

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 July 2013

Attendance:

Councillors:

Pines (Chairman) (P)

Byrnes (P)
Cook (P)
Evans (P)
Gemmell (P)
Learney

Power (P)
Sanders (P)
Scott (P)
Stallard (P)
Wright (P)

Deputy Members

Councillor Tod (Standing Deputy for Councillor Learney)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Godfrey (Portfolio Holder for Finance & Organisational Development)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Warwick (Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods & Environment)

1. **MEMBERSHIP OF SUB-COMMITTEES ETC**

RESOLVED:

That the Lead Councillors and membership of the following Informal Scrutiny Groups be confirmed:

- (i) Museums Service ISG – Councillor Gemmell (Lead) and Councillors Prowse, Collin, Laming plus no Conservative nominations TBC.
- (ii) Consultation ISG – Councillor Power (Lead) and Councillors Laming, Witt, Izard plus no Conservative nominations TBC.

2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Tod declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of Report OS78 due to his role as a Hampshire County Councillor, as the report referred to aspects of care services which the County Council had a role in delivering and in other reports on the agenda where County Council matters arose. Councillor

Tod was also an employee of a health charity which received funding to support delivery of its services. However, as there was no material conflict of interest regarding this item he remained in the room and spoke and voted under the dispensation granted by the Monitoring Officer on behalf of the Standards Committee.

Councillor Stallard declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of Reports CAB2493 and OS78 due to her role as a Hampshire County Councillor, as the report contained references to services delivered by the County Council. The report also referred to the Denmead Neighbourhood Plan and she was a member of its Steering Group. Councillor Stallard also declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of Report CAB2494 due to her role as a Hampshire County Councillor, as the report contained references to White Wings House, Denmead where the County Council contributed towards the delivery of care and support services. However, as there was no material conflict of interest regarding these items, she remained in the room and spoke and voted under the dispensation granted by the Monitoring Officer on behalf of the Standards Committee.

3. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported that before this Committee, he had met with the scrutiny lead Members and considered suggestions for changes to the Council's scrutiny arrangements and these would be discussed further with officers.

The Chairman also advised that further to the Committee's previous scrutiny of the Council's arrangements for Housing repairs, he would be informally discussing with officers further aspects related to sub-contractors.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

5. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 20 May 2013, be approved and adopted.

6. **12 MONTH REVIEW: INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP ON COMMISSIONING AND THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**

(Report OS80 refers)

During discussion, the Chief Executive reported that the Council was looking to potentially further enhance its current approach of commissioning the voluntary sector to help deliver aspects of their services, projects and programmes. This

could be through a shared approach with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

The Committee referred to a recent Cabinet report that set out details of a proposed review of how the Council can best support the future resilience of the voluntary sector, including assistance with their participation in core funding bids (Report CAB2470 refers). Part of this work included targeted local consultation, and it was agreed the members of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to contribute towards the consultation process.

The Committee also discussed the successful 'Meet the Funders' seminar, which had been jointly organised by the Council and WACA. The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) agreed that as this event had been at capacity; consideration would be given to arranging another event with a differing approach taken with regard to targeting its audience.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress to date in implementing the recommendations of the Informal Scrutiny Group on Commissioning and the Voluntary and Community Sector, as set out as an Appendix to the Report, be noted.

2. That members of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to contribute towards the proposed consultation process to shape the provision of a future support service for the voluntary sector in the Winchester District, as set out in Report CAB2470.

7. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2012/13 OUTTURN**
(Report CAB2494(HSG) refers)

The Committee noted that this Report had been considered by the Cabinet (Housing) Committee at its meeting held on 19 June 2013 where the recommendations had been agreed as set out.

During discussion, the Chief Finance Officer clarified that the report set out detailed outturn information for the agreed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2012/13, which had previously been scrutinised by Members. The Council's recently published Statement of Accounts for 2012/13 contained detailed comparisons to the previous year's budget. The Committee also noted that the HRA Business Plan was reviewed annually in the autumn. This would include projections of the potential impact from restrictions on future rent increases that were likely to be imposed by the Government's recent Comprehensive Spending Review. The Committee supported the early analysis of all aspects of the spending review so as to ensure its impact on programmes of work over the long term was minimised as far as possible.

The Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) responded to a number of questions with regard to the key service summary and capital programme variances. It was reported that it was expected that a stock condition survey of all properties would be completed in time to inform spending plans in the revised HRA Business Plan in the autumn.

