 6YL  
01483 755855  
[www.woking.gov.uk](http://www.woking.gov.uk)



**INTRODUCTION TO WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL'S  
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.
- An extract from the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan.
- Any Scrutiny Review Topics proposed by Members of the Council for inclusion on the Work Programme.
- Any topics identified for pre-decision scrutiny.
- Details of the current Task 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 workload, subjects 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.

**The Committee**

**Chairman:** Councillor D E Hughes

**Vice-Chairman:** Councillor M Whitehand

Councillor J Bond	Councillor R Mohammed
Councillor G G Chrystie	Councillor M I Raja
Councillor S Hussain	Councillor C Rana
Councillor J R Sanderson	

**2020/21 Committee Dates**

- 15 June 2020
- 13 July 2020
- 14 September 2020
- 19 October 2020
- 23 November 2020
- 25 January 2021
- 22 February 2021
- 22 March 2021





**Suggested Additions to the Work Programme**

Decision to be Taken	Proposed by	Officer Comment
<b>Housing Infrastructure Fund.</b> For the Committee to receive the HIF Bid conditions once received from Homes England.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	The Finance Task Group would review the conditions once made available.
<b>Treasury Management Policy.</b> To review the policy and procedures and making recommendations to the responsible body	Finance Task Group	
<b>Safer Working Partnership – Community Safety Plan.</b> 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.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	It was scheduled to be viewed at the meeting on 23 March 2020, which was cancelled due to the COIV19 outbreak.
<b>Corporate Peer Review Challenge.</b> To review the final report and feedback from the Review.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	Awaiting Final Report
<b>Flood Alleviation Plan.</b>	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	
<b>Task Groups.</b> For the Committee to receive the Terms of Reference for each task group, and review the link with the Committee.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	



**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 13 July 2020**

Decision to be Taken	Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person
<b>Performance Management</b>			
<b>Performance &amp; Financial Monitoring Information.</b> For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Chairman
<b>Matters for Determination</b>			
<b>Work Programme.</b> For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Hanna Taylor
<b>Matters for Consideration</b>			
<b>Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.</b> For the Committee to receive an adoption of an anti-social behaviour policy, and seek delegated authority in regards to the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 powers.	None	None	Camilla Edmiston Oli Walker
<b>Task Group Updates</b>			
<b>Task Group Update.</b> To receive an update on the work of the Task Groups under the remit of the Committee.	None	None	Chairman



**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 14 September 2020**

Decision to be Taken	Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person
<b>Performance Management</b>			
<b>Performance &amp; Financial Monitoring Information.</b> For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Chairman
<b>Matters for Determination</b>			
<b>Work Programme.</b> For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Hanna Taylor
<b>Matters for Consideration</b>			
<b>Housing Topic Scrutiny – Current Position.</b> Feedback from the Housing Task Group that looks at the Housing Needs and Supply within the Borough.	None	None	Louise Strongitharm
<b>Youth Service Provisions.</b> For the Committee to receive an updates on the current youth services available in the borough.	None	None	Sandie Bolger Adam Thomas SCC Representative
<b>Serco.</b> To receive an update on Service KPI's, planned works, recruitment capacity and future aspirations of joint working.	None	None	Geoff McManus

**Task Group Updates**

<b>Task Group Update.</b> To receive an update on the work of the Task Groups under the remit of the Committee.	None	None	Chairman
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**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 19 October 2020**

<b>Decision to be Taken</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>
<b>Performance Management</b>			
<b>Performance &amp; Financial Monitoring Information.</b> For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Chairman
<b>Matters for Determination</b>			
<b>Work Programme.</b> For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Hanna Taylor
<b>Matters for Consideration</b>			
<b>Housing Topic Scrutiny – Delivery.</b> Feedback from the Housing Task Group, review of planning policies, recent deliveries and proposals, potential barriers and specific projects.	None	None	Louise Strongitharm
<b>Task Group Updates</b>			
<b>Task Group Update.</b> To receive an update on the work of the Task Groups under the remit of the Committee.	None	None	Chairman





**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 23 November 2020**

Decision to be Taken	Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person
<b>Performance Management</b>			
<b>Performance &amp; Financial Monitoring Information.</b> For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Chairman
<b>Matters for Determination</b>			
<b>Work Programme.</b> For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Hanna Taylor
<b>Matters for Consideration</b>			
<b>Sheerwater Regeneration Project Update.</b>	None	None	Ray Morgan
<b>Housing Topic Scrutiny – Future Housing Strategy.</b> Feedback from the Housing Task Group, and identifying our priorities over the next 3 to 5 years, 10 years and the delivery of this.	None	None	Louise Strongitharm
<b>Celebrate Woking 2019/20 Review and Forward Plan.</b> For the Committee to be updated on the outcomes of the various events that have taken place within the Borough over the past year and to be informed of future plans for encouraging visitors into the area.	None	None	Riette Thomas Chris Norrington

<b>Treasury Management Mid-year Review 2020/21.</b>	None	None	Leigh Clarke
<b>Task Group Updates</b>			
<b>Task Group Update.</b> To receive an update on the work of the Task Groups under the remit of the Committee.	None	None	Chairman

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 25 January 2021**

<b>Decision to be Taken</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>
<b>Performance Management</b>			
<b>Performance &amp; Financial Monitoring Information.</b> For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Chairman
<b>Matters for Determination</b>			
<b>Work Programme.</b> For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Hanna Taylor
<b>Matters for Consideration</b>			
<b>Joint Waste Management Performance Review.</b> To review the level of complaints and service KPI's provided by JWS.	None	None	Richard Bisset
<b>Freedom Leisure.</b> For the Committee to receive an annual review and an update since the 2019/20 review.	None	None	Angela Baillie
<b>Play Area Maintenance.</b> To review the maintenance work completed since the last update in November 2019, and whether the programme can be changed from 25 years to a shorter period.	None	None	Arran Henderson Tracey Haskins
<b>Task Group Updates</b>			

<b>Task Group Update.</b> To receive an update on the work of the Task Groups under the remit of the Committee.	None	None	Chairman
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**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 22 February 2021**

Decision to be Taken	Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person
<b>Performance Management</b>			
<b>Performance &amp; Financial Monitoring Information.</b> For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Chairman
<b>Matters for Determination</b>			
<b>Work Programme.</b> For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Hanna Taylor
<b>Matters for Consideration</b>			
<b>Freedom of Information Requests.</b> To review the statistics and requests that proceed to the Information Commissioners Office.	None	None	Hanna Taylor
<b>Overview of Complaints Received and Contract Review.</b> For the Committee to review the complaints for 2020 and identify any trends. The Committee wish to review some areas of the contract.	None	None	Joanne McIntosh New Vision Homes
<b>Task Group Updates</b>			
<b>Task Group Update.</b> To receive an update on the work of the Task Groups under the remit of the Committee.	None	None	Chairman



**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 22 March 2021**

Decision to be Taken	Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person
<b>Performance Management</b>			
<b>Performance &amp; Financial Monitoring Information.</b> For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Chairman
<b>Matters for Determination</b>			
<b>Work Programme.</b> For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Hanna Taylor
<b>Matters for Consideration</b>			
<b>Family Centres Update.</b> For the Committee to receive an update a year on from the consultation that determined the re-modelling of the remaining Children’s Centres in the Borough to create Family Centres as part of a wider Family Service, led by Woking Borough Council.	None	None	Adam Thomas
<b>Freedom Leisure.</b> Update from FL, to compare questionnaire results, a year on from the last survey.	None	None	Angela Baillie
<b>Annual Report of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee.</b>	None	None	Chairman

**Task Group Updates**

**Task Group Update.** To receive an update on the work of the Task Groups under the remit of the Committee.

None

None

Chairman



### Latest Version of the Forward Plan

The Forward Plan gives an indication of the decision to be taken by the Executive. Published monthly, the Forward Plan has traditionally given an indication of the decisions to be taken over the following four months.

