

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
13 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Present:

Councillor Philippa Broom (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Marian Rough (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

A. Ayub	R.D. Dunn	D. Gohil
Mrs C.A. Bannister	M.P.C. Francis	Ms J.R. Sexton

I.J. Beardsmore

Apologies: Councillors Ms M. Bushnell, Mrs I. Napper, Mrs C.A. Nichols, A.P. Patterson and Ms S. Webb

In Attendance

The following Cabinet Members were in attendance and at the invitation of the Chairman took part in the discussion of those items relevant to their Portfolio.

Councillor Mrs V.J. Leighton – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Staff

Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing

Councillor Penny Forbes-Forsyth – Cabinet Member for Parks and Leisure

Councillor R.L. Watts – Cabinet Member for the Environment

226/11 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

No disclosures of interests reported.

227/11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2011 were approved as a correct record.

228/11 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(1) Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals Seminar

The Chairman reported on the outcome of the Ashford and St Peter's Hospital Trust seminar. The seminar had been well attended with some senior delegates attending from the Trust to discuss future plans. The three main areas covered were (1) car parking on the two sites but especially St Peter's, (2) tendering the catering contract on a commercial basis and (3) the issues of the potential merger with Epsom Hospital.

RESOLVED to note the outcome of the seminar and agreed that the situation be monitored with a further seminar/meeting being arranged for the future, if required.

(2) Election Task Group

The Chairman reported that the work of the task group was progressing, although it had yet to meet formally. Councillor Davis would be arranging to meet with the other members of the task group which in addition to Councillors Beardsmore and Mrs Napper would include Councillor Mrs Rough.

RESOLVED to note the current position with regard to the work of the Task Group.

229/11 CALL IN OF CABINET DECISIONS

No decisions had been called in.

230/11 OUTCOME OF RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

The Committee noted that the recommendation on the implementation of the policies on waste collection and how these would be enforced had been approved by the Cabinet.

231/11 HOUSING RISKS AND MITIGATION

The joint Heads of Housing and Independent Living gave a presentation that addressed the Council's statutory housing obligations, the homeless criteria, involvement of other agencies and stakeholders as well as relevant statistical data for the borough. A copy of the presentation is attached.

In support of the presentation the Officers had produced a briefing paper covering the numerous issues and key risks areas the council's housing service faced. The paper outlined the short, medium and long term measures both implemented and proposed to alleviate the pressures.

It was identified that the Borough was experiencing a growth in homelessness due to the economic climate and the changes in housing and benefit legislation. The Department of Work and Pensions had made alterations to the way Housing Benefit were paid for households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. It was noted that there were times when the only option available was to place householders in bed and breakfast accommodation. It was acknowledged that this was not a satisfactory course of action particularly with householders with young children.

The Committee discussed the recent merger of Spelthorne CAB with Runnymede and noted that to date the organisation was not offering debt advice and assistance to Spelthorne residents in housing need. To rectify this situation the Council's housing team were currently undertaking some of this work. It was noted that meetings were arranged including with Councillor Gething the Cabinet member responsible for Communication and would continue with the new CAB manager appointed to cover both Spelthorne and Runnymede to ensure that a service level agreement was in place and to discuss the funding aspect. The Chairman asked that the officers keep her up to date with progress being made.

The Committee noted the investigations into initiatives and opportunities to increase and improve the supply of private rented sector accommodation being undertaken. It was noted that one possible solution could be where

landlords were given financial assistance to improve their property on the basis that the property was then available to the council.

The joint Heads of Housing and Independent Living indicated their willingness to report progress being made on the housing services at a future meeting of the committee.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The presentation be received;
- (2) The Housing and Independent Living Team be thanked for their continued commitment to the services provided to the residents and the way they tackle the challenges they face; and
- (3) A progress report be submitted to a future meeting of the committee.

232/11 REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN POSITION 2010-2011

The Committee discussed with Adrian Flynn, Senior Accountant, the report covering the current spend and income figures for the period April to July 2011, which revealed that £4.619m had been spent against the year to date budget of £4.527m and the full year budget of £12.663m.

RESOLVED that the report of the Chief Finance Officer outlining the current revenue spend position for the period April to July 2011 be noted.

233/11 CAPITAL BUDGET OUTTURN POSITION 2010-2011

The Committee discussed with Adrian Flynn, Senior Accountant the report covering the current spend figures for the period April to July 2011 on the capital programme. The committee noted that £544k had been spent to date against the original budget of £1,526k and against a revised budget of £2,037k.

The officers agreed to obtain further information on the Disabled Facilities Grant which in the first quarter of the financial year had spent 55% of the budget.

RESOLVED that the report of the Chief Finance Officer outlining the Capital monitoring position for the period April to July 2011 be noted.

234/11 WORKFORCE MONITORING 2011

The Committee noted that the report from the Head of Human Resources on the diversity of the workforce and recruitment monitoring for the year 2010/11 had been included on the agenda for information only.

The report provided information on the diversity across age, gender, disability and ethnicity of the Council's workforce, recruitment monitoring for the year and on trends and actions taken.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that members had the opportunity to submit specific questions direct to the Lead Officer for scrutiny if they wished.

RESOLVED that the report from the Head of Human Resources on the monitoring data and workforce statistics for the year 2010/11 be received and the action taken noted.

235/11 FOOD WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE

The Lead member of the Task Group, Councillor Asif Ayub, reported verbally on the progress being made by the Task Group which covered the main objectives agreed and the work undertaken to date.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The progress report on the work of the Task Group be noted; and
- (2) A further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee

236/11 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES TASK GROUP

The Chairman reported verbally on the work being progressed by the Task Group covering the terms of reference, what the task group wished to look at and the work undertaken to date. The Committee noted that part of the work of the task group included play facilities for disabled children.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The progress report on the work of the Task Group be noted; and
- (2) A further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

237/11 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Cabinet Forward Plan

238/11 WORK PROGRAMME 2011/2012

The Committee received the current work programme together with the list of topics identified by the committee members at the last meeting which had been updated to show the action taken to date. It was noted that a report on the work of the Leader's Task Group looking into the ICT contract would be submitted to a future meeting of this committee.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the work programme be agreed; and
- (2) The Chairman together with the Lead Officers for scrutiny be authorised to progress arrangements.

239/11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following additional matters were reported:

(1) Cabinet Members

The Chairman expressed her thanks and appreciation to the Cabinet members who had attended the meeting and taken part in the debate of those items relevant to their portfolio.

(2) Councillor Gohil – future issues

In accordance with the procedures for notifying the Chairman and Scrutiny Officers 24 hour prior to a committee meeting of any other additional items for consideration. It was noted that Councillor Gohil would be emailing the Chairman to give notice of his request.