

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - RESOURCES - 22 MARCH 2022

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

Present

Cllr Stephen Mulliner (Chairman)
Cllr Joan Heagin (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Jerome Davidson

Cllr Peter Martin
Cllr John Neale
Cllr Peter Nicholson

Apologies

Cllr Roger Blishen, Cllr Chris Howard and Cllr George Wilson

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTES (Agenda item 1)

Apologies for absence were submitted by Cllrs Roger Blishen, Chris Howard and George Wilson.

28 MINUTES (Agenda item 2)

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3)

There were no declarations of interest submitted for this meeting.

30 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 4)

There were no questions submitted by members of the public for this meeting.

31 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (Agenda item 5)

There were no questions submitted by members of the public for this meeting.

32 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 6)

Mark Mills highlighted the areas of note in the Resources O&S Work Programme.

The Scrutiny Officer was actioned to add a working group on the Housing Revenue Account to part four of the Work Programme.

33 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3 2021/22 (Agenda item 7)

A copy of the Corporate Performance Report for quarter 3 of 2021/22 was circulated with the agenda. Members were invited to comment on each service area in turn and raise any queries.

Concern was raised by the Chairman that there was no head of service for Policy and Governance or Business Transformation present and he requested that a HoS or senior manager attend in future.

The Chairman advised that he had sent a comprehensive email to the Head of Housing Operations regarding some queries on his section of the report and had received a comprehensive and satisfactory response. He highlighted that a meeting had been held with officers and the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen to discuss the workloads of the two overview and scrutiny committees and it had been suggested that Housing Operations transfer from the Services O&S to the Resources O&S and this will take effect as of the June meeting. He pointed out that there will be three briefings from the Housing Working Group before the next meeting.

A member questioned the use of the word 'modest' in the Chief Executives narrative regarding the New Homes Bonus. It was felt £1.6m was not modest and should not be described as such.

The Committee also raised concerns regarding the Planning section of the report. Although not within the committees remit the members were concerned that many of the KPI's were not met, FOI's and Complaints were high and applications were very high. Officers advised that there had been a update since the writing of the report and they were pleased to advise that validations had improved. There had been a large increase in household applications which was similar to other LA's in the area. This had slowed down and now and it was hoped that Q4 should show a significant improvement in performance.

Members asked for an update from planning officers outlining:

- a) What is driving the large number of applications?
- b) Is it foreseen this will reduce soon?
- c) Do we need more staffing resource?

Officers were asked how our planning salaries compared with other authorities and were advised that a benchmarking exercise was scheduled to ascertain this exact question.

The members enquired about the costs of appeals and which budget this came out of? It was outlined that there was a dedicated appeals budget which can be adjusted accordingly. Members asked for a year-on-year figure for appeals and that the original agreed budget be set out against the revised one.

34 ANNUAL REVIEW OF CORPORATE KPIS SET FOR 2022-23 (Agenda item 8)

Louise Norie outlined the background to the report advising it had been agreed by Members that officers would review the KPI's annually. She advised that the suggestions and proposed changes were set out in the report.

Members noted that two KPI's had been added for Business Transformation when previously they had been none due to it being a relatively new service. There was concern with the issues some residents have using the telephone and online

systems and felt it was important to measure the drop off rate. Officers advised this was measured and could be provided in the future.

Concern was also raised at HO4b and HO5b were being removed. The Chairman had written to the Head of Housing Operations regarding this and had been assured this was measured by other means but the Committee felt these KPI's should be retained.

The Committee also discussed F1 and F2 and asked why they had been reduced from a 99% to a 98% target? The Head of Finance advised that currently this was a more realistic target but this could be raised again once it was realistic to do so. The Committee felt this should be the case as targets should not be dropped just to make them achievable they should be aspirational targets to work towards.

Officers were asked about the end of year balance sheet for Council Tax and if the deficit was then lost? The Head of Finance advised that this was chased until it can be chased no more and that the reason the deficit was higher this year was due to the financial difficulties many residents had during the last two years lockdowns so there was confidence this could be recouped. It was highlighted that many residents paid over ten months so could use the remaining two months to clear any debt or could opt to pay over twelve months to make this more achievable.

Recommendations:

The Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee ask that the Executive consider the following **Recommendations**:

- Retain HO4b 'Responsive Repairs: Average number of days to complete a repair' and HO5b 'Responsive repairs: Was repair completed right first time?
- Include a KPI for Customer Services Team which monitors the dropout rate of customers calls
- Aim to restore the current target of 99% for indicators F1 'Percentage of Council Tax collected' and F2 'Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates collected' for 2023/24 or the earliest year that circumstances realistically allow.

35 COLLABORATION WITH GUILDFORD UPDATE (Agenda item 9)

The Leader, Councillor Paul Follows, gave an update on the collaboration discussions with Guildford Borough Council. He advised that the IAA (Inter Authority Agreement) Working Group was meeting weekly and were currently drafting the terms of reference for the Head of Service. The Risk Register has been drawn up and agreement drafted. Stage 2 of the staffing side has now begun.

36 EQUALITY OBJECTIVES AND ACTION PLAN (Agenda item 10)

Cllr Penny Marriott, Executive Portfolio Holder for Equalities, Diversity, Inclusion and Community Safety, introduced the report. She explained this was not a set of rules to follow its focus was to improve services to our customers be they internal or external. It was necessary to produce a policy on how our Equality objectives would be achieved. The Committee were advised that when the objectives were drawn up that 'little did we know' the objective of 'actively welcoming not Waverley those world citizens who are seeking refuge in UK from War, repression, natural disasters, extreme hunger and poverty' would become so relevant so quickly.

The Committee confirmed this policy and action plan related to both internal and external customers and was assured this was the case. Louise Norie, Corporate Policy Manager, highlighted that the objective was to focus upon the Council as an employer and service provider.

It was suggested the previous Equality policy should be included as an annexe to the report to show how it has been improved from half a page.

- 37 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda item 11)
- 38 PROPERTY INVESTMENT ADVISORY BOARD ACTIVITY UPDATE REPORT
(Agenda item 12)
- 39 PROPERTY INVESTMENT QUARTERLY REPORT (Agenda item 13)
- 40 BURYS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (Agenda item 14)

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and concluded at 9.16 pm

Chairman