

BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Remote - Virtual Meeting on Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors N. D. Harrison (Chair), S. T. Walsh (Vice-Chair), M. S. Blacker, G. Buttironi, J. C. S. Essex, R. J. Feeney, J. Hudson, N. C. Moses, S. Parnall, J. Paul, J. E. Philpott, K. Sachdeva, S. Sinden and R. S. Turner

76. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no apologies for absence and no substitutions.

77. MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest given.

79. PORTFOLIO HOLDER BRIEFING - PLACE PORTFOLIOS

Members received briefings from the three Place Executive Members overseeing three areas of the Council's work: Planning Policy & Place Delivery, Neighbourhood Services and Economic Prosperity. The presentations from each of the Executive Members was published on the Council's website as part of the Committee's agenda pack.

Councillor Biggs, Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy & Place Delivery, gave an overview of the Council's work [in his presentation to the Committee](#). This included planning policy such as new and revised Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) on Sustainable Construction and Climate Change and Local Distinctiveness Design Guide. Updates were given on transport improvement work with Surrey County Council including work on a Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan in partnership with SCC and Atkins to identify priorities for walking and cycling improvements across the borough.

The Place Delivery update focused on major development projects such as the Redhill town centre regeneration in Marketfield Way and improvements in Horley town centre which had a major programme of investment. Council-led affordable housing developments had made good progress for example in Pitwood Park and Cromwell Road. Regeneration in Preston was continuing and also partnership work

to bring forward the Westvale Park neighbourhood centre and three play areas, as well as the Riverside Green Chain paths and cycleways in Horley.

Members discussed and asked questions on the following areas:

Marketfield Way, Redhill – retail, leisure, and hospitality facilities, including a cinema complex, is a key element of this long-term development in Redhill town centre. Members asked if planning for post COVID-19 had been reflected in any updated plans as the development progressed this year. Officers confirmed that the development aimed to be a destination venue to improve the night-time economy in the area as a destination venue. Key to this success was flexibility in terms of the commercial units so there was not only retail space but also future proofing building work to configure units so tenants could use these to provide a variety of services including food, beverage and leisure uses such as gyms as well as office space.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding – Members asked how the CIL funding (with nearly £3.5m collected from developers in 2019/20) contributed towards the delivery of infrastructure projects such as transport or infrastructure improvements in the borough and how applications to spend the money was prioritised for distribution by Members on local CIL Panel meetings. Over 50 projects were now funded or allocated for CIL funding with nearly £1m spent on infrastructure projects in 2019/20.

Southern Partnership Building Control – the Council's joint building control partnership with Tandridge and Mole Valley District Councils continued with service improvements made in the past year. Future challenges included building control work post the Grenfell fire.

Merstham Recreation ground refurbishment – work was continuing on plans to improve Merstham Recreation ground in consultation with residents to make it a flagship park in the borough. Positive engagement with residents and stakeholders resulted in 650 survey responses returned and a recent Facebook Live event.

Playing pitch strategy – discussions were underway to cover both indoor leisure facilities and consideration of outdoor playing areas for sports like football, hockey, and cricket. This was part of assessments on the borough's open spaces as part of the DMP (Development Management Plan).

Clerk's Note – Councillor Hudson and Councillor Sinden joined the meeting during this item due to earlier remote meeting connection issues.

Councillor Humphreys, Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity, gave an overview of the Council's work during 2020 from his [presentation to the Committee](#)

which included support to the local economy, town centres and local businesses during the pandemic and helping businesses to build resilience and strong foundations for future growth including supporting non-essential shops when open for business on 12 April and working closely with the four business guilds in Banstead, Horley, Redhill and Reigate. And Economy and Retail Lead on the Surrey Recovery Group and economic taskforce.

Members discussed and asked questions in the following areas:

Support to businesses and online networking – the Economic Prosperity team had provided support to start-up and micro businesses and facilitated networking to strengthen the business community. Around £57,000 of business support grants were allocated up to early March 2021. The team sent out a monthly business e-bulletin (which has 1700 subscribers) with social media engagement including a LinkedIn Business group (with 168 members). There had been 9 Learning Lunches which moved online over the past year with more than 100 attendees taking part in these virtual business networking sessions.

