

# Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held at the **New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate** on **Thursday, 16 June 2022** at **7.30 pm**.

**Present:** Councillors H. Avery, M. S. Blacker, G. Buttironi, J. C. S. Essex, N. D. Harrison, G. Hinton, A. King, N. C. Moses, S. Parnall, A. Proudfoot, R. S. Turner, S. T. Walsh, R. Absalom (Substitute), P. Chandler (Substitute), and S. A. Kulka (Substitute)

**Visiting Members Present:** Councillor T. Archer

## **1 Election of Chair**

The Committee elected a Chair for this Municipal Year 2022/23. Cllr N. Harrison was proposed by Cllr S. Walsh and seconded by Cllr J. Essex.

**RESOLVED** that Cllr N. Harrison be elected Chair of the Committee for this Municipal Year 2022/23.

## **2 Election of Vice-Chair**

The Committee elected a Vice-Chair for this Municipal Year 2022/23. Cllr S. Walsh was proposed by Cllr S. Parnall and seconded by Cllr N. Moses.

**RESOLVED** that Cllr S. Walsh be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for this Municipal Year 2022/23.

## **3 Apologies for absence and substitutions**

Cllr M. Elbourne sent his apologies for absence and was substituted by Cllr S. Kulka.

Cllr R. Ritter sent her apologies for absence and was substituted by Cllr P. Chandler.

Cllr M. Tary sent his apologies for absence and was substituted by Cllr R. Absalom.

## **4 Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting on 17 March 2022 were approved.  
The exempt minute from the previous meeting on 17 March 2022 was approved.

## **5 Declarations of interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.



6 Quarter 4 performance report 2021/22

The Committee received reports giving an overview of the Council's performance for Quarter 4 2021/22, including Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reporting, as well as revenue and capital budget monitoring. The reports were due to go to Executive on 23 June.

Cath Rose, Head of Corporate Policy, Projects and Business Assurance, and Pat Main, Head of Finance outlined the report to Members.

Points to note on KPIs included:

- Of the 11 KPIs that are reported on in Quarter 4, 10 were on target or within agreed tolerance.
- The sole red rated KPI 10 which related to recycling, is reported one quarter in arrears and against a target of 60%, 54% had been achieved. Despite not achieving the target in Q3 it was recognised that the target is a challenging one and the cumulative achievement for the year to date is the Council's strongest ever performance for recycling. Following comments from the Committee at the last meeting, additional contextual information had been added, including residual waste data which indicates a decrease in residual waste generated per household compared to the previous year.
- Council tax collection was reported at 97.9% and business rates collection was reported at 99.8% which were great improvements on earlier in the year and collection rates had since increased even further with Council tax collection at 99.14% and business rates collection at 99.91%.
- Performance against homelessness targets had been consistently above target, despite the challenges presented to the team through the pandemic. The vast majority of those in need of temporary accommodation within the borough had been accommodated.
- Both overall housing completions and affordable housing completions were above target.
- Neighbourhood Services indicators KPI 8 and KPI 9 show that the local environment continues to be kept clean, with a reliable waste collection service for residents.
- Several contextual indicators had been included; these are indicators where no target has been set but are useful for considering the council's performance.

Members commented that the appearance of the report had improved greatly and was very useful.

Members made comments and observations on the following areas:

**Homelessness** – Members asked whether the figures for homelessness could be compared to the previous year in order to predict a final figure for the end of this year. It was confirmed that the figures fluctuated throughout the year, and individual cases often spanned reporting quarters, however a comparison with the previous year could be sought. A written answer would be provided by the Head of Corporate Policy, Projects and Business Assurance after the meeting.

**Affordable Housing and affordable housing completions** – Members asked how many of the affordable housing completions are socially rented and how many are affordable rented. Members also asked whether the KPI was green rated based on

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over delivering on the number of homes in one particular year, which might cause other problems in the medium to long term. It was confirmed that the way in which the data is collected from planning applications does not allow for distinction between rent levels as affordable and social rent. However, the title of the tables in the document would be amended to reflect that it relates to affordable rent and social rented combined. The local plan sets a numerical target for affordable housing of 1,500 over the plan period and the Council was on target to achieve this. A written answer would be provided by the Head of Corporate Policy, Projects and Business Assurance after the meeting. A Member requested that social rent housing numbers are also separately reported from this year.

**Staff Turnover and Staff Sickness Absence** – Members asked whether numbers of staff working in the offices / working from home should be reported. It was confirmed that there was some tracking of numbers of staff working in the offices for track and trace purposes, as well as those members of staff required to physically attend work. It was suggested that this be reported to the Employment Committee.

**Corporate Complaints** – Members asked whether stage 2 complaints were investigated by a different officer / department to the stage 1 complaint. It was confirmed that the investigating officer at stage 2 would be from a different department to the investigating officer at stage 1.

