

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

This report gives an overview of the main issues considered at the meeting held on 19 January 2021 and the Extraordinary meeting held on 9 February 2021.

19 January 2021

1. The Lower Sunbury Lendy Memorial Lion

1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered two issues:

- i. The report written about the Lendy memorial by Alan Doyle and to recommend to Cabinet a course of action based on the information currently available.
- ii. Whether to accept the offer of supporting an application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a grant to undertake further research on the Lendy statue. a grant to undertake further research on the Lendy statue

1.2 The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:

Recommendation 1:

- i. The Council supports the views of residents, as expressed in the petition. The statue should immediately be uncovered and left in place.
- ii. The Council provides at the site a plaque containing historical information, with more detailed information available, for example through a QR code.
- iii. The Committee agrees that the Council works with local informed sources and their wealth of information so other suggestions for ensuring access to detailed background information can be pursued, such as a booklet in the Embroidery Gallery and the involvement of the well-respected local history society.

Recommendation 2:

- i. Spelthorne provides a letter of support for the proposed application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a grant for academics to undertake further research on the Lendy statue.
- ii. Should any new information come to light the Council will review it and come to its own decision.
- iii. That this resolution should not delay the actions proposed in recommendation 1.

2. Outline Budget 2021-2025

2.1 The Committee noted the draft budget proposals for the outline budget 2021-2025.

2.2 The Committee raised a number of queries on specific items which officers responded to at the meeting or agreed to look into and provide a written answer.

- 2.3 Members expressed concern that a press release regarding the Council Tax freeze was released prior to the report going through the full reporting process.

3. Reserves Policy

- 3.1 The Committee considered the Reserves Policy and agreed to note the report.

4. Treasury Management Strategy - half yearly report

- 4.1 The Committee scrutinised the Treasury Management Strategy – half yearly report and noted that the report reflected the position as at the end of September 2020.
- 4.2 The Committee acknowledged that the report could have been timelier but had been delayed due to a number of challenges including those relating to COVID and staffing changes.
- 4.3 Members of the Committee expressed the view that they would like the Council to review their investments with a view that they seek to identify ethical investment opportunities. Officers advised that this had been noted and Arlingclose were aware and had made the point that they needed to balance the financial interests of the Council. Cllrs Buttar and Noble also confirmed that Cabinet were mindful of the Committees wishes on this matter.

5. Treasury Management Strategy Statement

- 5.1 The Committee noted the draft report on the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2021.

6. Work Programme

- 6.1 The Committee noted the work programme.

7. Updates from Task Groups

- 7.1 The Committee noted a written update from the Climate Change task group and a verbal update on the End of Life Celebration Centre both presented by Cllr Noble.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that the Climate Change task group had established a Financial Investments Review subgroup to look at the nature of the Council's investments and a longer-term strategy for moving towards greener investments.
- 7.3 Cllr Noble informed the Committee that the End of Life Celebration task group had not been able to meet due to the pandemic and officer availability.
- 7.4 The Committee noted that the Clean Streets task group were going to meet to discuss what they wanted to do going forward and thus did not feel it was appropriate to decide whether to appoint other members or to co-opt Cllr Gething at the meeting. Cllr Gibson praised the work of Spelthorne Litter Pickers which was echoed by the Committee.

8. Corporate Project Management

- 8.1 The Committee noted that improvements to how the RAG ratings were presented had been made and thanked Cllr Noble and officers for their work on this.
- 8.2 Members raised a number of queries on the Sunbury leisure centre which officers responded to at the meeting or agreed to look into and provide a written answer.
- 8.3 The Committee agreed to note the update.

9. Exempt item- Corporate Project Management

- 9.1 Members queried why the confidential project (SLR) was included and asked what was happening with it. Officers agreed to provide a written response.

Extraordinary Meeting, 9 February 2021

10. The Draft Capital Strategy

- 10.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to note the working draft of the Capital Strategy 2021 and to provide recommendations on how the Strategy could be improved and amended to Cabinet for them to consider prior to the report going to Cabinet on 24 February and Council on 25 February 2021.
- 10.2 The Committee scrutinised the strategy in detail as reflected in the minutes of the meeting and.
- 10.3 The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:

Recommendation 1: The Committee recognises the live nature of this Strategy and accepts that due to time constraints it is not possible to re-write the Strategy this year but the Committee requests that in future the Strategy is more forward focused, and a tracked changes version is available for members to review to see how the Strategy has evolved.

Recommendation 2: That officers update the Strategy to make it more concise, replacing appendices with links where possible, prior to being presented to Cabinet on 24 February 2021.

Recommendation 3: That the information provided in paragraph 6.9 is updated to make it clear that the figures quoted are from the Strategic Land Availability Assessment and not any future planning application or any previous development scenarios members may have seen.

11. Detailed Revenue Budget

- 11.1 The Committee were asked to scrutinise the Detailed Revenue Budget for 2021/22 prior to it being considered by Cabinet on 24 February 2021.
- 11.2 The Committee scrutinised the Budget in detail as reflected in the minutes of the meeting.

The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:

Recommendation 1: The Committee was concerned over the adequacy of the monies set aside for green issues and climate change, which undermines the pledge in the draft Capital Strategy that climate change is a priority and asks Cabinet to review this.

Recommendation 2: That next year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or Service Committees if the Council agrees to adopt the Committee System governance model at the Annual Council meeting in May) will have sight of the budget earlier in the process to enable them to be fully involved in the shaping of the final budget before it is presented to Council for approval.

Councillor Vivienne Leighton

Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25 February 2021