Support for town centres – use of the Town Improvement Fund to deliver minor works and support Christmas activities. Members asked about support for smaller communities in the north of the borough such as Tadworth, the Tattenhams and Nork.

Horley Business Park – officers had supported planning policy in the preparation of the ongoing Supplementary Planning Document on Horley Business Park, including an Economic Update Report, which was due to go out for public consultation in the summer. Consideration during the planning process would be given on changing ways of working post COVID-19.

Reigate & Banstead Works website – the rb-works.co.uk website had been successfully launched. It had focused initially on larger employers in the borough such as Kimberly-Clark and Willis Towers Watson, but officers confirmed that any employers in the area could be listed including smaller businesses.

Councillor Bramhall, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, gave an overview of the Council's work in neighbourhood services which included recycling, refuse and cleansing during 2020 [in her presentation to the Committee](#). She thanked senior officers and the whole neighbourhood team for keeping a full service running (with higher levels of household recycling and waste including garden waste) and keeping parks and green spaces well maintained during the past challenging year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was confirmed that multi-use games areas, play areas such as in Reigate Priory Park, and skate parks could reopen on 29 March, following government guidance.

Members discussed and asked questions in the following areas:

Incidents of fly-tipping – in response to a written question, the Committee was told that there had been 186 significant fly tips since March 2020. This equated to 3158 transit vans worth of items collected, the majority of which had been collected after being dumped at the Council's bring sites. The area which had seen the highest level of fly-tipping was the Mound Car Park bring site, at Tattenham Corner, followed closely by Holly Lane Car Park (Banstead Woods). A covert camera car had been placed at different recycling centres and small camouflaged cameras had been deployed at known fly-tipping hotspots in the borough. In 2020/21 to-date the Council has issued 23 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for fly-tipping and 12 for littering.

Litter picking – the cleansing team had worked with the assistance of community payback scheme on litter picking in the borough. They had also been helped by volunteer litter pickers (including Members of the Committee) such as in Kingswood and the north of the borough.

Roll-out of recycling in flats – the Committee requested further information on the updated timeline for completing the roll-out of recycling services to blocks of flats in the borough. This project and the review of bring sites had been put on hold during 2020/21 due to the pandemic. Some areas were not accessible to refuse lorries or kerbside recycling. Bring sites also attracted rubbish dumped from residents in nearby boroughs such as Purley and Croydon. Smaller bin sizes were discussed. It was agreed that a plan would be shared with the Committee by the Strategic Head of Neighbourhood Services with a future Member workshop organised to review these issues once out of Covid recovery.

Dog poo and dog waste bins – Members asked for a communications campaign to remind the increasing number of dog owners to take their dog poo bags home with them – in one litter-picking session, 300 dog poo bags had been collected. Members were asked for ideas on where best to site dog waste bins in the borough. These needed to be accessible by road so they could be emptied using cleansing vehicles.

RESOLVED – to note the Portfolio Holder briefings on Place services from Executive Members for Planning Policy & Place Delivery, Neighbourhood Services and Economic Prosperity, and the observations of the Committee.

80. Q3 2020/21 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members received the Quarter 3 2020/21 Performance reports: Key Performance Indicator (KPI) performance for the last quarter, KPIs to be reported on for 2021/22, Revenue budget performance for Q3 2020/21 and Capital Programme performance for Q3 2020/21.

Councillor Lewanski, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Policy and Resources, reported that of the ten KPIs reported on in the third quarter, nine were on target. One KPI was off target – KPI 7 (Net affordable housing completions) which was red rated.

Members discussed and asked questions on the following areas:

Affordable housing – It was noted that the Council was continuing with its long-term plans to provide more affordable housing in the borough. Against a target of 75 there were 48 completions by the end of Q3. However, allowing for fluctuations in development activity and economic circumstances, performance was reported to be on track. The borough's affordable housing target is for 1,500 affordable units to be built between 2012 and 2027. Since 2012, 875 affordable units have been completed.

A number of key sites were in mature development including Pitwood Park and Cromwell Road which contained affordable housing units. The Council was also working with social housing provider Raven Housing Trust on proposed future projects to deliver more rented social housing. The Committee requested an update on the Housing Strategy adopted in 2019 at a future meeting.

