

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - RESOURCES - 21 NOVEMBER  
2022

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

**Present**

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

Cllr Brian Edmonds  
Cllr Chris Howard  
Cllr Peter Nicholson

**Also Present**

Cllr Peter Clark

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTES (Agenda item 1)

Apologies for absences were received from Councillor David Else, Councillor Peter Martin, John Neale and Councillor George Wilson.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 2)

No declarations were received.

3 MINUTES (Agenda item 3)

The minutes were approved for the meeting held on the 7 November 2022.

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

There were no questions received from members of the public.

5 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (Agenda item 5)

There were no questions received from members of the council.

6 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT Q2 (Agenda item 6)

Louise Norie informed the Committee that there was an error with the Q2 Housing Delivery and Community summary. She noted that an amended summary had been circulated to members and hard copies handed to members this evening. The Chair noted that due to the extraordinary meeting on the 7 November, many areas within the report were familiar.

Councillor Edmonds raised queries relating to the Chief Executive's Summary. He queried staff losses through mergers, intellectual synergies, and best practice. He also asked if consideration had been given to asset similarities and identify potential

issues in the merger. Tom Horwood, Joint Chief Executive, responded to the queries raised reminding the Committee of the Full Council resolution to proceed with a collaboration with Guildford Council on the basis of a joint shared management team. He added that the team would propose businesses cases on a service-by-service basis for future collaborations. Tom Horwood reminded the Committee that at the Full Council meeting in April 2022, a Joint Governance Committee was established and would be meeting in December to review the inter-authority agreement and the risk register.

Councillor Heagin raised a query regarding the discretionary element of the energy rebate scheme within the Finance and Property section of the report. She wanted further clarification on what had been proposed to ensure that all the funds were allocated and there was no underspend. Peter Vickers, Executive Head of Finance responded to the query advising that a report would be circulated noting that the criteria had been widened to capture more individuals in need and auto awarding funds had been made.

Councillor Nicholson raised a query regarding Queensmead outturn. Andrew Smith, Executive Head of Housing, advised that the query would be taken back and raised with HRA Finance colleagues and reported back to the Committee. The Chair noted the savings of the Joint management team and highlighted the reference to shared executive support, he queried when there would be an update. Tom Horwood advised the Committee that the JMT would be discussing the matter over the next week.

Councillor Heagin raised a concern regarding the performance of the responsive repairs and the contract. She noted that that the summary stated 200 overdue repairs were expected and manageable, however indicator HO5B only showed 14% incompletes after 28 days and was below the target of 10%. Responding to the query Andrew Smith advised the Committee that the new responsive repairs contract started on the 1 April and was not quite meeting its targets yet. He noted that there had been some improvements and he had met with the contractor and customer services team and things were improving.

The Chair inquired to the recruitment of flooring, roofing and groundworks operatives. Andrew Smith advised the Committee that this was improving slowly along with compliance officer's and will be kept under review. The Chair also queried the Strategic Asset Manager vacancy. Andrew Smith informed the Committee that Heather Rig was currently acting up into the role and Hugh Wagstaff would be taking up the role in the new year.

Councillor Heagin raised a question regarding the notice of seeking possession and the context regarding the figure of 18 described in the report. Responding to the query Andrew Smith advised that a notice was very much like a warning and rarely resulted in an eviction. The Chair asked if there was further information on the Housing Delivery variances for the Capital programme. Peter Vickers advised the Committee that he would circulate further information on the underspend and profiling of the expenditure.

Councillor Howard sought further clarification on recruitment, and whether salary was an issue. Andrew Smith advised the Committee that the Council were considering salaries and were part of a benchmarking exercise with other councils

and housing associations, he felt that there was a good case to put forward for supplements. Councillor Edmonds asked if the cost of local accommodation was a factor to the recruitment issue. Andrew Smith informed the Committee that local accommodation had always been an issue, specifically when those jobs were for services that require visiting properties. He also noted the lack of a good private rented sector.

Tom Horwood advised the Committee that recruitment had been identified as a wider corporate risk and something that the JMT were monitoring. He explained that it was an industry wide issue and councils were competing for a diminishing number of staff, especially in some professions like planning and repairs. He advised that remote working and collaborating with other councils was part of the Council's solution.

7 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 7)

The chair noted that the Budget would be a substantive item at the January 2023 committee meeting. Councillor Heagin made enquiries regarding the service plans for 2023/24. She suggested that the Committee members would benefit from an informal briefing or meeting with the Heads of Services prior to the meeting. Robin Taylor, Executive Head of Organisational Development, noted the timing especially with the Christmas break. There was also a suggestion to discuss the Service Plans at the March 2023 committee meeting. The Chair agreed to discuss further with officers.

8 COLLABORATION WITH GUILDFORD (Agenda item 8)

The Committee received an update on the collaboration from Tom Horwood, Joint Chief Executive. He reminded the Committee members that the Executive Heads had been in post since the 1 October and had been familiarising themselves with council, councillors, and officers, he mentioned the meetings that had been arranged for councillors both at Waverley and Guildford. He advised that there were two vacant posts, one of which was the Monitoring Officer which were being filled on an interim basis and recruitment would take place early next year. He informed the Committee that the next steps would be to prepare business cases for further collaboration and the Organisational Development team were preparing a methodology on how that would be implemented. Tom Horwood noted the Joint Governance Committee would meet in December and will cover the risks of the partnership and the inter-authority agreement.

Councillor Edmonds asked if the Organisational Development team would employ consultants to carry out the work. Tom Horwood advised the Committee that the work would be undertaken by staff and there were no current plans to use consultants, however, consultants may be required in the future on more technical business cases.

