

## **Report of the Chairman on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

There has been one extraordinary meeting of the Committee held on 22 September and one ordinary meeting held on 29 September 2020. This report gives an overview of the main issues considered at those meetings.

### **Extraordinary meeting – 22 September 2020**

This meeting was held to enable the Committee to pre-scrutinise a report on a Community Asset Policy which was due to be considered by the Cabinet the following day.

The Committee welcomed the principle of the Policy and the need for a proper assessment of potential applicants to ensure best use of the Council's assets and resources. However, it was concerned that the points-based system of evaluating applications was weighted towards established organisations and that small or new organisations, such as those that emerged during the pandemic, with much to offer to local communities would not fare so well.

The Committee agreed that the Council should encourage and support applications from new, or small local organisations and community groups. The Committee invited Cabinet to reconsider the policy taking into account Overview & Scrutiny Members' views and come back with a revised report and score card, to better reflect supporting organisations, including small and young organisations of value to the community, and giving Overview & Scrutiny members 10 days to make submissions.

The Committee also recommended that a complete list of the Council's assets to which the Policy relates, be appended to the Policy so that it was clear which buildings and pieces of land were covered by the Policy.

### **Meeting held on 29 September 2020**

#### **1. Affordable Housing at the former Brooklands College site, Ashford**

- 1.1 Following a request by some members of the Committee to call-in this item, considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 23 September 2020, I requested that it was added to the Committee agenda as a late briefing item in order to provide further explanation and clarify the background and rationale of this very complex matter.
- 1.2 The Committee received a detailed presentation to address the issues raised in the requests for call-in, and sought further explanation from officers. There was a further window of 24 hours available for call-in, if members still felt that was appropriate.

#### **2. Asset Management Plan**

- 2.1 The Committee received a report on the Asset Management Plan and noted that this is a key delivery vehicle for the Council's Capital Strategy.
- 2.2 The Committee requested an opportunity to scrutinise the performance and development monitoring and resourcing requirements for asset management which I

agreed to discuss with officers as to the most appropriate time to include this on the work programme.

### **3. Annual Asset Investment Report**

- 3.1 The Committee received a report on the Council's investment and regeneration portfolios for the period ending March 2020. In response to questions from members, further information on the outlook for commercial and retail rents and values was provided in private session.

### **4. Overview and Scrutiny Statutory Guidance**

- 4.1 The Committee reviewed a report on the Guidance that was introduced in May 2019 and previously received by the Committee in January 2020.
- 4.2 The Committee noted the clear message from the Guidance that Overview and Scrutiny should be allowed to flourish within Local Authorities and that Scrutiny members had enhanced powers to access relevant and timely information in order to carry out their duties effectively.

### **5. Financial Reports**

- 5.1 The Committee noted the capital and revenue spend for the period ending July 2020 and received responses from officers to detailed questions on expenditure and variances.

### **6. Corporate Project Management**

- 6.1 The Committee deferred consideration of the report on the progress of projects across the Council, as it required sight of the detailed confidential information relating to assets projects in advance of its meeting.

### **7. Exempt Item – Investment sinking fund scenario planning**

- 7.1 The Committee noted an exempt report explaining the methodology for monitoring and protecting rental income from shortfalls via a sinking fund.

**Councillor Vivienne Leighton**

*Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

**22 October 2020**