**18 June 2020**

Key Decision	Subject	Decision to be taken	Consultation (Undertaken prior to the meeting unless otherwise stated)	Background Documents	Contact Officer
<b>No</b>	Notice of Motion - Cllr A-M Barker - Fireworks	To consider the Notice of Motion from Cllr A-M Barker referred to the Executive on 26 March 2020 by Council on 13 February 2020.	Cllr Davis, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Deputy Chief Executive (Douglas J Spinks)
<b>No</b>	Notice of Motion - Cllr G Chrystie - Confidential Reporting at Council and Committees	To consider the Notice of Motion from Cllr G Chrystie referred to the Executive on 26 March 2020 by Council on 13 February 2020.	Cllr Azad, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Peter Bryant)
<b>Yes</b>	Brookwood Cemetery Masterplan	To recommend to Council the Brookwood Cemetery Masterplan.	Cllr Azad, Portfolio Holder, and Cllr Cundy, Lead Member for Brookwood Cemetery.	None.	Deputy Chief Executive (Douglas J Spinks)
<b>No</b>	Caring for Children and Young People Policy - HR Policy for Woking Borough Council Employees	To recommend to Council that the Caring for Children and Young People Policy be approved.	Cllr Bittleston, Portfolio Holder, Unison.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)

<b>No</b>	Woking Borough Council's Response to COVID 19 - Update	To receive an update on the activities undertaken by the Council in light of the Coronavirus Pandemic or otherwise referred to as COVID 19.	Cllr Bittleston, Leader of the Council.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)
<b>Yes</b>	Flood Risk Management	Authorisation to release remaining funds to allow scheme to be constructed.	Cllr Davis, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Deputy Chief Executive (Douglas J Spinks)
<b>No</b>	Executive Undertakings - Woking Football Club (PLAN/2019/1176) and Egley Road (PLAN/2019/1177) Planning Applications	The Executive will be asked to consider agreeing to give effect to the requirements of the Local Planning Authority in respect of Planning Applications PLAN/2019/1177 and PLAN/2019-1176.	Cllr Bittleston, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Peter Bryant)
<b>No</b>	Woking Walk In Centre (WIC) Consultation Update	To receive an update on the consultation being undertaken by North West Surrey CCG concerning the future of the Woking Walk In Centre (WIC) at Woking Community Hospital and its review of urgent care services in North West Surrey.	Cllr Bittleston, Leader of the Council, Cllr Kemp, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)
<b>No</b>	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Annual Monitoring Report	To receive details of RIPA authorisations during 2019 calendar year.	Cllr Azad, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Peter Bryant)
<b>No</b>	Write off of Irrecoverable Debt	To write off debts over £10,000.	Cllr Azad, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Director of Finance (Leigh Clarke)

<b>No</b>	Risk Management and Business Continuity Annual Report	To receive the annual report on Risk Management and Business Continuity.	Cllr Bittleston, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)
<b>No</b>	Performance and Financial Monitoring Information	To consider the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information contained in the Green Book.	Cllr Bittleston, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Finance Officer (Leigh Clarke)
<b>No</b>	Monitoring Reports - Projects	To provide quarterly reports on the progress of projects in the interests of financial prudence and corporate governance.	Cllr Bittleston, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)
<b>Yes</b>	Commercial Tenant Management	To receive a report on Commercial Tenant Management.  (The press and public will be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this 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.)	Cllr Azad, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)

<p><b>Yes</b></p>	<p>Victoria Square Update</p>	<p>To receive a Victoria Square Update report.</p> <p>(The press and public will be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this 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.)</p>	<p>Cllr Bittleston, Leader of the Council.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)</p>
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**16 July 2020**

<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Decision to be taken</b>	<b>Consultation (Undertaken prior to the meeting unless otherwise stated)</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
<b>Yes</b>	Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) - Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)	To recommend to Council that the Council makes the Compulsory Purchase Order which is necessary for the Housing Infrastructure Fund project to proceed.	Cllr Bittleston, Leader of the Council.	None.	Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Peter Bryant)
<b>No</b>	Independent Directors of Subsidiaries	To consider revised arrangements for Independent Directors.	Cllr Azad, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)
<b>No</b>	Churchyard Closure and Transfer of Maintenance Responsibility – St Mary The Virgin Horsell	The Executive is requested to resolve that the responsibility for the maintenance of the closed churchyard at St Mary The Virgin Horsell is transferred to Woking Borough Council.	Cllr Davis, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Deputy Chief Executive (Douglas J Spinks)
<b>Yes</b>	Treasury Management Annual Report 2019-20	To receive the Annual Treasury Management Report.	Cllr Azad, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Finance Officer (Leigh Clarke)

<b>No</b>	Equalities Annual Report - 2020	To receive an annual report detailing progress on the equalities agenda.	Portfolio Holder, employees, a range of voluntary and community sector groups and organisations.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)
<b>No</b>	Performance and Financial Monitoring Information	To consider the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information contained in the Green Book.	Cllr Bittleston, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Finance Officer (Leigh Clarke)

**Current Task Groups Responsible to the Committee**

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

<b>Task Group</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Date Established</b>	<b>Anticipated Completion Date</b>
Economic Development Task Group	To identify and seek the implementation of measures to mitigate the impact of the economic downturn on the residents, community organisations and businesses in the Borough of Woking.	Cllrs Ali, Azad, Barker, Bond, Davis, Elson, and Johnson.	Officer and Councillor time.	11.03.09	Ongoing
Finance Task Group	To review Financial issues as and when identified by the Committee. Financial Performance of the Council Management and Administration of Accounts procurement Strategy, Pension fund, Financial Strategy.	Cllrs Ashall, Azad, Aziz, Bond, Davis, Hughes, and Sanderson.	Officer and Councillor time.	25.05.06	Ongoing
Housing Task Group	To review Housing issues as and when identified by the Committee, including Housing Strategy, Housing Business Plan, Housing Service Plans, Housing Revenue Account, Housing Conditions, Housing Needs, Private Sector Housing, Home Improvement Agency, Housing and Council Tax Benefits, and monitor/review progress of the PFI Scheme	Cllrs Aziz, Bridgeman, Forster, Harlow, Johnson, Kemp and Mohammad.	Officer and Councillor time.	25.05.06	Ongoing





OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 JUNE 2020

## **WOKING FOOTBALL CLUB & ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENTS TASK GROUP**

### **Executive Summary**

Over the past three months the Task Group has met five times to consider a wide range of information and evidence related to this proposed development.

This group has not considered or viewed the planning application which has been submitted to planning.

The Task Group has reviewed as per the agreed scope of the group, the processes behind the Council's involvement with the development going back to 2017, and to 1994 when the WBC policy pertaining to the redevelopment of the football stadium was agreed. It has undertaken a scrutiny function as appropriate under the umbrella of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Task Group's Report comprises two parts;

1. This Part I covers summary findings and recommendations are published below for consideration by the whole O&S committee with a view to progressing them to Council for agreement of implementation.