Points to note on revenue and capital budget monitoring included:

- The final outturn position would be finalised when accounts for the year were complete, but no significant changes were expected.
- There was a £0.9 million underspend on the service budgets.
- There was a £0.4 million overspend in Central Budgets mainly due to a year-end payment to Surrey Pension Fund.
- COVID-19 income losses were just over £1.0 million (after Government grant contribution).
- The result of these three items was a net revenue budget overspend of £0.541 million which was funded through a call on the £2.0 million Reserve that was set aside for COVID-19 income losses, leaving a balance on the Reserve of just under £1.5million.
- Capital expenditure at £35.7 million was below the programme budget for the year.
- The variance was a combination of slippage (£101.7 million) and underspends (£3.7 million). £37 million was being carried forward to 2022/23 while the remainder, comprising sums previously allocated for commercial investment, would be added back to the programme when business cases were approved.
- Overall, it had been another challenging and complicated year from a financial perspective due to the continued impacts of the pandemic, but those impacts had been monitored closely and the year had ended with a net underspend on the underlying service and central budgets and healthy reserves.

Members made comments and observations on the following areas:

**Capital Programme** - Members asked, with regards to Marketfield Way and other developments, what is the financial impact of delayed completion on income forecasts and is that impact being borne by the Council, or by the contractors. It was confirmed that a more comprehensive response on the impact of both the revenue and capital income would be given at a future date when more information became available. Members agreed that this project would be considered at a future meeting.

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**COVID-19 Income Losses** – Members asked whether there was an update on grants from Government regarding COVID-19 losses. The Head of Finance confirmed that all expected Government support had been received by year-end and that this had matched the expenditure incurred.

Members referenced the £1.3million loss in car parking and other income and asked what the budget for 2022/23 would be. The Head of Finance confirmed that the budget for 2022/23 had been reduced by £1.1 million to reflect post-pandemic forecasts; actual receipts compared to this revised budget would be monitored and reported throughout the year.

**Garden Waste** – Members asked how significant additional income was generated by the service during the year and would this income go some way to offsetting the income losses from car parking. It was confirmed that the increased income was due to signing up additional new customers to the garden waste scheme, above the number predicted when the budget was set. This additional income had contributed to the net underspend on service budgets which in turn had helped mitigate COVID-19 income losses for the year.

**Street Cleansing** – Members enquired why street cleansing had incurred a £6k additional spend on postage. The Head of Finance agreed to provide a written answer following the meeting.

**Service Budget Variances** – Members asked whether the variances had been taken into account when setting the budget for 2022/23 or had they been “one-off” variances. The Head of Finance confirmed that historical budget outturn results were considered during budget setting.

**Data Insight** – Members asked what benefits are derived from the Data Insight expenditure of £172k. It was explained that this was a relatively new initiative for collating information from internal and external sources to present to management and Members to support decision-making and planning. The expenditure had been incurred in building further capacity. The Leader commented that Data Insight had been of vital importance throughout the pandemic and there was a growing demand from partners, such as the NHS, to share data to benefit the development of resident-centred services, rather than just from the Council’s perspective. It was suggested that the Chair and Vice-Chair undertake a piece of work to examine the work of the Data Insight team and its benefits and report back to the Committee.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee:

- 1) Notes the Key Performance Indicator performance for Q4 2021/22 as detailed in the report and Annex 1 and makes observations to the Executive as set out in the minutes;
- 2) Notes the Revenue Budget outturn for 2021/22 and recommended budget carry-forwards as detailed in the report and at Annex 2 and makes observations to the Executive as set out in the minutes;
- 3) Notes the Capital Programme outturn for 2021/22 as detailed in the report and at Annex 3 and makes observations to the Executive as set out in the minutes;

7 **O&S Work Programme Schedule 2022/23**

Members considered the proposed future work programme for the Committee.

The Chair informed Members that the additional topics for scrutiny had been discussed by the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Leader and that the objectives had been defined. Any future refinements would be decided by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. The Leader commented that it was important for the work programme to be clear in its objectives as the work programme is expensive in terms of officer's time. It was noted that the work of the Banstead Commons Conservators would centre on the open spaces and would not include budgets, which were examined separately. The Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor N. Bramhall, expressed her concern at the extra work which would be created for officers and asked to be consulted in the process. The Chair and Vice-Chair would make this a succinct piece of work. It was also noted that Councillors Harp and Moses were members of the Banstead Common Conservators and would be unable to take part in the scrutiny, but would be welcome to attend the meeting. Members asked whether members of the public would be able to ask questions of the Banstead Commons Conservators. It was confirmed that this topic would be scrutinised by a sub-group which would not seek public input directly, but that members of the task group would be encouraged to meet with members of the public to ascertain their views and to collate questions to ask, which should be submitted as advance questions.

**RESOLVED** – the Committee agreed the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2022/23.

8 **Companies Performance Update - Spring 2022**

The Committee received the Spring 2022 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, Pathway for Care Limited and Camelia Close (Tadworth) Residents Management Company Limited.

The Council is currently reviewing the future strategy for Greensand Holdings Limited with its Directors following recent changes to local government guidance on commercial investments. Horley Business Park Development LLP is not currently considered to be performing in line with expectations.

