

**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
20 November 2018**

Present:

Councillor S.C. Mooney (Chairman)
Councillor J.G. Kavanagh (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

S. Capes	A.T. Jones	R.A. Smith-Ainsley
R. Chandler	V.J. Leighton	B.B. Spoor
A.E. Friday	A. Sapunovas	

In attendance: Councillor C. Barnard, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development; Councillor D. Patel, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Compliance, Councillor H. Williams, Portfolio Holder for Finance.

Apologies: Councillors J.R. Sexton

272/18 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2018 were approved as a correct record.

273/18 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

274/18 Call-in of Cabinet decisions

No Cabinet decisions were called in.

275/18 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

276/18 Air Quality

The Pollution Control Officer presented a report reviewing the air quality in the borough. The principal pollutant in the Spelthorne area was nitrogen dioxide and this had been monitored locally since 1996. There were three continuous monitoring stations in the borough located in Stanwell, Sunbury Cross and Upper Halliford. The monitoring station at Sunbury Cross was funded by the Council until December 2018 and was subject to a growth bid for continued funding. The levels of nitrogen dioxide had continued to exceed the required annual national air quality objective in some monitoring locations in the borough, particularly alongside major roads and busy junctions.

The report highlighted four actions being taken to raise awareness of the impact of air quality: a Surrey Schools project to educate pupils on air quality issues and encourage a change in modes of travel to school, an Air Alert scheme to offer advice to help those with respiratory conditions manage them when air quality was poor, participation in national air quality campaigns, and the introduction of electric vehicle car charging points in the borough.

Also considered was the potential impact on air quality of the expansion of Heathrow and the Eco Park. The Pollution Control Officer advised that the construction work for Heathrow expansion would last for approximately 9 years with resultant impact on air quality and noise. Airport car parking for up to 25,000 cars was being proposed for land at Stanwell Moor. Heathrow Airport Ltd (HAL) had said that expansion would not increase airport related traffic from today's levels but Spelthorne Borough Council was sceptical of this claim.

Members asked a number of questions about the location of the air quality monitoring stations, whether the proposed Esso pipeline would have any effect on air quality in the area, and electric vehicle charging points. The Pollution Control Officer agreed to circulate enhanced maps that clearly identified the location of air quality monitoring stations in each area of the borough together with a list of roads where the monitors were situated.

At the suggestion of a member, the Committee agreed to make the portfolio holder aware that they supported the continued funding of the Sunbury Cross monitoring station.

Richard Parkinson of Surrey County Council, Jorge Hau from Suez the Eco Park operators, and Stephen Othen of Fichtner Consultant Engineers, gave a presentation on the operation of the Eco Park (attached). This included an overview of the project, including the layout and the different processes: recycling and recovery, gasification and anaerobic digestion.

They advised that emissions from the Eco Park were regulated and if pollutants exceeded the permitted levels they were required to close down within four hours. The pollutants were constantly measured in the flue and a monitor was located on the chimney itself where the greatest concentrations would be found.

The presenters responded to questions from members about keeping information simple and not too technical for the benefit of the public, conversion of waste to electricity, siting of the monitoring equipment, and access to monitoring data. They agreed to look at placing monitoring data on Eco Park website or another accessible place.

They anticipated that the anaerobic digestion plant would be operational in the first quarter of 2019 and the gasification plant in the second quarter. Notification would be given in advance of this taking place.

Resolved:

1. To note the report and thank Richard Parkinson, Jorge Hau and Stephen Othen for their presentation; and

2. To make portfolio holder aware that the Committee would like funding to continue for the Sunbury Cross monitoring station

277/18 Houses in Multiple Occupation - Article 4 Direction

With the agreement of the Committee, this item was considered earlier on the agenda.

The Planning Development Manager presented her report outlining the current planning legislation for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and the options for making an Article 4 Direction to remove Permitted Development Rights for HMOs (which would mean that permission would be required for any HMO regardless of the number of occupants) in certain areas.