2. A separate supporting Part II report which summarises the evidence on which these findings and recommendations are based. As this contains much information which has still to be considered confidential to Council Members only. It is not currently a public document and will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Council under Part II conditions.

The Task Group is made up of lay Councillors and has had limited resources to review a great deal of complex detail within short timescales. It has conducted this investigation with the best of endeavours and these findings and recommendations are made in good faith and impartially.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee is requested to:

#### **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That**

##### ***Transparency and a Clear Audit trail***

- (i) WBC in its future business dealings maintains minutes and notes of all meetings in which development contracts and finance are discussed and decisions made.
- (ii) Decisions regarding disclosure of Part II items should be more transparent and under regular review.
- (iii) Officers not agree confidentiality clauses which prohibit the Council from public disclosure following the signing of contracts.
- (iv) Definition of what constitutes 'material' changes to be clarified. This would support Officers when using their delegated authority, and not open the Council to any challenge of changes which may be of a material standing.

***Clarity over some Officer roles***

- (v) That Officers who hold various positions by virtue of their employment in the Council and its companies, are released from some actions in which they act in these multiple roles, especially where there are also personal declarations of interest and associated directorships. It is recommended this be referred to the Standards and Audit committee. Their consideration for a protocol by which Officers, by virtue of their appointment, can be guided on what is appropriate would be helpful. This would ensure that Officers are not put in positions where there can be a challenge of a conflict of interest.

***Business Cases***

- (vi) For all significant and complex developments or investments a business case should be submitted to Council at the out-set, to provide the context, the justification of the case for change and promote discussion on available options.
- (vii) Members should be more careful in accepting information without reasonable evidence, and unsubstantiated statements should be more rigorously tested prior to agreement of Council (Officer) recommendations.
- (viii) Elements of the future sustainability and self-sufficiency of WFC should be more fully tested for clarity and accuracy. As the prime rationale for the development is that of ensuring the on-going sustainability of the club. It would be prudent to ensure that this is achievable in all the various and on-going iterations of the proposals. Any changes of proposals should be brought back to the Council for consideration.

***Due diligence***

- (ix) In all projects the process of due diligence needs to be as full and broad as possible and not limited to the narrow scope of a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV). WBC must adopt a similar comprehensive due diligence perspective as that of a lending bank.
- (x) A rigorous risk assessment is required on the whole scope of this development to protect the Council. The project risks and those associated with the loan facility should be regularly reviewed.
- (xi) Risk assessments should be undertaken for all future developments and investments.

***Council as landowner and also Planning Authority***

- (xii) In developments where WBC has dual roles and interests these need to be transparent, and any conflicts clearly identified.

## Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group Report

- (xiii) Consideration of Core Strategies and the Site Allocations DPD should be clearly distinct from any undue influence by an impending development.
- (xiv) Council purchase price of property and land should always be supported by at least one and preferably two valuations and survey reports.

### ***Deferral of any planning application***

- (xv) ~~It is recommended that any Planning Application is deferred and not heard by the Planning Committee until the Regulation 19 Consultation hearing outcome has been fully reported upon by the Secretary of State's Inspector. (Following legal advice this recommendation has been withdrawn. Having considered Leading Counsel's Opinion it is advised that the recommendation that the Planning Application is deferred and not heard by the Planning committee until the Regulation 19 consultation has been fully reported by the Secretary of State could amount to recommending that the Council takes steps that are unlawful. Legislation provides that the Local Planning Authority must determine Planning Applications and as confirmed by Leading Counsel none of these processes or targets are affected by the preparation of a development plan)~~

### ***Further independent scrutiny review***

- (xvi) Given the scale and gravity of findings within this report a further independent and fully resourced investigation into the processes behind this development should be commissioned.

The item(s) above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to the Council.

**Background Papers:** None

**Reporting Person:** Cllr Deborah Hughes, Chairman of the Task Group  
Email: CllrDeborah.Hughes@woking.gov.uk

**Contact Person:** Cllr Deborah Hughes, Chairman of the Task Group  
Email: CllrDeborah.Hughes@woking.gov.uk

**Date Published:** 5 June 2020



## Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group Report

### 1.0 Introduction

#### Initiation

- 1.1 The task group was initiated at the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) meeting on the 21st October 2019.
- 1.2 The terms of reference were submitted to the Committee and ratified on the 25th November 2019.

#### Rationale

- 1.3 The proposed developments at both Kingfield / Westfield and on the Egley Road are major projects which have been subject to many debates in the Council and in the Executive. They were also subject to a petition submitted by local residents to the Council. This Task Group seeks to assure the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (and therefore the Council and residents) that appropriate due process has been applied.

#### Timing

- 1.4 The task group was always set up to be a task and finish group providing in depth scrutiny into the processes around the decisions made by the Council and the Executive relating to the Westfield Football Club redevelopment and associated developments.

#### Membership

- 1.5 The task group was made up of members of the committee who volunteered to be involved. It was requested that these should be from across the political parties and this is largely the case (3x Conservatives; 2x Lib Dems and 1x Independent); Cllr Hussain; Cllr Chrystie; Cllr Whitehand (Vice Chair); Cllr Bond; Cllr Rana; Cllr Hughes (Chair).

Observers; Cllr Morales; Cllr Bittleston; Cllr Raja.

#### Meetings

- 1.6 The task group had 4 key meetings each of 3 hours and a shorter meeting with Cllr Azad held on the 28.2.20.

#### Guest attendance

- 1.7 The task group meetings were divided into consideration of the key elements of the Task Group scrutiny. Officers, external stakeholders and a Council Member were invited to participate;
  - Peter Bryant, Head of Democratic Services; Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
  - Leigh Clarke, Director of Finance
  - Cllr Ayesha Azad, Portfolio Holder for finance
  - Rosemary Johnson, Chair of WFC
  - Neill Morrison, Board Director, WFC
  - Ray Morgan, CEO, WBC

#### Support

- 1.8 The Task Group was supported by Hanna Taylor, Democratic Services Officer, and the two Council Solicitors, Jacqui Hutton and Joanne McIntosh.

## Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group Report

- 1.9 Minutes were kept of each meeting and circulated to the Task Group members.

### External Support

- 1.10 Access to expert external advice was requested but denied.
- 1.11 It should be noted that this is a report written from the discussions with the guests, and a wide range of paper, verbal and electronic evidence. It is written in good faith as representative of the submissions to, and views of the Task Group plus the additional evidence collated. The Task Group members agreed this report prior to it coming formally to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.
- 1.12 The Task Group has had to operate quickly and with limited resources. This Report has therefore been written on a best endeavours basis recognising additional information and background not yet provided may be able to give greater information.

