

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8 July 2014

Present:

Councillor P.A. Broom (Chairman)
Councillor A.E. Friday (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

F. Ayers
M. Bushnell
C.A. Davis

R.D. Dunn
D.L. Grant

I.T.E. Harvey
D. Saliagopoulos
S. Taylor

Apologies: Councillors C.M. Frazer, M.J. Madams and M.W. Rough.

In Attendance

Councillor T.J.M. Evans, Cabinet Member for Finance

168/14 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

169/14 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

170/14 Call in of a Leader, Cabinet or Cabinet Member Decision

No decisions had been called in.

171/14 Bus provision in Spelthorne

The Chairman explained that she had invited representatives from Surrey County Council and the Bus Company, Abellio to speak to the Committee about bus provision in Spelthorne after Stanwell Moor residents had raised an issue with the Council about the effect of the reduction in the 441 bus service on the local community.

Paul Millin, Surrey County Council Group Manager, Travel and Transport gave a presentation providing an overview of local bus provision, the reasons behind the decision to change the 441 route bus service and the recently begun Local Transport Review.

County Councillor Mike Goodman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, explained that due to cuts in funding the County Council needed to find efficiencies and would look at ways of saving money without having to cut services.

The Local Transport Review would look at integrating services, finding efficiencies and making savings via three streams: local bus; concessionary fares and community transport. The Review aimed to save £2m pa revenue by 2017/18. Proposals would be going to Surrey's Cabinet in September 2014, followed by a wide public/stakeholder engagement including other Surrey authorities.

Abellio Surrey is the main bus operator in Spelthorne, running three commercial services, including the 441, and five contracted services. Mr Millin and Alastair Willis, Abellio's commercial manager, explained that the 441 service had declined in reliability in keeping to its timetable over some years and a number of solutions were considered to address this, whilst still maintaining the service. A commercial decision was made to withdraw the 441 service from Stanwell Moor and re-route the 557 service to provide a link to Heathrow and Ashford. Mr Millin outlined how residents were informed, the impact on the service of the change and the alternative choices for residents.

Stanwell Moor residents present at the meeting explained the effect on their community resulting from the changes to the 441 bus service. They no longer had a bus service to take them directly to essential local facilities and had to cross a busy dual carriageway to reach the bus stop for an indirect service to Staines.

The Committee was concerned about the safety of residents which was a high priority for the Council. The Committee requested information from Surrey County Council on how it would be addressing the issue of residents having to cross a busy dual carriageway to access a bus stop. It agreed that public safety should be an essential component of any consideration for making changes to the transport service following the Local Transport Review.

The Committee queried what action had already been taken to find efficiencies through partnership working and to look at innovative solutions. The Committee encouraged Surrey County Council and bus operators to look creatively at other options for providing a local transport service including partnership working with BAA and community buses.

The Committee asked to be involved in the Local Transport Review later in the year and that this review should include an evaluation of the impact caused by the change in provision of the 441 bus service, and a review of the 216 service.

Resolved to:

- (1) note the presentation on bus provision in Spelthorne;
- (2) ask Surrey County Council to provide, as soon as possible, a response on how it would be addressing the issue of Stanwell Moor residents having to cross a busy dual carriageway to access a bus stop;

- (3)** ask Surrey County Council, as part of its Local Transport Review to:
 - (1) include an evaluation of the impact caused by the change in provision of the 441 bus service;
 - (2) review the 216 service;
 - (3) consider public safety as an essential component of any consideration for making changes to the transport service;
- (4)** request that the Committee be included in the Local Transport Review and
- (5)** encourage Surrey County Council and bus operators to look creatively at other options for providing a local transport service including partnership working with BAA and community buses.

172/14 A2Dominion – plans for Spelthorne

John Knevett, the Deputy Chief Executive of A2Dominion, gave a presentation covering: history and current operating environment; investment in new homes; re-investment in stock and the community; reviewing and improving services and plans for the future.

During Mr. Knevett's presentation, whilst focussing on the development side of A2D's business, he mentioned, in passing, that A2D had bid to become Kempton Park's development partner for a potential housing development on the Kempton Park site but the contract had been awarded to Redrow Homes.