With regard to the lower than expected spend in the New Council Homes Build budget, the Committee raised concerns that the lack of delivery of new housing schemes during the first year might have been due to officer capacity with the New Homes Team. However, the Chief Executive explained that these delays had been due to the extensive work undertaken during the previous 12 months on public consultation, procurement and planning work relating to development sites already identified. The Committee noted that the relevant Portfolio Holder would continue to review the delivery of new build schemes during subsequent years.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was agreed that as the outturn information in the report would not contain comparisons to previous years' HRA budgets, it would assist the Committee in undertaking their scrutiny role in future if the Portfolio Holder and the Assistant Director (Housing Services) arrange an informal briefing session on background information relating to the delivery of the Business Plan.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT COUNCIL BE ADVISED THAT THERE ARE NO MATTERS THAT THE COMMITTEE WISHES TO DRAW TO ITS ATTENTION.

RESOLVED:

That the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leader have regard to the comments of the Committee as set out below:

- (i) That the Portfolio Holder ensure the early analysis of all aspects of the Government's recent Comprehensive Spending Review so to ensure its impact on programmes of work over the long term was minimised as far as possible.
- (ii) That the Leader review delivery of new build housing schemes, noting the lower than expected spend in the New Build budget for 2012/13.
- (iii) That the Portfolio Holder and the Assistant Director (Housing Services) arrange an informal briefing session on background information to assist the Committee in undertaking their scrutiny role with regard to HRA Business Plan delivery.

8. **CAPITAL EXPENDITURE OUTTURN 2012/13**
(Report CAB2492 refers)

The Committee noted that this Report had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 26 June 2013 where the recommendations had been agreed as set out.

Councillor Godfrey introduced the Report and emphasised that, on the whole, all the major projects originally proposed had been delivered.

During discussion, Councillor Godfrey, the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer responded to questions on the carry forwards listed in Appendix 1 to the Report. With regards to Disabled Facility Grants, clients had not been left in need of urgent adaptations, but the proposed carry forwards had been affected by additional Government grant having been received later in the year. In addition, reduced expenditure was likely to have also been due to recent restructuring of the County Council's Occupational Therapist Team and this was being investigated. The Chief Executive reported that the Electronic Document Management Records System project had been delayed pending deployment of project management resources as staff had been involved with other priorities.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT COUNCIL BE ADVISED THAT THERE ARE NO MATTERS THAT THE COMMITTEE WISHES TO DRAW TO ITS ATTENTION.

RESOLVED:

That Portfolio Holder for Finance & Organisational Development have regard to the comments of the Committee above.

9. **GENERAL FUND REVENUE OUTTURN 2012/13**
(Report CAB2493 refers)

The Committee noted that this Report had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 26 June 2013 where the recommendations had been agreed as set out.

Councillor Godfrey introduced the Report and highlighted that the favourable outturn position as set out was a consequence of prudent budgeting and he congratulated the officers involved for this achievement. During discussion, he clarified that the Council's Financial Strategy for the next five years would continue to have regard to the likelihood of the Council's Revenue Support Grant being further reduced, and would also have regard to other challenges outlined within the Government's recent Comprehensive Spending Review.

In response to questions, the Chief Executive advised that financial pressures facing the Council were likely to mean that there would continue to be pressure on salary budgets. Although he did not propose further significant organisational changes at this time, planned service reviews might culminate in a further reduction in staff numbers. The Chief Executive also explained that as part of a forthcoming review of his service area, the Assistant Director (Housing Services) would investigate potential opportunities for collaborative working, especially where significant savings might be achieved.

The Chief Finance Officer clarified aspects of the presentation of the information in the Report. Table 1 set out the most significant favourable and adverse variances, and these were reconciled and grouped according to service area in Appendix F to the Report. Comparative information for the previous year was provided within the Council's Statement of Accounts.

A Member suggested that where information was given in summary form, it would be helpful if the criteria for highlighting variances be included. The Chief Finance Officer indicated that in Table 1 the criteria had been variances over £50,000. She indicated that if Members had any other suggestions to aid presentation she would welcome a discussion.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT COUNCIL BE ADVISED THAT THERE ARE NO MATTERS THAT THE COMMITTEE WISHES TO DRAW TO ITS ATTENTION.

RESOLVED:

That the Revenue outturn position as set out in the report be noted.

10. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE – CHANGE PLANS OUTTURN 2012/13**
(Report OS78 refers)

The Committee referred to the appendices to the Report and asked a number of detailed questions on the progress updates against Change Plan outcomes.