## **2.0 Key Findings, arising from the evidence provided to the Task Group**

- 2.1 **The Council decision to support Woking Football Club (WFC) and the proposed development was given on unclear evidence regarding the financial state of the football club and a 25 year old 'policy' that had not been reviewed since.** A seat capacity of 10,000 the Council was informed was 'Policy'. Yet the WFC indicated in April 2019 that this was not their requirement, and that 8,000 overall capacity would be adequate. No initial option appraisal was conducted. A motion to look at a reduction in the numbers of seats was not considered by anyone other than the developers yet the Council had asked for a wider view. This policy was then superseded by an officer's delegated authority to adjust the capacity to just over 9,000.
- 2.2 **The due diligence appears wholly inadequate being conducted on a far too restricted basis** - a basic Special Purpose Vehicle basis only. No additional checks on the key people behind the development, their business history or any of the other aspects normally conducted by banks when considering a loan of this magnitude.
- 2.3 **There appears to be as little if any documentation to explain why the Council offered the Developer a £250m loan.** No evidence has been provided to the Council that the Developer had private finance agreed, or even explored, for this project. In July 2019 the Council had an understanding that private funding would, and must, be used. But by November 2019 a complete change had occurred when the Council offered the developers access to the loan of public funds.
- 2.4 **The fundamental business case for the development (a 'case for change') was not forthcoming at the outset** and despite requests was not submitted until the WFC business plan accompanied the Planning Application. A baseline business case would have been usual and useful to justify a case for change and picked up on many of the issues and concerns at an earlier stage.
- 2.5 **Changes were made, which could likely constitute a material change, without a clear definition of what is material.** These relate specifically to changes in the numbers of the seats and the changes in ratio of seats to standing; the numbers of properties that were proposed; the funding arrangements which were brought back to Council for consideration; and also the use of the stadium itself. A clear definition of 'materiality' would support Officers when using their delegated authority, and not open the Council to any challenge of changes which maybe of a material standing.
- 2.6 **There are a high number of documents which were held in confidence.** Until November of 2019 all documents apart from one paper in Part I in July 2018 were in Part II and so

## Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group Report

confidential. This was governed, it transpires, from a confidentiality clause within the contract in which the developers had controlled disclosure.

- 2.7 **Decisions appear to have been made under delegated authority which puts into question the authority of the key officer making them and his/her authority to so do.** Tight imposed timeframes and lack of clarity over what constituted material changes were said to be exacerbating factors. The Task Group heard changes were requested by the Football Club and Developers but due to the tight timeframes the Officer made the decision and then announced this to Council under delegated authority.
- 2.8 **The overall position of the Council in this development is opaque.** It has clearly supported the sustainability objective of the football club and its desire to build a new stadium. But the level of support that it has provided the developers seems to indicate a level of interest beyond what could have been reasonably expected e.g.
- The shared cost for the viability assessment would be more indicative of a shared venture
  - The NDA of the WFC business case when provided to two Officers and not released to anyone else despite requests,
  - The Council has purchased land and is facilitating the moves of the Gym Club and David Lloyd all prior to any successful planning consent
- 2.9 **There appear to have been no internal nor external valuations conducted on the two major land purchases** (the Kingfield and Egleby Rd sites.)
- 2.10 **Information given to Councillors does not always appear to have been accurate.** Whilst Councillors acted in good faith and in a desire to support the club the veracity of key information supplied can be questioned e.g.
- The commercial aspects to support the ongoing viability of the Football Club were not clear and changed over time.
  - The developers stated 'there will be' e.g. a Medical Centre and Dentists before any relevant permissions and confirmation had been achieved.
- 2.11 Alternative pitch use for rugby we are now informed is a non -starter as no specific changing rooms in the proposed plans meet rugby's specification. **Elements of the future sustainability of WFC should be more fully tested for clarity and accuracy**, particularly definitive statements of what commercial and alternative uses are intended to be included in the new development. The documents that were viewed showed various iterations of this and conflicting information. The business case to support this was not presented until submission with the planning application.
- 2.12 **There were discrepancies in the discussions identified and misunderstandings as no minutes were kept of the over 50 meetings** which took place between the developers and Council Officers in the Council Offices alone. The absence of any such minutes in this whole development does not aid transparency and opens up the Council to unnecessary speculation.
- 2.13 **The proposed £250m revolving loan is unprecedented to an external developer and appears high risk** as no actual values have been attributed to the assets of GWL to cover the loan until such time as tangible assets have been built. No risk assessments were provided to the Task Group.

## Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group Report

- 2.14 **WBC does not appear to be insured against risks to itself as a result of this development** or its relationship with the developers. Questions are raised on what risks is WBC carrying and how are these assessed and mitigated? The apparent lack of a Risk Assessment is concerning, particularly so when the Council has purchased land ahead of planning consents; offered an unprecedented loan without a value on the security held by the developers; the onward sustainability for the WFC which is not proven. Do we have any insurance that covers any of the Council's liabilities in this development?
- 2.15 **There appears to remain the risk that even after all this support WFC may not be sustainable and self-sufficient** and that WBC will be asked / obliged to step in as it has done over the past 30 plus years. Risks exist to WFC sustainability until the Planning Consent has been granted and there appears to be no alternative plan. WBC could end up with shares in the Football Club with unclear implications for the Council. The implication of all these risks needs to be made clear to Members.
- 2.16 **Confusion exists in various documents regarding the development vehicle**, GoDev and GWL which are not all the same entity. Initial negotiations were with GoDev and Wayne Gold. GWL is a different entity. The two terms seem to be used interchangeably, and yet due diligence was not conducted on both.
- 2.17 **The land on which the new stadium and houses are proposed is still subject to the findings of the Secretary of States Inspector on the Regulation 19 consultation.** The final report is not due until later this year. However the interim report which was published on the 14th of February puts in doubt the assumptions under which the viability of the development has been conceived. The project is dependent upon the housing element as the funding 'enabler' for the development. Housing numbers are at odds with those in the Core Strategy 10 which the Inspector refers to as being a basis for the indicative number of homes suitable for this site. **The submission of any planning application prior to the Inspector's full report could be viewed as premature as it would pre-empt the outcome of the report** and not take into account his full findings. It is noted that the development sites were not originally in the Regulation 18 consultation and were only added afterwards. Hence residents have only had an opportunity to have their say in the Regulation 19 consultation. It raises questions over the standing of a planning application over the Inspectors awaited report.
- 2.18 **It appears that some Officers took action on behalf of WBC despite holding multiple roles, directorships and declared personal interests.**
- 2.19 Two Officers hold multiple roles and responsibilities which impact on this development, including directorships in KCS; declared conflicts of interest; have roles in WBC; roles with WFC and were signatories to some or all of the documents. One of these also was the key negotiator for the terms of the development agreement (and the other documents) and used Delegated Authority to amend a Council policy and held the decisions over what should remain in Part II. This leaves them vulnerable to questions of whether they are too involved at so many levels. It would have been wise to have sought external advice on the nature of their roles and involvement in this development.
- 2.20 Whilst the Council voted to support this development it has made several purchases which appear to pre-empt a planning decision, despite original plans for the purchase e.g. Egley Rd to be dependent upon a successful planning outcome. This was brought forward once the Site allocations were submitted.

### 3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 The Task Group cannot assure the O&S Committee and therefore the Council and residents that appropriate due process has been applied.



## **Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group Report**

- 3.2 This report seeks to promote an invigorated open and transparent Council, via the implementation of the recommendations as listed above as a de facto improvement plan. Many of these are deemed to be good practice.
- 3.3 The long time scale over which this development has been considered means that there have been many changes in what the Council members originally agreed to, and there are significant variations in the details provided to members over this period. This raises the question of whether members are fully aware of what these proposals are, and the possible risks identified to the Council.
- 3.4 Given the scale and gravity of findings within this report a further independent and fully resourced investigation into the processes behind this development should be commissioned.