She explained that Article 4 Directions were intended for use in exceptional circumstances where evidence suggested that development under Permitted Development rights, such as the spread of HMOs, harmed local amenity or the proper planning of an area. Article 4 Directions did not stop development; they simply meant that planning permission was required for a specified development which, without the Article 4 Direction, would be permitted development.

The Planning Development Manager advised that the data used to undertake a spatial analysis by ward of the numbers and types of HMOs which existed in the Borough, and the extent of the complaints received did not currently support the introduction of an Article 4 Direction. She confirmed that the situation would continue to be monitored and an updated report presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in a year's time.

The Planning Development Manager further advised that as a result of new licensing legislation which had come into effect from 1 October 2018, it was anticipated that the management and safety standards in a high proportion of privately rented residential properties within Spelthorne would improve. It was the responsibility of the Environmental Health department to monitor HMOs and enforce the legislation.

The Planning Development Manager agreed to circulate the list of criteria that was used when considering an HMO licence following the meeting.

Resolved to note the report and receive an updated report in 12 months' time.

278/18 Capital Monitoring Q2

The Committee considered a report on capital expenditure covering the period April to September 2018.

Members asked for further information to be provided about the reasons for the variations between projected and actual spend and for further detail about the overspend on disabled facilities grants.

Resolved to note the current level of capital spend.

279/18 Revenue Monitoring Q2

The Committee considered a report on revenue expenditure covering the period April to September 2018.

Information was provided in response to questions about the Gigabit project and the reasons for its delay, and the homelessness initiatives. Members also asked if there were plans to roll out electric car charger units across the borough, and in particular in Ashford. The Deputy Chief Accountant agreed to write to members after the meeting advising of the cost of an individual electric car charger unit .

Resolved to note the current level of revenue spend.

280/18 Capital Strategy

Deputy Chief Executive Terry Collier, Michael Graham, Head of Corporate Governance, Nick Cummings, Property and Development Manager, and David Birley, Housing Strategy Officer, gave a presentation to the Committee explaining the requirement to produce a capital strategy by 31 March 2019 and guidelines issues by CIPFA. The presentation gave details of the four main elements of the strategy: capital expenditure, investment decisions and arrangements, treasury management and skills and knowledge.

Members asked questions about the change in emphasis from investment for the purpose of supporting services, to addressing the local housing needs, risk assessment and management, the effect of any interest rate increases and the timetable to produce and publish a strategy.

Resolved to note the presentation and include the Capital Strategy on the Work Programme for January 2019.

Following this item and having sat for three hours continuously, it was moved by Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley, seconded by Councillor Friday and agreed to suspend Standing Order 5.1 to continue with the remaining items on the agenda.

281/18 Budget Issues 2019/20 - 2020/21

Deputy Chief Executive Terry Collier gave a presentation to the Committee on issues that would affect budget setting; these included the pressures being experienced by councils, the reductions in central government funding, whether the business rates bid was successful and the relevant timescales. Other possible factors such as Brexit, expansion of Heathrow, and potential Surrey County Council cuts were highlighted and the strategies to be used to close the budget gap.

Mr Collier also advised that the net surplus from investment acquisitions would be used to support services that would otherwise be at risk.

Members were concerned at the delay in Surrey County Council advising of any budget cuts as a result of the consultations they are currently holding and felt this was unreasonable and made our own budget setting very difficult. They requested that feedback is given to the relevant portfolio holder and/or Leader of Surrey County Council that the delay in notifying Spelthorne Borough Council of budget cuts is unreasonable.

Resolved:

1. To note the presentation.
2. Councillor Mooney to convey the Committee's concerns to Surrey County Council.

282/18 Task Groups

Members were asked to consider which items on the work programme might be a suitable subject for a task group to undertake. Due to the lateness of the hour, the Committee agreed to discuss this as the first item at its next meeting.

Resolved to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting in January 2019.

283/18 Work Programme

The Committee considered its work programme for the remainder of the Municipal year.

Resolved to note the work programme for the remainder of 2018/19.