

**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
16 January 2018**

Present:

Councillors:

S.C. Mooney	A.E. Friday	J.R. Sexton
J.R. Boughtflower	J.G. Kavanagh	R.A. Smith-Ainsley
S. Capes	D. Patel	B.B. Spoor
R. Chandler	A. Sapunovas	

Apologies: Councillors T.J.M. Evans, K. Flurry, A.L. Griffiths and D. Saliagopoulos

8/18 Election of Chairman

It was proposed by Councillor A.E. Friday and seconded by Councillor J.G. Kavanagh and:

Resolved that Councillor S.C. Mooney be appointed Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2017/2018.

9/18 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2017 were approved as a correct record.

10/18 Election of Vice-Chairman

It was proposed by Councillor S.C. Mooney and seconded by Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley and:

Resolved that Councillor J.G. Kavanagh be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2017/2018.

11/18 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

12/18 Call-in of Cabinet decisions

No Cabinet decisions had been called-in.

13/18 Management of the river Thames

Maria Herlihy, Operations Manager and James Liney, Asset Performance Team Leader with the Environment Agency (EA) gave a presentation

(attached to these minutes) on their management of the River Thames and flood risk.

The additional information provided included:

- bathymetric surveys and shoal removal – EA identify 5-10 areas of most benefit for removal of silt. This is an ongoing programme.
- dredging – can be useful in some locations but only one option open to EA. Takes place where it is a cost effective and sustainable option.
- The EA has an annual maintenance programme for the locks and weirs.
- temporary flood defences are employed on a risk based assessment
- deployment plans for temporary flood defences will be tested over coming months. EA would like to engage with the Council and local communities on the location for test to take place.

In response to questions from members, Ms Herlihy and Mr Liney responded:

- the EA is in a better, stronger position than in 2014 to deal with future floods due to the temporary flood defence deployment plans, improved forecasting systems and resources located at the EA Sunbury depot.
- the EA has learned from the experience in 2014, how to better communicate information to residents.
- deployment plans have been computer modelled on different scenarios to ensure their use does not make the situation worse for other communities further down river.

They agreed to provide further information to the Committee following the meeting on:

- How can residents can sign up for flood warnings
- the location for the temporary flood defences deployment pilot
- progress being made with local plans that local communities were asked to prepare after the 2014 floods
- advice for residents on how to deal with groundwater flooding
- reasons why it was not cost effective/practical to plan a temporary flood defence for Sunbury

Finally they encouraged members to attend the planned information sessions on progress with the River Thames Scheme.

Resolved to note the presentation by the Environment Agency on management of the River Thames and thank Maria Herlihy and James Liney for attending.

14/18 Business rates avoidance and evasion

The Temporary Customer Services Operational Manager and the Internal Audit Manager presented the report on business rates - avoidance and evasion. They explained that due to resource challenges they were only able to investigate a limited number of cases. They highlighted the partnership with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council to procure a counter fraud resource, which supported and supplemented the existing investigatory resource at

Spelthorne focussing on Housing and Business rates, and had resulted in a positive outcome for the Council in terms of the amount of monies we had been able to recover.

The Chairman commended the fraud partnership as a good initiative which the Council should take opportunities to make greater use of.

Resolved to note the report on business rates.

15/18 The Council's property investment strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Howard Williams and the Chief Finance Officer jointly gave a presentation to the Committee on the Council's approach to risk management with respect to its commercial property acquisitions (attached to these minutes).

They explained: the drivers behind the Council's investment activity - reduced central government funding and budget pressures; a summary of the acquisitions made; the Council's approach to acquisitions through policies / strategies - Strategic Property Investment Parameters statement, Treasury Management Strategy, borrowing strategy; and the process undertaken before an acquisition was made, including evaluation of tenants, modelling exit strategies and using external advisors.

They responded to questions from members of the Committee.

Resolved to note the presentation on the Council's risk management approach to its property investment strategy.

16/18 Treasury Management half-yearly report

The Deputy Chief Accountant presented the Treasury Management half-yearly report on treasury performance for the first six months of the financial year to the end of September 2017. The Council had invested and borrowed substantial sums of money and was therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The report covered the council's treasury activity and the associated monitoring and control of risks.

Resolved to note the treasury position achieved during the first six months of 2017/18 and the financial environment in global markets.

17/18 Update on Leader's Task Group for Economic Development

Councillor Patel, the Chairman of the Economic Development Engagement Group highlighted progress with the work of the Group:

- Membership had been widened to achieve more input from the business community to include representatives from Surrey Chamber of Commerce and the chairman of Spelthorne Business Forum
- Surrey County Council will be looking to improve the traffic light system in Staines

- We are launching a competition with schools and photography groups to provide pictures for the website to promote the Borough.

Resolved to note the update on the Leader's Task Group for Economic Development.

18/18 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

19/18 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 2017/18.