REPORT ENDS



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 JUNE 2020

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE ADVICE IN LIGHT OF THE

### WOKING FOOTBALL CLUB & ASSOCIATE DEVELOPMENTS TASK GROUP REPORT

#### Executive Summary

The Chairman of the Task Group advised me that the report was unanimously agreed by the Task Group and I received a final copy of the Part 1 Report on 3 June 2020.

Whilst recognising the efforts that have been made by the Task Group in examining this matter I consider that it is not in the Council's interests for the recommendations to Council, set out in the Part 1 Report, to be approved by the Committee. In my view the recommendations would prejudice the future management of Council Business and potentially undermine the Council's ability to act in the interests of residents. This strikes at the heart of the management of the Council's business for which I am ultimately responsible.

I accept that Members of the Task Group have not been able to satisfy themselves that the due processes of the Council have been followed.

In my view such a challenge to the Governance arrangements of the Council needs to be addressed before it is debated further or the Council is requested to determine anything in respect of the report. Our normal, and good practice, in such circumstances is to commission a review of the Governance process through the Council's Internal Auditor, an independent organisation, Mazars. The Auditors report should then be submitted to the Standards and Audit Committee and the views of that Committee be established and reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee could then properly consider the Task Group Report with the benefit of the Audit Report and the views of the Standards and Audit Committee.

Therefore, at this stage, I propose that:- the Woking Football Club and Associated Developments Task Group Report be noted; the Council's Internal Auditor be requested to undertake a review of the Governance arrangements for the related developments; the Standards and Audit Committee consider the Auditors report and advise the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of its views; and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the Task Group report at a future meeting with the benefit of the Auditor Report and the views of the Standard and Audit Committee.

#### Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

#### RESOLVE That

- i. the Woking Football Club and Associated Developments Task Group Report be noted;
- ii. the Council's Internal Auditor be requested to undertake a review of the Governance arrangements for the developments;
- iii. the Standards and Audit Committee consider the Auditors report and advise the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of its views; and

- iv. the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the Task Group report at a future meeting with the benefit of the Auditor Report and the views of the Standard and Audit Committee.

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

**Background Papers:** Leading Counsel's Opinion, circulated 10 March, as Appendix 1.

**Reporting Person:** Name, Ray Morgan, Chief Executive  
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**Contact Person:** Name, Ray Morgan, Chief Executive  
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**Date Published:** 5 June 2020

REPORT ENDS

**WOKING STADIUM**

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**OPINION**

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1. The Woking Borough Council is a local planning authority and, thus, may be concerned both in the determination of applications for planning permission and the preparation of development plan documents. Such documents play a part in the determination of planning applications as, putting the matter broadly, an application is determined having regard to the development plan, so far as material, and to other material considerations.
2. One such material consideration is Government advice and, in particular, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019). In Woking the Site Allocation Development Plan Document (SADPD) is presently travelling through a process that ought to result in it within a reasonable time coming to be formally part of the development plan, as statutorily defined. This process is referred to in the NPPF and is

statutorily controlled (see the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

3. Policy UA44 of the SADPD refers to the Woking Football Club which is contemplated as a mixed use site coming forward during the plan period. There is, however, no indicative housing yield given for the site although other sites in the SADPD do have such indicative yields. However, the Woking Football Club site does not determine or affect the ability of Woking to reach its housing objectives. Further, its existence does not bear on or influence to any significant degree other housing sites.
4. An important part of a local planning authority's functions is the determination of applications for planning permission. Indeed primary and secondary legislation sets out a clear process for such applications which local planning authorities should, at the very least, endeavour to keep. The Government sets targets for the time within which applications should be determined. None of that process or those targets are affected by the fact that a development plan document is being prepared.
5. The preceding fact is of profound importance for it reveals that Parliament did not consider that planning control (i.e. (in this context) the determination of planning applications) halts whilst a plan document was being prepared. Indeed planning control continues just as before, i.e.

applications can be made and have to be determined. Thus, the fact that UA44 is being considered as part of the development plan process is no bar to the concurrent consideration and determination of a planning application in respect of Woking Football Club.

6. It so happens there is such an application and the legislative consequence (described above) is that the application must be considered and determined by the local planning authority in the usual way. If this usual way determines the application prior to the adoption of any new development plan document then such is a mere happenstance; it is absolutely not a disqualifying event.
7. What constitutes a material consideration on an application for planning permission is not defined. This is recognised in the NPPF and at paragraphs 49-50 the Framework deals with an argument that an application may be premature given the promotion of a development plan document. In other words it could be a material consideration on a planning application that such a document was being prepared.
8. As a matter of principle such an argument is bound to be weak for, as we have seen, Parliament expressly did not disable planning applications from being determined (or alter the process in any way) merely because a

development plan document was being prepared. Further, paragraph 49 of the NPPF makes it plain that such an argument is unlikely to succeed other than in limited circumstances where both of two conditions are met. The first of which is the application must undermine the plan making process by predetermining other decisions. However, it is perfectly clear that the Woking Football Club decision does not undermine any other decision. For instance no number in any such decision referable to housing is dependent on the Football Club decision.

9. Paragraph 80 of the NPPF indicates that where permission is refused on grounds of prematurity the authority has to indicate clearly how granting permission would prejudice the outcome of the plan making process. There is no reasoning available here capable of giving such an indication.
  
10. In the context of the Development Plan Document there is, although the inspector is well advanced in his work, still some further work to be done before adoption by the Council. This is likely to involve further consultation. The question arises whether determination of the Woking Football Club application should be deferred pending that consultation.



11. The answer is no, it should not. The determination of the planning application has its own procedure with such consultation as appropriate. Consultation on another issue is not part of the statutory regime and would merely serve to delay. The development plan document consultation would have to be seen as a material consideration and that proposition appears unsustainable.
12. The next question is whether the application should be refused on grounds of prematurity. In the circumstances prematurity has, in the light of the observation in the NPPF and generally, no strength as a determining material consideration on the planning application. The necessary impact is simply not present. In those circumstances the application should not be refused on grounds of prematurity.
13. A refusal of a planning application or a failure to determine a planning application can lead to an appeal with a subsequent hearing or inquiry before an inspector. It will be remembered that such an inspector can award costs on the basis of unreasonable conduct. In considering any application for costs an inspector will pay close regard to the NPPF.

14. Consequently, if either deferral, because of the concurrent plan process, or refusal, on the basis of prematurity, occurs. I consider the Council would be at risk of a costs order for having acted unreasonably.

15. CONCLUSION

Neither deferral on the basis of further SADPD consultation nor a refusal on prematurity grounds is justified.

5<sup>th</sup> March 2020  
QC  
[clerks@4-5.co.uk](mailto:clerks@4-5.co.uk)  
0207 404 5252

**TIMOTHY STRAKER**

4-5 Gray's Inn Square  
WC1R 5AH

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

**WOKING STADIUM**

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**OPINION**

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 JUNE 2020

## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### Executive Summary

Each year, the Chairman of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee prepares a report outlining the activities undertaken by the Committee. This year, the Committee has reviewed a wide range of topics and has completed both scrutiny and pre-decision scrutiny of the work of the Executive and the Council as a whole. The four Task Groups of the Committee – the Economic Development, Finance and Housing Task Groups – have continued to monitor and review these three core areas of the Council's activities. The Committee recently set up a further task group, Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group, to review the due diligence and process applied to the decision making and the continued requirement for Part II.

The Work Programme of the Committee is regularly reviewed and updated to take account of issues affecting the Borough at the time.

