

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 November 2020

Present:

Councillor V.J. Leighton (Chairman)
Councillor O. Rybinski (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

J.T.F. Doran	M. Gibson	T. Lagden
R.D. Dunn	A.C. Harman	L. E. Nichols
T. Fidler	I.T.E. Harvey	
N.J. Gething	N. Islam	

Apologies: Councillors C.L. Barratt, J.H.J. Doerfel and D. Saliagopoulos

In attendance: Councillors C. Bateson, S. Buttar, R.J. Noble and B.B. Spoor.

251/20 Minutes

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 22 September 2020 and the meeting held on 29 September 2020 were approved as correct records.

252/20 Disclosures of Interest

Councillor T. Fidler declared an interest in Item 7 - Leisure centres update, in the interest of transparency. He advised that he had dealings with some people who were involved in this matter and as it relates to financial transactions he would not take part in the discussion on the item.

253/20 Call-in of Cabinet decisions

No Cabinet decisions had been called in by the Committee.

254/20 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Committee considered and noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

255/20 Review of Community Safety

The Community Safety Officer presented the report on a review of Community Safety. He corrected some errors in Paragraph 2.1 of the report: the table giving the data on reported crimes over the previous 12 months should refer to 2018/19 not 2017/18 and the figure for the decrease in shoplifting should be in green font to indicate a reduction.

The Community Safety Officer outlined the priorities and statutory obligations for the Safer Stronger Partnership Board and the resources required to meet its responsibilities. He provided data on crimes in Spelthorne for the last two years and in comparison to the Surrey force area. Finally he gave an overview

of the activities the Partnership had delivered in response to community concerns.

He explained the actions used to address crime including: crime prevention strategies through use of social media, community protection warning systems to address potential offences before taking formal routes for prosecution, and referral of offenders to the crime prevention programme.

Borough Inspector Maxine Cilia provided an update on the latest crime figures which showed domestic burglary was down, drug offence statistics were up due to an increase in the number of people being caught during lockdown and domestic abuse had continued to increase, with lockdown a contributory factor. This was also the reason for more youth anti-social behaviour at many locations.

The Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr David Munro, gave a presentation highlighting his achievements and his priorities for 2020/21, the concerns raised by residents and what he was doing to tackle crime.

Cllr R.O. Barratt, the portfolio holder for compliance, reported that he had spent a night with the police to understand the issues they faced. He enquired about the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras to help combat crime. The Borough Inspector advised that there were already ANPR cameras in the Borough on the M3 and M25 and also covering Staines town and Stanwell but more were needed on the border with the Metropolitan Police area between Feltham and Ashford. The Police and Crime Commissioner agreed to look at providing more cameras in the Borough.

Mr Munro and Inspector Cilia invited members to contact them about any local, or individual ward, issues they wanted to discuss.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Cilia and Mr Munro for attending the meeting.

The Committee noted the report on Community Safety.

256/20 Leisure Centres update

The Chief Finance Officer presented an update on the operation of the Leisure Centres. He advised that the situation had changed since the report was circulated, with the Leisure Centres closing during a further period of lockdown from 5 November until 2 December. As schools would remain open, Sunbury Manor School was being given access to the hall at Sunbury Leisure Centre for PE classes and Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) staff would be available to facilitate this.

SLM had clarified they would take a soft hibernation approach during this new lockdown, including the continuation of maintenance and inspection routines using minimal staff to allow them to react quickly and smoothly when lockdown ended. They had only made one post redundant and hoped to avoid further. The majority of staff were on the extended national furlough scheme.

Prior to the current situation, the Chief Finance Officer advised that the use of the two Centres had been steadily improving. The Council had received regular reports on the level of activity usage and monthly accounts on expenditure which had given reassurance that the Leisure Centres were operating as the Council had anticipated when the support package was provided.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that the operator had achieved a small surplus compared to the information given in the report. However, they had requested flexibility from the Council in the event they required additional financial support as a result of the second lockdown. He advised that any request for additional funding would be discussed with the Council. Finally he commented that the government had ring fenced £100 million to help Local Authority leisure centres and details on the allocation of that funding was expected soon.