9 SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT POLICY (Agenda item 9)

Patrick Tuite, Procurement Officer, addressed the Committee. He advised that the Committee members had before them the Sustainable Procurement Policy, he noted that Waverley did not have a policy in place for the procurement function and it was proposed that this policy is put in place to support the council's corporate strategy. The Chair raised a query regarding the monitoring and measuring of

potential suppliers' performance against environmental commitments and who would be responsible for completing the task. Patrick Tuite informed the Committee that the policy would be proportionate to the contract which it was applied to. He noted that some commitments might be resource intensive, but it would be for bigger contracts that are adequately resourced to be able to do so. He also added that in many cases the monitoring was already being carried out.

The Chair welcomed the report and inquired to the frequency of the monitoring and reporting. Patrick Tuite advised the Committee that he had not stipulated any frequency as it would be the officers who are responsible for the contract that would be best place to decide on frequency. The Chair asked if other local authorities had implemented similar policies. Patrick Tuite informed the Committee that the policy was developed in conjunction with a number of district borough councils, all intending to adopt similar policies. He added that Waverley may be the first in Surrey, but it is expected that others would follow. The Chair also queried the term 'Circular Economy' and industry certification.

Patrick Tuite advised the Committee that it was a whole life costing of a product as well as what would happen to the product once it was disposed of. He added that it was a longer look at products, factoring in disposal, and environmental implications once the lifetime had expired. Patrick Tuite advised the Committee that he had not stipulated any certifications as it would be the officer who are responsible for the contract that would be best place to decide.

Councillor Edmonds asked if there would be an uplift of cost if the council adopted best practice instead of good practice. Patrick Tuite advised that the council should always strive for best practice, however the policy states where possible commitments should be affordable and appropriate. Councillor Heagin welcomed the report and noted the extra work it would mean for officers. She queried if officers intended to gather data as the policy was implemented to assess and understand the impact for when the policy is reviewed at a later date. Patrick Tuite advised the Committee that this was something he would take away and consider.

Councillor Howard welcomed the report and noted the council's commitment to the Climate Change Emergency, she felt that the policy supported the council's commitment. The Chair wondered if social value was encouraged to potential contractors in order to improve their chances of success. Patrick Tuite confirmed that it was one method, he noted that most firms were already applying social value regardless of their clients' requirements.

The Committee noted and welcomed the report; the Chair advised that he looked forward to seeing how the policy worked in practice.

## 10 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION (Agenda item 10)

Councillor Peter Clark, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and IT, addressed the Committee and introduced the report. He advised the Committee that Robin Taylor was appointed as the new Head of Organisational Development and that they were working together to bring forward the Waverley business plans.

Robin Taylor informed the Committee that 7 out of the 10 phase one projects were complete. He noted that two were paused and one was off track. He noted that the continued annual savings was slightly under £662,300 and £258,000 was forecasted which left a gap of £128,571. He advised that consideration should be given to any further phases of the council's Business Transformation programme deliveries in the future, in terms of supporting the council's other strategic objectives. Robin Taylor asked the Committee to note the progress made to date and welcomed any comments.

The Chair wanted to know the status of the Business Transformation 2 (BT2). Robin Taylor advised the Committee that there was a BT2 and that there would continue to be transformation activity for Waverley. He also advised that there would be joint transformation activity with Guildford if the business cases are approved. Councillor Heagin queried the harmonisation of IT and the alignment of policies. She sought further information on how this would be managed. Mark Mills read aloud a response from IT services. The Chair asked if a task group had been set up to investigate the matter. Robin Taylor confirmed that the JMT was reviewing it as a priority.

11 HYBRID WORKING (Agenda item 11)

The Chair sought further clarification on the pie chart and the larger 118,29 TBC percentage. Robin Taylor advised that the table showed how the workforce had been classified to date. He advised that he was not worried about the TBC as it was work in progress and it was not expected to be completed at this stage, but to provide the committee with an update of progress. He advised that an update would be brought back to the Committee at a later date. The Chair asked if working from home would remain attractive to staff. Responding to the queries, Robin Taylor informed the Committee that it would depend on 1) the Job role and 2) individual choice. The planned approach to agile working would depend on the job or the individual's personal circumstances. He expected that the work would be completed by the end of the financial year.

Councillor Edmonds queried how the productivity of agile working measured against traditional working from the office. He felt that when individuals worked from home there was a cost saving and inquired if this had caused any frictions. Robin Taylor advised the Committee that in terms of staff productivity, this was measured by individual objectives linked to service plans and the corporate strategy. He advised the Committee that the piece of work was to understand what each individual needed to deliver and to use agile working to improve performance. He advised the Committee that there had been positive result is sickness levels and he hoped it would have positive effects on retention.

Councillor Heagin wondered if the data had been fed into the requirements for office space and if there would be further reductions. Robin Taylor informed the Committee that this had already been done and the council does not have the same need for banked desks. He also noted that the council is monitoring staff usage of the building and the car parking, and it would be kept under review. He advised the Committee that office use had decreased as more staff were working from home. Councillor Edmonds felt that a sickness level of 6% seemed to be high. Robin Taylor noted that the council used benchmarking to compare performance and Waverley compared very favourably against other Surrey District and borough councils.

The Committee thanked officers and noted the report.

12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda item 12)

13 PROPERTY INVESTMENT ADVISORY BOARD ACTIVITY AND QUARTERLY UPDATE (Agenda item 13)

**The meeting commenced at 19:00 and concluded at 20:20.**

**Chairman**