The Committee is now invited to agree the draft report for submission to the next meeting of Council, on 30 July 2020.

### Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

**RESOLVE That** the report be submitted to the next meeting of Council subject to any comments made by Members of the Committee.

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

**Background Papers:** None.

**Reporting Person:** Councillor D Hughes, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Email: cllrdeborah.hughes@woking.gov.uk

**Contact Person:** Councillor D Hughes, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Email: cllrdeborah.hughes@woking.gov.uk

**Date Published:** 5 June 2020



## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is wide-ranging and includes a variety of areas for consideration that have been reviewed over the past year. These included areas such as the finance of major developments; internal scrutiny of Council processes; review of joint ventures and partnerships; contractual performance as well as various updates, such as Celebrate Woking, and areas for pre-scrutiny such as the HIF conditions and the proposed Woking Community Lottery.
- 1.2 The Committee commenced with a reminder to members of the Committee's terms of reference - the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are responsible for examining all functions and responsibilities of the Council. The Committee would ensure that the Council delivers its key aims and objectives, by creating an open, transparent mechanism for Councillors to shape, question, evaluate and challenge the Council policies, decisions and performance.
- 1.3 Mandatory Scrutiny training was also provided to all members prior to the first meeting of the Committee. The successful training was facilitated by Mark Palmer, the Development Director from South East Employers (SEE) and Members noted positive feedback from the session.

## **2.0 Summary of Work Undertaken**

### 2.1 Areas brought forward from the 2019/20 Municipal Year;

- Licensing of the food premises;
- Followed up with a letter from the previous chair of this Committee to the MP for a change in Government policy regarding the mandatory display of food hygiene status in catering outlets
- Freedom Leisure - A report had come to the Committee and as various changes had happened in year and significant public concern was still being voiced this was put as an area for in-depth scrutiny.

#### The Work Programme

- 2.2 Every effort was made to ensure that the Committee was working with the forward plan for the Council to ensure forward scrutiny of decisions.

### 2.3 **Areas identified for Scrutiny**

#### Freedom Leisure

- 2.3 This was a continued piece of scrutiny work carried over from the previous municipal year, and was intended to be the key focus for the Committee in the current year.

### 2.4 The scrutiny was undertaken in four parts, which were;

- A survey of residents in the Borough. The survey was aimed to capture the results of users and non users of the leisure centre Both those who do and those who don't, seeking views on a range of areas. For those who do not use the facilities, information was sought on why they didn't and if they utilized alternative facilities elsewhere. This survey was conducted by an external organization on behalf of the Committee, but the Committee was instrumental in determining the range and scope of the survey.
- A site visit to Pool in the Park by Committee members which was open to all members to attend. The Committee were shown into every area they wished, and our questions

## Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

were responded to openly and freely at the time. A report on this visit was written by the Chair and sent to members.

- An agenda item in O&S on the resident experience, with representation from both residents and Freedom Leisure.
- A second agenda item to consider the performance management by the Council of the contract.

### 2.5 Actions from this scrutiny; and outputs

- Report of findings into the site visit
- Survey outcomes, which it is planned will provide a baseline for a follow up survey to be conducted once the present renovations into the changing areas are completed.
- Changes to the way in which Freedom Leisure communicates to residents. A more proactive approach and also a more timely communication of any closures with clear explanations. It was found that Freedom Leisure and the Council were often doing work that was raised as concerns by residents, but that this was not well communicated. It was suggested that a communication action plan be implemented.
- A representative from Freedom Leisure to be invited as a member of the Health and Well-being Task Group. With a key emphasis to be on the inclusion of health within leisure.
- A report was written to the Freedom Leisure Partnership Board with recommendations from the findings of this scrutiny within its performance management brief.
- A recommendation that Freedom Leisure be on the agenda for the next year, following a second survey of residents, to ensure that the anticipated improvements in the public perceptions has been achieved.

### Anti-Social Behaviour and the possible relationship with youth provision.

2.6 This is due to come to the Committee on the 23rd March 2020.

### Children's Centres

- 2.7 Urgent consideration was given to the SCC decision to close the existing six children's centres, replaced with two centres, and reduce the budget for this area whilst increasing the age range to be managed.
- 2.8 The SCC consultation and proposal that WBC to take on some of the service under the Family Services was discussed by the Committee. Various changes were debated and the Committee sought assurance on a range of areas to ensure that the essential services would be retained, if in a different form.
- 2.9 A paper written from the Committee with recommendations to Council, on 25th July where recommendations accepted. A framework was discussed as to what the Council's responsibilities were in this respect and what was to be retained under Surrey County Council. This was followed up by the Chairman and Deputy Chair on behalf of the Committee with the Family Service leads within Woking Borough Council.
- 2.10 This was followed up by a presentation from the Family services team, which provided significant assurance on aspects such as; training of staff for an extended age range; the universal offer and how this is being provided via alternative provision; the bringing together of



## Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

the previous Children's centre staff into one team within the Council and the associated robust governance around this; the capacity of the staff and the finances.

2.11 We also learnt of the benefits of this service now being part of the wider council team, with enhanced integration of services and joint learning across other teams.

2.12 Action and outputs:

- A framework paper written to describe the actions and responsibility split between WBC and SCC, this was taken to full Council.
- A follow up on the agenda with an update on the progress of the transition to the new Family Services (this happened on Feb 24th).
- A follow up meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair with the Family Centre leads to discuss progress.

### Scrutiny on the Victoria Square

2.13 Ray Morgan provided a presentation on the progress and detail of this development.

2.14 This considered both the finances and progress. Some delay will be due to the rebuilding of the red car park, however the overall project is still on track to be completed within the anticipated contract timing. The financial element was reviewed in the finance task group.

2.15 Actions and Outcome;

2.16 A section is now included in the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information, the 'green book'. Details of the Victoria Square development are discussed regularly in the Victoria Square Oversight group.

### Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

2.17 The Housing Infra Structure Fund was announced in the summer. This area was on the agenda several times over the year, and culminated in agreement in Council.

2.18 Details of the application was discussed by the Committee following a verbal presentation by Ernest Amoako and a presentation by Ray Morgan.

2.19 Actions;

- A summary of the HIF bid was produced by the Chair for members.
- Follow up requested to consider the conditions on which the grant is offered.
- Follow up agenda item to O and S on the conditions and further scrutiny within the Finance task group
- Scrutiny pre Council on the terms of the bid.

### Sheerwater

2.20 A presentation on the progress was provided by Ray Morgan regarding modifications to the original ideas for the site.

2.21 Actions:

## Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- To come back to O&S for update
- Briefing to all members, done.

### Play Areas

2.22 The Committee reviewed update on the refurbishment programme of the 42 play grounds within the Borough. The Chair and Vice Chair conducted a site visit of 13 of these prior to the meeting. Concerns were raised on the cleanliness of the play furniture, signage and age range recommendations. In particular the refurbishment programme appeared to be very protracted and this was challenged.

2.23 Actions:

- Increase the frequency of the refurbishment programme.
- Review the Council recommended play furniture on future refurbishments.
- The updated refurbishment and renovation programme to come back to the Committee.

### Joint Waste Solutions and Amey

2.24 The JWS team presented the data regarding performance of AMEY over the past year. Issues in performance were apparent at the end of last year and the Committee sought assurance that these were being addressed. The key areas of concern were staff and vehicle capacity, both of which the members were informed are being expanded. Members discussed the present provision against their understanding of the initial contract.

