

## **BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate on Thursday, 17 January 2019 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors B. A. Stead (Chairman), T. Archer, M. S. Blacker, R. W. Coad, G. R. Curry, J. C. S. Essex, N. D. Harrison, R. Michalowski, J. M. Stephenson, Mrs. A. F. Tarrant, J. F. White, Mrs. R. Absalom (Substitute) and J. M. Ellacott (Substitute)

Also present: Councillors M. A. Brunt, J. E. Durrant, T. Schofield, and C.T. Whinney

#### **46. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2018 be approved as a correct record.

#### **47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Committee Members: Councillors J.P. King, D.T. Powell (substituted for by Cllr R. Absalom), and R.S. Turner (substituted for by Cllr J.M. Ellacott).

Others: Louise Round, Chair of the East Surrey Community Safety Partnership

#### **48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

#### **49. ANNUAL SCRUTINY OF THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP**

The Chairman welcomed the following guests to the meeting:

- Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey, David Munro
- Borough Commander for Reigate and Banstead, Angie Austin
- Deputy Chair of the East Surrey Community Safety Partnership, Michael Hodder

The Committee received a presentation from Councillor J. Durrant, Executive Member for Community Safety, and Sarah Crosbie, Partnerships Team Leader, on the community safety portfolio and the Council's community safety work. This included information on the work of the Council and the Community Safety Partnership to support the safety of residents and to address matters such as anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, serious organised crime and the 'Prevent' counter-terrorism campaign. Attention was also drawn to the Council's recent modern slavery awareness campaign and the positive response received. It was

also identified that the Council's direct community safety and enforcement activities now operated on a more distinct basis, and that additional information on the enforcement elements would be provided at a future point.

The Committee then received a presentation from the Borough Commander for Reigate and Banstead, Angie Austin, on the work of the police within the borough. This included information on crime rates and reporting practices, priority areas, and recent police initiatives and operations. Information was also provided on some of the approaches utilised by the police to address and disrupt criminal activity, and the role that could be played by the community.

The Committee then received a presentation from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Surrey, David Munro, on the role of the PCC and the police across the county and the borough. This included information on options for policing budgets and officer numbers, headline crime areas (anti-social behaviour, burglary, child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, drug & alcohol offences, fraud, modern slavery, and unauthorised encampments), and options for community engagement.

The Committee considered and discussed the presentations. There were a number of questions and comments, relating to the following topics:

- **Unauthorised Encampments.** Queries were raised regarding police awareness of unauthorised encampments by groups within the borough and the approaches adopted in response. It was confirmed that the police sought to pursue all such incidents as proactively as possible, within the bounds of legislation. It was identified that information from local residents was important for assessing the community impact of such incidents. It was identified that the Council was developing a report on a range of available responses, including consideration of physical defences for at-risk sites and potential legal options. It was also noted that there was a need to provide appropriate sites for authorised encampments in the area, and that where designated transit sites were available, this increased the options available for responding to unauthorised encampments. It was commented that it was hoped that the government might take account of transit sites when considering requirements for gypsy and traveller accommodation in the borough.
- **Police Overview and Funding.** In response to a query, the PCC confirmed that police performance in the borough was considered to be generally good. It was identified that recorded crime had increased, but that much of this increase was assessed to be due to improvements and changes in recording practices, and that the increase in Surrey had been lower than the national average. It was identified that where problem areas occurred, they would continue to be addressed. It was identified that the police would continue to support improvements to the clean-up rate for crimes, and that options including additional training were being considered to support this. It was confirmed that the recent funding for Police had been below the desired levels, and that where resources were constrained, this placed limitations on the options available to the force. It was identified that, in the absence of national funding, options for local funding were being considered, and that a consultation on a proposed increase to the Surrey Police precept to support additional officers was ongoing.

- **Begging.** It was commented that some reports had been received from residents of aggressive begging in some town centre areas. It was confirmed that the police were working with the council to consider enforcement options for such matters, including possible use of public space protection orders. It was noted that responses which served only to displace issues were of little benefit.
- **Electric Vehicles.** A question was raised regarding how the adoption of electric vehicles, such as taxis, could be supported within the borough. It was confirmed that the council was considering options around the provision of supporting infrastructure, i.e. charging points and was generally looking to include electric vehicles in its fleet where appropriate. It was identified that Surrey police had acquired a number of electric cars for the use of the force.
- **Youth Work.** It was confirmed that detached youth work with the iBus scheme was being conducted in the Whitebushes area.
- **Community Groups.** A query was raised regarding the role of community groups established by local residents in supporting the work of the council and the police to support community safety in the area. It was identified that information provided by such groups was welcomed by the police, and that where records of exchanges on messaging applications and social media were offered, these could help provide evidence of matters identified by these groups. It was identified that groups such as Neighbourhood Watch were often effective at deterring crime in the relevant areas. The importance of engagement with the community around both immediate concerns and longer terms issues was confirmed.
- **The Modern Slavery Awareness Campaign.** It was queried if an update on the modern slavery awareness campaign was available, and it was confirmed that an update report on the campaign would be made available to all Members following the meeting.
- **Recent Car Thefts.** A query was raised regarding the police approach to a selection of car thefts in the borough. It was identified that individuals had been identified and responded to by the police on a previous occasion in relation to car thefts in the area. It was further noted that that known risk factors were identified and monitored, and that where patterns were identified, resources to address the matter could be prioritised.
- **Local Enforcement Powers.** A query was raised regarding the powers which had been made available to the council's enforcement officers and if they were considered to be sufficient. It was noted that the police had granted all available powers to the council, but that the council was seeking additional powers around matters such as parking enforcement from other sources. It was confirmed that the powers currently held by the council were considered to be being used effectively, but that ways to improve were always being considered.
- **Prioritisation of Issues.** It was identified that issues were identified as priority community safety concerns for the council and police on a number of bases. In addition to known resident priorities, it was noted that some matters were requirements of national strategies. It was noted that some matters of concern to residents were known to be symptomatic of underlying and connected issues, and that addressing these underlying issues was therefore an important step in resolving the resulting symptoms. It was also noted that some individuals were not as able to raise concerns around issues they may be experiencing, and that it was important to ensure that these