The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) advised that further performance information could be presented in future monitoring reports on project 'slippage'. It was explained that some projects might have been superseded by later initiatives (agreed with Members) since the previous half-year performance report.

Active Communities Outcome

The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) was in agreement that the Council must endeavour to drive forward a targeted approach to proposals coming forward from community planning events, such as that currently being undertaken in Stanmore.

The Chief Executive clarified that public health responsibilities had been passed to the County Council and it was envisaged that these would eventually be discharged in partnership with other authorities. In the meantime, the Committee was reminded that the City Council continued to play a positive contribution with its sports and leisure work, environmental health and also with regard to the provision of high quality housing. The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) referred to the successful physical activity programme of work undertaken during the Olympic year and explained that a 2012 Legacy Plan building on known data about participation had already been published by the Sports and Physical Activity Alliance.

The Chief Executive also clarified that the Planning Management Team continued to work with developers to negotiate the best possible outcome with regard to the on-site provision of affordable homes.

Economic Prosperity Outcome

The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) reported that an economic impact survey of the Winchester High Street Market could be commissioned, although a previous survey by Tourism South East had concluded that the market was complementary rather than in competition with the shops. It was noted that performance information in Appendix 2 indicated that footfall to the High Street had decreased since the previous year and the reasons for this were not clear.

The Chief Executive advised that the City Council's apprentice scheme would not necessarily culminate in permanent job prospects; however the scheme provided invaluable experience and learning opportunities for the individuals.

High Quality Environment Outcome

The Chief Executive acknowledged that as part of negotiating a planning proposal, developers were likely to be concerned about the viability of schemes coming forward. This might impact on the achievability, or otherwise, of new developments achieving Code Level 4 or 5 sustainability levels. The Planning Management Team reminded applicants that this was generally a requirement of the Council and was in the process of developing guidance on the matter.

The Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods and Environment) reported that with regard to capture of recyclables, trends for that achieved for compostable

materials (i.e. garden waste) tended to be impacted by seasonal variations. A joint action plan with East Hants District Council would develop a communications plan to residents to increase the capture of recyclables and also reduce contamination by unsuitable materials.

The Assistant Director also clarified that the 'Warm up Winchester' project provided sign-posted assistance to all residents of the District.

Efficient and Effective Council Outcome

Referring to the performance information at Appendix 2 to the Report, the Committee acknowledged that the Council had robust procedures in place to manage instances of sickness absence. The Chief Executive emphasised that a general increase in levels also related to longer term cases and that the Council would take a more targeted approach to these cases in the future.

Customer Complaints

Referring to the performance information at Appendix 2 to the Report, the Chief Executive explained that those service areas (such as Environment) that have experienced increased numbers of complaints, was likely to have been due to changes to aspects of service delivery or policies. With regard to Planning Control, officers were required to balance their work in determining both major applications (which required more extensive pre-application work) and householder applications. Officers were currently working closely with the Planning Advisory Service to improve processes and Members would be informed of an improvement plan in due course.

RESOLVED:

1. That the performance information in the Report be noted.

2. That the Portfolio Holders for Economic Development and Business Services, with the Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) have regard to the Committee's suggestion to commission an economic impact survey of the Winchester High Street Market.

11. **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP – PERFORMANCE OUTTURN REPORT 2012/13**

(Report OS77 refers)

The Chairman announced that he considered that it would be preferable to defer consideration of the report to a separate meeting focussed only on community safety and where a Police representative could be present to respond to questions.

In response to a suggestion, the Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods and Environment) advised that he would check whether crime data was available for all District Wards rather than just for the town area.

RESOLVED:

That consideration of the Report be deferred to a special meeting of the Committee (date to be confirmed).

12. **PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND THEIR VALUE TO THE COUNCIL INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP**
(Report OS79 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the progress made to date in implementing the recommendations of recommendations of the Local and National Performance Indicators and their Value to the Council Informal Scrutiny Group be noted.

13. **MONITORING REPORT – KEY DECISIONS NOT INCLUDED WITHIN THE FORWARD PLAN DURING 2012/13 MUNICIPAL YEAR**
(Report OS81 refers)

In response to a question, the Chief Executive reminded the Committee that implementation of the urgent decision required for Electronic Documents and Record Management System (Report CAB2304 refers) was subsequently delayed due to delays in the deployment of project management staff resources.

RESOLVED:

That the performance information in the Report be noted.

14. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT OS71 REFERS) AND JULY 2013 FORWARD PLAN AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION**

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme and Forward Plan for July 2013 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.05pm.

Chairman