2.25 Actions:

- Cllr Davis as Portfolio holder offered to review the KPIs which are presented on this performance in the green book. This is following comments that the deteriorating quarter 3 and 4 position were not picked up by the present indicators. It was suggested that a review of these KPIs be undertaken so that in future any issues can be identified and picked up by members via this route.
- Enhanced communication and education from JWS for residents over their recycling offer.
- Update on expanded provisions for other areas of recycling as discussed to come back to the Committee.

### Empty Homes

2.26 This topic was suggested for review by the Committee via the Housing Task Group. The performance of the Council in bringing empty homes back into use dipped significantly last year as a result of pressure to implement the licensing of rental accommodation and staff capacity being diverted. It was noted that the performance in this year is significantly improved and is now ahead of its target. The Committee discussed the wider issues around this complex topic.

2.27 Actions:

- All ward members to be given the up to date list of all empty homes in their wards
- Encouragement that ward members identify other empty properties that they may well be aware of.

## Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Encouragement that members flag up issues that arise from empty homes in cases of ASB, vandalism etc. to the officers.

### Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

2.28 This is due to come to the Committee on the 23rd March 2020.

### Safer Woking Partnership and the Community Safety Plan

2.29 This is due to come to the Committee on the 23rd March 2020.

### Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group

2.30 Council processes in regard to the Woking Football Club & Associated Developments.

2.31 An ad hoc task group was set up for detailed scrutiny into this.

2.32 Action:

- A report written from the Task group to be presented at the OSC on the 23rd of March with findings and recommendations.

### For Overview;

- Procurement Process; rules and regulations, plus examples
- Celebrate Woking; achievements to date and the forward plan
- Flood alleviation plans, progress on these.
- Complaints, consideration of trends
- FOI requests; a large increase in these being presented. The Committee requested a further breakdown of those under the democratic services heading.

### Financial scrutiny and overview

2.33 This was conducted throughout the year via a review of the Green Book and presentation of the Mid-Year Treasury management report to the Committee. More detailed review was conducted via the Finance task group.

### Pre scrutiny

2.34 The community lottery suggestion was put to the Committee for consideration. A detailed presentation was provided by Phil Wright from Gatherwell and many questions and initial concerns allayed.

2.35 Action;

- A recommendation was made that the lottery be further considered in the Executive.

## **3.0 Membership**

3.1 The Constitution permits membership of 9 councillors. The membership this year has been: Councillor D Hughes (Chairman), Councillor M Whitehand (Vice-Chairman), Councillor J Bond, Councillor G Chrystie, Councillor S Hussain, Councillor R Mohammed, Councillor M Raja, Councillor C Rana and Councillor J Sanderson.

## **Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 3.2 Attendance at meetings this year continues to improve. The subjects for the agenda have arisen from the Chairman and Vice Chairman, as well as other members and Committee members. The attendance record for the Members of the Committee is set out at Appendix 1.
- 3.3 A additional meeting was included in October 2019, from the original advance dates.

### **4.0 Task Groups**

4.1 Scrutiny of the Council's activities often takes place in task groups. There are four task groups which come under the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Economic Development Task Group (Chairman Councillor I Johnson)
- Finance Task Group, (Chairman Councillor K Davis)
- Housing Task Group and Economic Development Task Group (Councillor I Johnson)

The fourth is an ad hoc task and finish group;

- Woking Football Club & Associated Developments Task Group (Chairman Councillor D Hughes)

4.2 Appendix 2 contains summary reports by the respective Chairs on the activities and objectives of each Task Group for the year.

### **5.0 Further Areas of Scrutiny**

5.1 The main subjects are shown in 2.0 above. In addition, the Committee monitors financial and other indicators in the "Green book" which is a monthly set of management information and also looks at the treasury mid-year review. This report is necessarily written before the meeting in March and therefore there will be items not included as part of this report.

5.2 Over the past year areas for follow up and future review have been noted on a forward plan as a suggestion for further deliberation by the Committee.

5.3 It has not been possible to include all the topics referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the year due to time pressures, however the items that had not been scrutinised were included in the suggested additions to the Work Programme.

5.4 It is also recommended that the nominated Committee members for the 2020/21 Municipal Year discuss continued inclusion of the annual reporting topics, and whether O&S is the correct venue for these, especially if it is a performance review.

### **6.0 Acknowledgements**

6.1 The task group contributions are vital to the work of the Committee. The three standing task groups continue to provide review and scrutiny into topics which both come directly from Overview and Scrutiny and also from within their direct Terms of Reference.

6.2 Support from Officers to the Committee has been outstanding, particular thanks to Hanna Taylor, Jacqui Hutton and Joanne McIntosh.

6.3 The Committee has looked into a wide range of topics and has taken an in-depth approach to several of these. This has meant that guests have been asked to attend on several occasions to present and answer questions. The Committee are thankful to all of the guests who have been open and clear when responding to questions and providing information for scrutiny.

## **Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 6.4 Thanks to the cross party support for this important Committee and contributions from all members. Also to portfolio holders who have generously attended to support and add insight into areas within their influence.
- 6.5 Finally, a particular thanks to Cllr Melanie Whitehand who ably acted as Vice Chair in this Committee and provided invaluable support.

### **7.0 Conclusions**

- 7.1 The past work of this Committee was challenged in November by the Peer Review, their full report is yet awaited. But it was suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needed to be more robust in its challenge and to be able to demonstrate clear actions and changes which have come from its discussions. This Committee have taken this criticism on board and this report attempts to demonstrate where actions and changes have been forthcoming

REPORT ENDS

**Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Attendance at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019/20**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Committee Members in Attendance</b>	
20 May 2019	Cllr D Hughes (Ch) Cllr M Whitehand (V-Ch) Cllr J Bond Cllr G Chrystie Cllr S Hussain	Cllr R Mohammed Cllr M I Raja Cllr C Rana Cllr Sanderson
17 June 2019	Cllr D Hughes (Ch) Cllr G Chrystie	Cllr R Mohammed Cllr M I Raja Cllr C Rana Cllr Sanderson
15 July 2019	Cllr D Hughes (Ch) Cllr M Whitehand (V-Ch) Cllr J Bond Cllr G Chrystie Cllr S Hussain	Cllr R Mohammed Cllr M I Raja Cllr C Rana Cllr Sanderson
16 September 2019	Cllr D Hughes (Ch) Cllr M Whitehand (V-Ch) Cllr J Bond Cllr G Chrystie Cllr S Hussain	Cllr C Rana Cllr Sanderson
21 October 2019	Cllr D Hughes (Ch) Cllr M Whitehand (V-Ch) Cllr J Bond Cllr G Chrystie Cllr S Hussain	Cllr C Rana Cllr Sanderson
25 November 2019	Cllr D Hughes (Ch) Cllr M Whitehand (V-Ch) Cllr J Bond Cllr S Hussain	Cllr R Mohammed Cllr M I Raja Cllr C Rana Cllr Sanderson
20 January 2020	Cllr D Hughes (Ch) Cllr M Whitehand (V-Ch) Cllr J Bond Cllr G Chrystie	Cllr R Mohammed Cllr M I Raja Cllr C Rana Cllr Sanderson
24 February 2020	Cllr D Hughes (Ch) Cllr M Whitehand (V-Ch) Cllr G Chrystie Cllr S Hussain	Cllr R Mohammed Cllr M I Raja Cllr C Rana Cllr Sanderson

**Reports of the Task Groups**

**Housing Task Group**

Chairman – Cllr Ian Johnson

Purpose	Membership
To review Housing issues as and when identified by the Committee, including Housing Strategy, Housing Business Plan, Housing Service Plans, Housing Revenue Account, Housing Conditions, Housing Needs, Private Sector Housing, Home Improvement Agency, Housing and Council Tax Benefits, and monitor/review progress of the PFI Scheme	Cllrs Aziz, Bridgeman, Harlow, Forster, Johnson, Kemp and Mohammed.