individuals and all members of the community received the support they required.

- **Police information availability.** It was identified that information on Surrey Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner was available on their respective websites, and that the PCC and chief constable attended public accountability meetings on a quarterly basis. It was identified that national crime statistics, along with the ability to consider more local information, were also available online. Regarding cases where there were immediate concerns or ongoing operations, it was identified that communication was sometimes constrained by operational necessities, but that, where areas of public concern were identified, it was sought to make information available as soon as possible.
- **Aggressive door-to-door salespeople.** It was identified that some residents had reported incidents with aggressive behaviour from door-to-door salespeople. The police noted that they had not received many reports of such incidents, but that they would respond where problems were identified. It was noted that such individuals did require official recognition, but that this did not have to be granted by the area in which they were operating. It was noted that some such persons might be victims of modern slavery and therefore not be operating freely.
- **Council priorities.** The Leader of the Council commented to the Committee that the Executive recognised Community Safety as an important area of activity, and that additional resources were being allocated where a need was identified.

The Chairman and Committee thanked the guests, Cllr Durrant, and supporting officers for their contributions, and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the review of the work of the East Surrey Community Safety Partnership in 2018/19 be noted.

## 50. **COMMERCIAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW - UPDATE**

Councillor Ellacott, Chair of the Commercial Governance Review Member Task Group, provided a verbal update to the Committee on the work of the group and its forthcoming report to the Committee. It was noted that a full report on the Commercial Governance Review would be considered at the February meeting of the Committee.

It was noted that the task group had been considering the Council's commercial governance arrangements, and reviewing options for the Council's approach to future commercial activities. The group was noted to have had a cross-party membership, supported by the Monitoring Officer and other officers, and in consultation with the wider Membership and an independent consultant.

It was noted that the group had considered matters including identifying where the establishment of a commercial body is appropriate, the committee reporting of commercial matters, the nomination of directors to any commercial bodies, and the approach to performance monitoring of such bodies.

It was confirmed that one of the topics considered by the group had been the handling of commercial confidentiality considerations, and ensuring that all

Members had appropriate access to information. The importance of ensuring that any commercial partners had awareness of the requirements associated with working with a public sector organisation.

**RESOLVED** that the update on the progress of the Commercial Governance Review be noted.

## 51. BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR 2019/20 - UPDATE

The Committee considered an update on the proposed Budget for 2019/20, including additional information on the provisional local government settlement 2019/20 and the Capital Programme, which was introduced by Councillor T. Schofield, Executive Member for Finance. An amendment to the Capital Programme information containing minor updates to the Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24 details was tabled at the meeting.

It was noted that the update included information on the proposed establishment of a New Posts Fund to fund new posts that might be required as a result of team restructures during 2019/20.

The Committee considered and discussed the report. There were a number of questions and comments relating to the following topics:

- **Proposed Budget Adjustments.** Observations were made regarding the potential use of income from retained business rates, including the delivery of services and the impact on council tax.
- **Great Workplace Programme.** It was confirmed that the Great Workplace Programme covered matters such as office furnishings and related supplies.
- **Capital Programme projected spending.** A number of queries were raised regarding the projected spending in the capital plan relating to areas including Priory Park maintenance, play areas improvement programme, commercial investment properties, and cemeteries & chapel. It was confirmed that additional information on the detail surrounding the referenced figures would be provided following the meeting. It was noted that rolling programmes were based on future expectations for capital requirements, and that these were reconsidered on an annual basis as additional information on requirements and available funding became available. It was confirmed that regular maintenance activity did not have a capital requirement and therefore was not included in the programme.
- **ICT replacement programme.** It was confirmed that the spending on the ICT replacement programme varied across years due to requirements around the lifespan of devices and licences and associated replacements.
- **New Posts Fund.** It was confirmed that the fund was to support new permanent posts where a requirement was identified during the year, prior to their incorporation into the usual section of the budget in following years. It was confirmed that governance and consultation arrangements for the fund would be confirmed following the meeting.
- **Government consultation papers – Fair Funding Review and Business Rates Retention.** A query was raised regarding the opportunity for Members

to contribute to the consultation on these topics. It was identified that the officers would be working with the Executive Member for Finance to produce a draft response to the consultation, and that this could be made available to Members. It was suggested that any Members who would like to make comments on the consultation contact the Executive Member for Finance.

- **Supporting Commentary.** It was remarked that the financial information provided would be made more accessible via the addition of additional supporting information and commentary, and it was confirmed that it would be sought to provide this additional commentary in future.

**RESOLVED** that the updates to the proposed budget for 2019/20 be noted.

**52. 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.

**53. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

The Meeting closed at 10.23 pm