Councillors expressed surprise at this information saying that they had no knowledge that the Jockey Club had negotiated a contract with Redrow Homes.

Councillor Evans asked that a statement be issued by the Chief Executive, supported by the Leader, to the effect that Spelthorne Borough Council was not aware of any planning application for housing on Kempton Park.

The Chairman then said that there would be an action point for "a clear and unambiguous statement" to be issued.

Members of the Committee raised the ongoing issues expressed by their residents relating to the service they received from A2Dominion. The Committee discussed with representatives from A2Dominion the reasons for customer dissatisfaction with their services, particularly relating to the attitude of staff, incorrect service charges and delays to repairs.

A2Dominion advised that it was monitoring its relationship with customers through face to face feedback and surveys which showed an 80% customer satisfaction rate. It was implementing a training plan to improve customer satisfaction. Mr Knevett accepted that there had been some issues with the service charges but that they were working on putting this right.

Resolved:

- (1) to thank A2Dominion for their presentation and urged them to continue to work to improve customer satisfaction and address the service charging issues;
- (2) to ask A2D to attend future meetings to provide further updates and
- (3) that the Chief Executive, supported by the Leader, be asked to issue a clear and unambiguous statement in relation to the extent of the Council's knowledge of a planning application for housing on Kempton Park.

173/14 Developing a Housing Strategy for Spelthorne

The Committee received a presentation from Bernadette O'Shea, an Independent Housing Advisor on the work she had undertaken to address issues facing the Council in relation to its Housing Strategy.

There were two main issues to address:

1. The significant increase in the numbers of homeless households and increase in cost to the general fund – she was tasked to help identify how the Council could secure affordable temporary accommodation.
2. The increasing number of households who were reliant on the private rented sector although there were not enough homes available – she was tasked to help the Council grow the private rented sector.

She advised that her recommendations for the Housing Strategy were to:

- Start with clarity relating to the vision and strategy for Housing
- Utilise opportunities from the Localism Act:
 1. General power of competence.
 2. Local Authority decisions relating to homelessness, allocations, and tenancy arrangements.
- Engage with the private sector through development of a local lettings agency.

The Committee was keen to have an opportunity to consider her report on this matter in detail.

Resolved to

- (1) note the presentation on developing a Housing Strategy for Spelthorne and
- (2) consider this matter in more detail at a future meeting of the Committee once the report has been to Cabinet.

174/14 Provisional Capital Outturn 2013/14

The Committee received the provisional capital outturn for 2013/14. It noted that £1.3m had been spent against a revised budget including carry forwards from 2012/13 of £1.89m. A large proportion of the £573k underspend would be carried forward to 2014/2015.

Resolved to note the provisional capital outturn for 2013/2014.

175/14 Treasury Management Annual Report 2013/14

The Committee received the Treasury Management Annual Report on treasury performance for 2013/14, covering the council's activities in the borrowing and investment market.

Resolved to note the Treasury Management annual report for 2013/14.

176/14 Provisional Revenue Outturn 2013/14

The Committee received the report on the provisional revenue outturn for 2013/14 and noted that £12.1m had been spent against the full year revised budget of £12.397m.

Resolved to note the provisional revenue outturn for 2013/2014.

177/14 Role of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Vice-Chairman Councillor A.E. Friday gave a brief refresher presentation on the role and work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

178/14 Review of work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2013/14

The Committee received a report summarising the areas of work it had undertaken during 2013/14.

Resolved to note the review of work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2013/14.

179/14 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Committee received the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Resolved to note the Forward Plan.

180/14 Work Programme – identifying issues for the year ahead

The Chairman asked members of the Committee to identify topics of interest/concern that could be considered for inclusion in the Committee's work programme for 2014-15.

Topics suggested were:

- Laleham Park

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- A2Dominion
- Localism
- Flooding
- Voluntary Sector
- Communications
- Recycling rates
- Provision of Legal/Committee Services
- Catalogue of public events in the Borough

The Chairman advised that she would be working with the Vice-Chairman and officers to produce a work programme from the topics identified by the Committee.

She asked members to contact her if they had any further thoughts on topics they would like to see included in the work programme.

Resolved to note the arrangements to produce a work programme.

181/14 Any Other Business

No other business was reported.