Staff sickness absence – the Committee was pleased to see that KPI4 showed that the last quarter had seen a continuation of the downward trend in staff sickness since quarter 1 in April 2020 and the first UK lockdown. The average duration of short-term sickness per employee reduced from 4 days down to 3.36 days. Members said this was an impressive achievement as a large number of staff were

having to cope with remote working combined with home-schooling and caring responsibilities as well as some periods of shielding and self-isolation. Other staff were continuing to work in frontline critical services such as refuse and recycling.

Interim Head of Paid Service, Mari Roberts-Wood, said that the data behind this KPI4 was being analysed carefully as the numbers could be affected by a small number of longer-term sickness absences. The Council and managers had provided support for staff during the pandemic, to help their physical and mental wellbeing during a tough year.

Homelessness prevention – Members were pleased to see that KPI5 – the % of positive homelessness prevention and relief outcomes was improving due to continued successful multi-agency working. With the courts closing again, there had been a decrease in families approaching the Council for support, but this had been matched by an increase in approaches from single people, many with complex needs.

Investment income – the Committee was disappointed that KPI 12 2020/21, which was an indicator on investment income, had been dropped from the proposed list of KPIs for the coming year 2021/22, given the importance of this area for the Council and its finances. The report proposed that this annually reported indicator was removed to avoid duplication with the performance information that is now reported to the Commercial Ventures Executive Sub-Committee (CVESC) in this area. The Committee requested that the Executive reconsiders the proposal in the report: ‘that KPI 12 be superseded as one of the KPIs to be reported on for 2021/22.’

Revenue Budget and Capital Programme – Councillor Schofield, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance, outlined the Revenue budget performance and the Capital Programme performance for Q3 2020/21. The Revenue Budget full year outturn forecast variance at the end of Q3 for Service budgets is 3.4% lower than the management budget. Central budgets were reporting 27.6% lower than budget with an overall forecast of £3.2m or 12.9% lower than budget.

Revenue Budget – the Committee noted the forecast of a satisfactory outturn, with a substantial underspend (£1.335m) on the Treasury Management Budget (although low interest rates might have adverse consequences on income projections in future years) and on the Budget Contingency (£1.350m). Members noted that not all the expenditure charged to the Feasibility Studies (Commercial Ventures) Reserve related to commercial ventures projects but also included some broader capital projects such as the Horley developments.

The Committee observed that in relation to the net forecast COVID-19 financial impact on 2021/22, this was currently cost neutral, taking into account COVID-19 grant funding, although accurate forecasting remains challenging. Council Tax collection for 2020/21 was down by 1.52% and Business Rate collection was down by 1.34% compared to January 2020.

The Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme set out the Council’s five-year financial strategy. Key to delivery of a sustainable budget over the medium term will be the Council’s Commercial Strategy.

The Committee thanked Pat Main, Interim Head of Finance, and the Finance team, for their work on managing the financial impact on the Council from the pandemic

and for effective administration of the multiple COVID-19 central government funding allocations.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) performance for Q3 2020/21, the Revenue Budget performance for Q3 2020/21 and Capital Programme performance for Q3 2020/21.
- (ii) To note the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be reported on for 2021/22.
- (iii) To request that Executive reconsiders the proposal for Key Performance Indicator 12 (2020/21) on investment income to be superseded as one of the KPIs to be reported on for 2021/22.

81. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021/2022

Members received the following proposals for 2021/22: Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS), Prudential Indicators, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement and Borrowing Limits.

A number of Committee Members had also attended a Member Panel briefing on the Treasury Management Strategy Statement on 15 March which was led by the Council's Treasury advisers, Link Asset Services and the Finance team. A summary briefing note from that meeting had been circulated to all Overview and Scrutiny Members, which outlined key changes between the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Strategies. This included changes in the MRP Policy, a reduction in the Operational Boundary for borrowing, and the implications of continuing low bank rate interest forecasts.

Members noted that the level of spending on investments and regeneration in 2020/21 had been somewhat delayed which had a resulting impact on the level of borrowing required in the current financial year. The Committee noted that the counterparty limits were to be increased to reflect the ongoing need to hold the significant additional funds that are being received from Government on a temporary basis during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22, Prudential Indicators, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement (MRPS) and the Borrowing Limits and the observations of the Committee.

82. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

Members reviewed the Committee's proposed Work Programme for the coming year (2021/22). Annex 1 set out the Committee's work, proposed Scrutiny Panels and Member suggestions.

Planned Scrutiny Panels included the Budget Scrutiny Panel in December 2021 and a Commercial Strategy Scrutiny Panel. The Local Plan Scrutiny Panel would be constituted if required.

The Committee supported two Member requests for inclusion on the work programme that a) representatives from Raven Housing Trust be invited to attend a future Committee meeting and b) any forthcoming Leisure Strategy for the Council following the pandemic, be scrutinised by the Committee.

Members asked to scrutinise the ICT strategy in response to the last 12 months and changing working practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The response to coronavirus had led to an increased number of staff required to work from home. Members attended virtual meetings, including formal Committee meetings and the Committee wanted to understand what any future 'hybrid' ICT working arrangements would mean for staff working and responding to residents, the improvements to be made for the benefit of residents, the resilience of the Council's ICT systems and the costs/challenges and risks associated with continued remote working.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To approve the proposed Work Programme for 2021/22 as set out in the report and in Annex 1; and included two Member suggestions relating to Raven Housing Trust, and any forthcoming Leisure Strategy.
- (ii) To review the ICT strategy, consequent to the increase in remote working due to COVID-19, and any preparations for a 'hybrid' working model, including improvements for the benefit of residents, and the costs/challenges and risks with continued remote working.

83. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Members received the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report outlining the work and reports of the Committee and its Scrutiny Panels during the past year (2020/21).

The Annual Report described the work of Overview and Scrutiny at 8 Committee meetings in 2020/21 plus the meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Panel in December 2020. In addition, there were 5 meetings of two Scrutiny Panels that were constituted during the year: Evaluating Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Recovery Scrutiny Panel – the latter looking at the Council's recovery programme following the emergency response to COVID-19. There was 1 additional Call-in meeting on 27 August 2020 on an Executive decision on the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. All meetings were held remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting national lockdowns. Annex 1 sets out Membership and Attendance during the year.

Members made no additional observations on the report of the Committee's work during 2020/21.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2020/21 and Annex 1 be agreed and recommended for approval to Full Council on Thursday 8 April 2021.

84. COMPANIES PERFORMANCE UPDATE - SPRING 2021

The Committee received the Spring 2021 Companies Performance Update report from the Executive Member for Investment and Companies, Councillor Archer. This report updated the Committee on the performance of the companies currently owned or part-owned by the Council which currently consist of: Greensand Holdings Limited, Horley Business Park Development LLP and Pathway for Care Limited. All these companies are currently considered to be performing overall in line with the Council's objectives and expectations.

Members noted the following points:

Greensand Holdings Ltd was funded through loans from the Council. It generates an income from one of its property holdings and provides an income to the Council through interest on the loan. The loan funding from the Council was £13.258m.

Pathway for Care Ltd provides supported living facilities for vulnerable residents at a number of sites in the borough and surrounding areas. The Council is a minority shareholder in the company, with the majority shareholding held by Transforming Healthcare Group. The Council has the right to appoint a director to the board of the company which is currently Councillor V. Lewanski. The Council holds £1.1m redeemable preference shares in the company, redeemable in April 2023. The number of voids had been reduced and Members noted that a small net profit had been reported which was a positive development. The annual accounts for the year ended 31 July 2020 were provided at Annex 1.

Horley Business Park Development LLP is a joint venture set up to bring forward planning and subsequent development, of employment land in the Horley area. The reports for year ended 31 December 2020 were not yet published.

RESOLVED – to note the Spring 2021 Companies Performance Update as set out in the report to the Committee and the observations of the Committee for consideration by the Commercial Ventures Executive Sub-Committee.

85. EXECUTIVE

It was reported that there were no items arising from the Executive that might be subject to the 'call-in' procedure in accordance with the provisions of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

86. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

87. EXEMPT BUSINESS

RESOLVED – that members of the Press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of Item 12 of the agenda (Medium Term Financial Plan Update (Exempt) under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that:

- (i) It involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Act; and
- (ii) The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

88. COMPANIES PERFORMANCE UPDATE, SPRING 2021 (EXEMPT)

The Meeting closed at 10.19 pm