Annual summary from Cllr I Johnson, Chairman of the Housing Task Group:

The delivery of affordable homes continued to be a key challenge during the year with a number of planning applications refused by the Planning Committee. The identification of sites was a problem. On the positive side, a project to provide new temporary homes and existing temporary properties is progressing well.

The housing team were fighting hard against this backdrop to house people displaced through regeneration schemes in Sheerwater and the town centre and those on the housing register but need member support to make things happen.

The Housing Register showed an identified need for 475 one bed (44%), 347 two bed (32%) and 257 three bed (23%). This compared with the council’s stock of 1354 one bed (39%), 851 two bed (25%) and 1193 three bed (35%). With the additional issue of a low turnover of availability it is clear that there is an undersupply of affordable homes to meet the current needs. It has been estimated that 1500 households need more suitable accommodation yet WBC is not meeting even the 102 target set in the Core Strategy so therefore finding it difficult to meet public need.

The Task Group has expressed concern during the year about the use of viability arguments to avoid developers providing affordable housing and were disappointed the Overview and Scrutiny made no comment when put to them as an area for review.

Other issues discussed and reviewed during the year were

- The Licensing Scheme in Canalside is being overseen by new management and a backlog of documentation and inspections is being addressed. A review of the scheme, which was established to improve housing standards, would be undertaken over the coming 18 months to inform whether it would be worthwhile to extend the scheme to other parts of the Borough and/or extend the scheme beyond 2023.
- A new contractor, Breyer, had assumed responsibility for housing repairs and reports to date suggest a real improvement for residents. There had been positive feedback on their proactivity and in resolving backlogs left by the previous contractor.
- Our new Housing Director has been looking to update housing policies which in some cases are long overdue. A good start has been made with updates of the Homelessness and Rough

## Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Sleeping Strategy and Allocations policy, both of which were discussed by the Task Group and approved by Council.

- The Let's Rent scheme, the private rented sector solution to housing need, achieved some successes in finding new landlords following a campaign, but with the local housing allowance being significantly lower than Woking market rental levels, the job of encouraging new landlords is all the more difficult.
- A new IT system, which supports tenants in bidding for properties and provides improved functionality was introduced at the end of 2019 and is working well.

### Economic Development Task Group

Chairman – Cllr Ian Johnson

Purpose	Membership
To identify and seek the implementation of measures to mitigate the impact of the economic downturn on the residents, community organisations and businesses in the Borough of Woking.	Cllrs Ali, Azad, Barker, Bond, Davis, Elson, and Johnson.

Annual summary from Cllr I Johnson, Chairman of the Economic Development Task Group:

The Task Group meets at least twice a year with the primary purpose of monitoring progress in the Borough's Economic Development Strategy and issues around the economic vitality of the Borough. The Purpose of the Task Group needs to be updated to reflect this, the Chairman also attends ad hoc events to support the PR effort of the Business Liaison team.

The focus of the task group's March meeting was to review the annual update, which was the second year of the 2017-2022 Strategy approved by Council. The Business Liaison team work tirelessly to support both new and existing businesses and the half year report demonstrated the efforts made to encourage start-ups and provide help to them to the next stage of their development. Woking Works had hosted a number of well-attended events and has established new links through the very successful Food and Drink Festival.

Enquiries for conference space had risen and it was noted that some existing bookings would need to be transferred from HG Wells to other venues. The number of empty units in Woking Shopping was lower than the national average though empty units do provide flexibility for new entrants to the Borough. Raw statistics showed an uptick in JSA claimants though these numbers are far from clear with overlaps with Universal Credit. Nevertheless this needed to be carefully watched.

Since the last meeting a group of councillors (Cllrs Ashall, Azad, Cundy, Davis and Johnson), together with Chris Norrington, had visited Bracknell town centre, which had been undergoing investment from City institutions, and on the face of it was well-designed and modern, and Aldershot. Members felt the excursion very useful in terms of ideas as WBC continues to develop. Also since the last meeting some uncertainties surrounding Brexit have been removed and since the Task Group's annual update takes place after the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny I would not wish to pre-judge what is in that report whether any confidence has been generated in the month or so following our exit from the EU.



## Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

I would like to express my thanks to members on the Task Group for being committed to the Economic Development of the Borough and to the Business Liaison team who help keep the Borough's name in lights as the place to do business.

### The Finance Task Group

Chairman – Cllr Kevin Davis

Purpose	Membership
To review Financial issues as and when identified by the Committee. Financial Performance of the Council Management and Administration of Accounts procurement Strategy, Pension fund, Financial Strategy.	Cllrs Ashall, Azad, Aziz, Bond, Davis, Hughes and Sanderson.

Annual summary from Cllr K Davis, Chairman of the Finance Task Group:

The Finance Task Group has had another busy year with an agenda reviewing and scrutinising the key Council financial reports. In particular:

- In July - The Council's financial statements for 2018/19 which were approved by Council by the deadline of 31 July.
- The balance sheet at 31 March demonstrated the Council's positive position with assets exceeding borrowing and a net asset position of over £200m.
- In November and January - The Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget papers including Investment Programme and Fees and Charges. Whilst it has been possible to increase contributions to reserves for 2020/21 the government funding uncertainties concerning 2021/22 onwards have been discussed regularly throughout the year.

The Task Group has expressed severe frustration that the new auditors BDO have been unable to sign off the accounts. This reflects badly on the Council, even though the reason is due to the workload of the auditor rather than with any problems with the accounts. This is an issue that has impacted many Councils around the country.

Each meeting the Task Group also considered the latest Green Book, challenging the performance reported. The Task Group has continued to feed into the improvements of the information published in the Green Book, providing full transparency to all Councillors and residents that are so minded to investigate. The Council's Strategic Property Investments table has been further refined and shows just how beneficial these assets are performing and how they are contributing to both economic development and subsidising Council services.

The detailed rental income at Wolsey Place has been a standing item during the year with updates on changes at every other meeting. Each quarter a summary of debts written off under delegated authorities is also reviewed. Officers have updated the Task Group on the borrowing strategy and new long term loans taken. The Task Group was disappointed when the Government unilaterally raised interest rates on PWLB loans and has pushed for officers to lobby the Government to set a more favourable tariff where loans are for the purpose of directly investing strategically in the borough.

The Task Group has also had the opportunity to interrogate the Chief Executive regarding the finances of Victoria Square in a more in-depth financial presentation than that given during the Victoria Square briefing and the presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Finance Task Group is one of the most important task groups and it is disappointing that all Members are unable to attend every meeting. The Task Group is an important part of the Council's governance and meetings should be attended by all Members of the Group. The Chairman requests that as the Committee dates are published up to a year in advance, there should be little reason to not attend except under exceptional circumstances.

The Task Group thanks the Finance team for the sterling work they do for the borough and the help provided by officers in assisting with Committee meetings this year and equally Member Services for looking after us and writing up the minutes.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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