

**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
23 March 2021**

Present:

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

Councillors:

J.H.J. Doerfel	M. Gibson	L. E. Nichols
J.T.F. Doran	A.C. Harman	D. Saliagopoulos
R.D. Dunn	I.T.E. Harvey	R.A. Smith-Ainsley
T. Fidler	N. Islam	

Apologies: Councillors C.L. Barratt

In attendance: Councillors C. Bateson, Buttar and R.W Sider BEM

80/21 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2021 and the extraordinary meeting on 9 February were approved as a correct record.

81/21 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

82/21 Call-in of Cabinet decisions

No Cabinet decisions have been called in.

83/21 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

84/21 Revenue Monitoring Q3 (Oct - Dec)

The Chief Accountant introduced the report and highlighted the main points. He informed the Committee that he had not had the opportunity to revamp the report yet but that he would be making changes to improve readability in future.

The Chief Accountant explained that there was an error in the Councils favour where the reported underspend at paragraph 1.1 should have stated £1.36 million not £1.29 million. He explained that this error had been due to environmental enhancements being treated incorrectly and the report would be amended.

The Chief Accountant drew the Committees attention to table 2.2 (loan interest payable) where a budget figure of £24.035 million against a forecast outturn of £24.258 million was recorded, but the correct figure was actually

£24.035million as that related to the loan interest on the Council's commercial and regeneration assets. He explained that as a result the variance was only £23k, that the error was purely presentational and did not impact on the bottom line.

The Chief Accountant stated that COVID-19 had had a significant impact with an underspend of £1.357 million forecast, which equated to just under 90% of the projected underspend.

In response to questions the Chief Accountant explained that the government were going to reimburse 75% of the Councils recoverable loses over a three year period and that each year the deficit would be recalculated. He further explained that the Council were waiting for confirmation of the methodology the government would use to calculate the amount but that if they applied the traditional method it would be around £434k.

A member queried if a year to date column could be added to the report in future to enable members to monitor progress. He also asked how members should interpret the interest receivable and interest payable short term in appendix A. The Chief Accountant advised that the interest had been split between short and long term but that it should not have applied in this case and should have been presented differently.

A members asked if it would be possible for Cabinet to consider using the outstanding unallocated balance of the Project Delivery Fund as an allowance, or bidding scheme, for Councillors and community groups to bid for to support green initiatives in the borough. In response the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that he would note the request and raise it with Cabinet. The Finance Portfolio Holder, Councillor Buttar, confirmed that he had noted the suggestion and would consider it.

The Committee agreed to note the forecast outturn for 2020/21 as at 31 December 2020.

85/21 Capital Monitoring Q3 (Oct-Dec)

The Chief Accountant informed the Committee that the report had been adapted and reflected the decision taken by Council on the moratorium earlier in the year. He explained that the projected outturn was £3.25 million with £110.1 million underspend to be carried over in 2021-22.

In response to a members question on the underspend as a result of the delayed purchase of property Y the Deputy Chief Executive advised that he would need to provide the Committee with a written response as the answer would contain information that was currently exempt.

In response to a members queries the Chief Accountant explained that he would need to look into the reported underspend on Harper House and the year to date expenditure on the Oast House and Ceaser Court and provide a written response for circulation to the Committee. Members of the Committee

expressed concern that the appendices were not providing a clear picture and welcomed a written response on the queries raised.

A member queried why there was a carry forward of £24,500 against the air quality line and expressed concern that progress was not being made. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Council did want to move this forward and he would provide the Committee with a written update on progress after the meeting.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

86/21 River Thames Task Group update

The Group Head of Neighbourhood Services introduced the report and provided the Committee with a detailed update on the work and achievements of the task group to date. She informed the Committee that the Council had completed several projects including providing a jetty for boat trips to support Staines' economy and upgraded lifesaving stations along the river. A variety of projects were ongoing with external assistance from the Thames Landscape Strategy.

In response to members questions the Group Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that the manager of the Llamas café had done a lot of work in preparation for providing electric boats for residents and visitors to enjoy and that work was due to commence to remove the unsightly raised flower beds, that had fallen into disrepair, so that electric charging points could be installed. She explained that the café manager understands the river and was very keen to deliver and was considering bringing back the crazy golf.

The Committee noted that residents has also contributed to improving the riverscape with one resident pulling trolleys from the river for the Council to collect. The Committee also noted that Councillor Gibson was in the process of arranging a joint river and land clean up and would share the details with the Committee in due course.

The Committee thanked the Group Head of Neighbourhood Services, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny and members of the task group for their work to date.

87/21 Task Group - updates and closure

The Committee noted that the Clean Streets task group had agreed to close as the Spelthorne Litter Pickers were doing a fantastic job and there was no need for duplication. The Committee expressed their thanks and gratitude to the Spelthorne Litter Pickers and noted that a combined land and river litter pick was in the process of being organised.

The Chairman informed the Committee that if the Committee system is adopted by Council at its extraordinary meeting on 25 March 2021 any future work of the Task Groups will be subsumed into the relevant Committee and the Committees shall decide whether there is a need to set up a sub-

committee or Task Group to look at a particular matter. The Chairman thanked members and officers for all their work and for providing the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with regular updates.

The Committee noted the updates.

88/21 Work Programme

The Chairman advised the Committee that as there were no further ordinary meetings of the Committee scheduled there was no further work to be considered. The Chairman explained that although the Committee were due to have an extraordinary meeting to conduct a Review of the Eco Park officers had not been able to arrange this with the relevant responsible agencies.

The Committee noted that as there were no further ordinary meetings scheduled there was no further work to be considered.