The Council continues to attempt to obtain management information from Pathway for Care Limited in order to review its performance. There are no issues anticipated with Camelia Close (Tadworth) Residents Management Company Limited and, as soon as all units are sold, the Council's involvement with the company will cease and the management of the communal areas will transfer to the resident management company.

This item was scrutinised more fully under part 2 due to the confidential nature of the parts of the discussion held.

**RESOLVED** – to note the Spring 2022 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.

9 **Reigate & Banstead 2025 Annual Report 2021/22**

Members received a report from Cllr M. Brunt, Leader of the Council, on the Reigate & Banstead 2025 Annual Report 2021/22.

The Reigate & Banstead 2025 Annual Report and the Equalities Objectives Progress Report are key tools to assess the Council's progress towards its corporate plan and equalities objectives. The plan had been adopted by the Council in January 2020 and this was the second year of its implementation. 2021/22 had been a year of both good progress and ongoing challenges for the Council. Key projects such as The Rise in Redhill and Camelia Close in Tadworth had either grown nearer to fruition or had been completed this year. The Council has also maintained consistent delivery of core services, despite the lingering disruption of the coronavirus pandemic and has improved its work with local partners to deliver support to local residents and communities.

Points to note included:

- The delivery of affordable housing at Tadworth and Redhill.
- YMCA housing for young people.
- Harlequin and Community centres.
- Support for vulnerable residents with support from Surrey County Council and NHS.
- Delivery of family support including refugee support.
- Progress on The Rise at Redhill, including a cinema and bowling alley.
- Development of Merstham Recreation Park and Horley Town Centre.
- Local businesses supported to recover from the pandemic.
- New business start-ups supported.
- Local people being connected to local jobs.
- High quality services delivered by Neighbourhood Services Team.
- Record local levels of recycling.
- Awards received for greenspaces.
- New commercial strategy.
- IT strategy.
- Work to deliver the £150 Council Tax rebate.

Challenges had included:

- Changes in services throughout the pandemic and changes in the prioritisation of services.
- Rising costs.
- Focus on financial sustainability.

Members thanked officers for the report and made the following comments and observations for the Executive for its meeting on 23 June.

**Average resident income** – Members asked why average employee earnings in the borough had decreased in the years 2012-2016 while average employee income in other districts had risen and asked whether this indicated that residents in the borough are not well paid. It was confirmed that this is a complex indicator but that average earnings in the borough were above the national average.

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**Town Centre Audits** – Members asked whether some of the smaller towns and villages could be considered for funded items that the larger towns received, such as painting, maintenance of park benches and Christmas decorations. It was explained that the audits had been externally funded and so scope was limited, however, the points raised would be considered. Local CIL funding can be used to make improvements, however, if something specific was required, this could be brought to the attention of the Portfolio Holder.

**Clear and Effective Communication** – Members asked whether communication from residents was received via email, phone calls or letters. It was confirmed that communication from residents was received via all three channels and that a written answer would be provided to members with more detail following the meeting.

**Local Plan** – Members asked whether the Local Plan up to 2027 could be presented with a timeline. The Leader explained that the Local Plan had been discussed at the recent Group Leaders meeting and that a plan will be prepared with timescales for review of the current Local Plan and to develop the new Local Plan.

**Leisure and Wellbeing** – Members noted that a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Facilities Strategy, and Leisure and Culture Strategy were in development and commented that all Councillors should be included in the consultation and development of new strategies relating to improvements in parks and greenspaces and other leisure developments. Consultation was requested at an early stage through the provision of workshops.

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** – Members commented that Local CIL was working well but that workshops with officers would be helpful to understand needs and focus with the upcoming review of Strategic CIL. The Leader commented that some Strategic CIL bids had been disappointing and that there would be a review of Strategic CIL bids. Members were urged to consider options for strategic projects in their own wards.

**Equalities Objectives** – Members commented that the Council should investigate options with partners to improve equalities, such as rising prices and the availability of affordable housing. The Leader confirmed that the Council is working with the NHS and other partners to provide integrated delivery to help residents holistically, not just from the Council's perspective. It was confirmed that advice would be sought from the Head of Corporate Policy on including this in reporting.

Members asked the Director of Place, Luci Mould to pass on their thanks and congratulations to officers for driving the borough forward successfully through the recent difficult times.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee –

- 1) Notes the Reigate & Banstead 2025 Annual Report for 2021/22 and makes the observations set out in the Minutes for consideration by the Executive.
- 2) Notes the Equality Objectives Progress Report for 2021/22 and makes the observations set out in the Minutes for consideration by the Executive.

**10 Overview of scrutiny**

Committee Members received an introduction to the purpose of overview and scrutiny and the work of the Committee from the Chair, Cllr N. Harrison, Vice-Chair, Cllr S. Walsh and Democratic Services Officer, Marie Crabtree.

Members requested that the presentation be circulated following the meeting.

A training session run by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny would take place in early September 2022.

Members commented that the Council website is difficult to navigate.

**11 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.

**12 Any other urgent business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting finished at 10.05 pm