The Committee noted the update.

257/20 Budget Issues 2021-2022

The Chief Finance Officer gave a presentation (attached to these minutes) on the Budget Issues for 2021/22 to 2023/24. He outlined the challenges for bridging the significant 2021-22 Budget gap due to COVID-19 and the risks, pressures and uncertainties for future years.

The Committee noted that more detailed briefings on the draft Budget would be provided at its next meeting in January 2021 and at an extraordinary meeting in February 2021.

Resolved to note the presentation on Budget Issues for 2021/22 to 2023/24.

258/20 Capital Monitoring Quarter 2

Councillor I.T.E. Harvey left the meeting prior to the start of this item.

The Interim Chief Accountant presented the report on the Capital spend for the period ending September 2020.

He advised that since the report was written the Council had agreed further funding for the Leisure Centre project to make it Passivhaus. This funding was would be reflected in the next monitoring report.

Resolved to note the current level of capital spend.

259/20 Revenue Monitoring Quarter 2

The Interim Chief Accountant presented a report providing a summary of the forecast outturn position at the end of the 2020-21 financial year, based on income and expenditure up to the end of September 2020

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that future reports would identify both of the Deputy Leaders in the breakdown of spend by portfolio.

During this item, the Committee having sat for three hours, Councillor T. Fidler proposed and Councillor N. Islam seconded and it was **agreed** to suspend Standing Order 5, in order to continue to the end of business.

Resolved to note the current level of revenue spend.

260/20 Report from the Climate Change Working Group

The Group Head for Commissioning and Transformation provided an update on the work of the task group and Councillor R. Noble provided a detailed supplementary report for the Committee on the meeting held on 28 October.

He advised that although the Council had declared a climate emergency it needed to clarify what was meant by that. He outlined the strategy to address climate change, including:

- identifying the Council's own carbon footprint
- establishment of smaller sub-groups of the Task Group to focus on specific issues, including the key areas of transport; Policies; assets and financial investments,
- partnering with other organisations
- communications
- personal 'Green audits' for councillors

The Committee noted the update.

261/20 Work Programme

The Committee noted the Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal year, with the inclusion of the petition on the Lendy Lion memorial in January 2021 which had been referred to the Committee by Council on 22 October 2020.

262/20 Exempt Business

Resolved to move the exclusion of the Press and Public for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

263/20 Corporate Project Management

The Group Heads for Commissioning and Transformation and Regeneration and Growth presented the update on Corporate Project Management and the confidential report on assets projects, respectively.

Officers agreed to address the following concerns/queries raised by Members, in future reports:

- The meaning of the red, amber, green (RAG) status of projects was not clear to the reader and needed clarification – a key will be restored to the report.
- The priority flagship Southern Light Railway (SLR) project was shown with a green status but no detail was provided of progress, or risk considerations.
- The change to a Committee system agreed by Council at its July 2020 meeting was not included in the list of projects.
- A missing column from the assets projects showing forecast spend to practical completion, which had been unintentionally removed.
- Projects identified in capital expenditure were not cross-referenced with Project Management. Assets and finance officers will co-ordinate better integration of the project reports with the financial monitoring reports.
- The project reports do not provide the information members need to facilitate scrutiny, in a clear and simple to understand format.
- That all projects have living business cases and project managers are reminded to do a refresh.

The Group Head for Commissioning and Transformation confirmed that projects marked as 'red' were reviewed by the Project Steering Group and if still not progressed referred to Management Team, where project updates were regularly on the agenda for discussion.

Members raised a concern that not all the assets projects they were aware of had been included in the report. Officers responded that the assets referred to were at a very early stage in their development and no decisions had been made as to what the projects would comprise. Once those projects were developed, they would be included in the list provided to the Committee. The expectation from the Committee was to be provided with a list of all projects on which any money had been spent, even if they were still at an early stage in their development. Members requested a top-level description of the project followed by fuller detail where this applied.

Resolved that:

1. a comprehensive list of projects with the appropriate and relevant level of detail is provided to the Committee; and
2. Cllr Noble is asked to work with officers on simplifying the reports to help members scrutinise them.