

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - SERVICES - 26
SEPTEMBER 2023

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

Present

Cllr Carole Cockburn (Chair)	Cllr Gemma Long
Cllr Philip Townsend (Vice Chair)	Cllr David Munro
Cllr Dave Busby	Cllr John Robini
Cllr George Hesse	Cllr Graham White
Cllr Jacquie Keen	

Apologies

Cllr Jane Austin and Cllr Janet Crowe

Also Present

Cllrs Kika Mirylees, Liz Townsend and Julian Spence. Cllr Paul Follows attended virtually.

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS (Agenda item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Janet Crowe and Councillor Jane Austin. There were no substitutes present.

13 MINUTES (Agenda item 2)

The minutes of the meeting of the Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 21 June 2023 and published on the Council's website was agreed as a correct record.

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

15 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 4)

There were no questions submitted.

16 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (Agenda item 5)

There were no questions submitted.

17 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 6)

17.1 The Chair outlined the work programme and encouraged members to suggest items for future meetings, as well as noting her interest in the upcoming Antisocial Behaviour Public Space Protection Order Update and Waverley and Farnham Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

17.2 The committee noted the work programme.

18 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1 2023-24 (Agenda item 7)

18.1 Jenny Sturgess, Policy and Performance Officer, introduced the Corporate Performance Report and explained the committee's remit. The Committee was advised that the report was primarily owned by the Executive but that members were encouraged to consider the report and highlight areas that may need further investigation. It was noted that the financial figures related to the end of Q4.

18.2 Cllr Munro commended the improvement in the number of planning applications decided within the statutory timeframe and asked about the source of the measured improvement. Claire Upton-Brown, Executive Head of Planning Development, noted that it was standard practice for the team to use all of the time available, and that several third-party organisations were sometimes the source of delays due to staffing levels and other issues.

18.3 Cllr Robini requested a copy of the Fairground Car Park mixed-use feasibility study; the Executive Head of Planning Development reassured Cllr Long that training on Community Infrastructure Levy and Business Improvement Districts had been arranged for the coming months.

18.4 In response to a query about food waste, Executive Head of Environmental Services Chris Wheeler replied that local authorities were still awaiting the National Waste Strategy from government but are working with the Surrey Environment Partnership to minimise waste, and that it was usual to see an increase in amounts of waste after Christmas.

18.5 In agreement with Cllrs Hesse and Keen, The Chair asked officers to work on communication to residents around reducing food waste; and to investigate the viability of composting domestic food waste.

19 THE EDGE - CONSIDERATION OF PETITION RECEIVED. (Agenda item 8)

19.1 The Committee heard from Mr Chris Grimes, Chairman of Sport Haslemere, who emphasised the importance of a long-term solution for the community and spoke of his desire to see The Edge become a centre of excellence for disabled sport.

19.2 Ian Doyle, Joint Strategic Director (Transformation and Governance), noted that The Leader, Cllr Paul Follows, had discussed a temporary solution with Surrey County Council, although there was no suggestion of Waverley Borough Council taking back the lease. Officers had drawn up proposals to

open the sports hall at The Edge on weekday evenings and one day at weekends, and were awaiting a response from potential suppliers.

19.3 Members noted the importance of working with local residents and community groups. Cllrs Keen and Robini discussed the importance of The Edge as a facility used by disabled sports groups.

19.4 The Chair noted that stakeholders were also seeking funding from other sources.

20 CRANLEIGH LEISURE CENTRE NEW BUILD (Agenda item 9)

20.1 Executive Head of Commercial Services Kelvin Mills introduced the report, noting that the Passivhaus and low carbon requirements in the proposal would constitute a long-term saving, despite greater upfront costs. Build cost inflation necessitated that a new budget requirement would be taken to Full Council in October.

20.2 Cllr Hyman was registered to speak on this issue but withdrew.

20.3 Cllr Hesse remarked on inflation since the project began and asked if there was a price threshold above which the proposal would be rejected. The Executive Head of Commercial Services noted the difficult economic climate and responded that, despite cost escalation since the initial 2021 estimate of around £20M, there were still review points, such as Full Council's agreement at the end of the tendering process. He also remarked on the benefits conferred by a Passivhaus building.

20.4 The Chair asked if financial comparisons could be made available to the Committee, and Cllr Hesse asked if a fixed price contract could be sought to better control costs. Officers agreed to respond to the Committee accordingly.

20.5 The Committee noted the report.

21 PLANNING UPDATES (Agenda item 10)

21.1 The Executive Head of Planning Development introduced the report, reviewing the response sent to DLUHC concerning why Waverley should not be designated and agreeing to distribute the response once received. It was noted that the memorandum of understanding suggested at the O&S Services committee of July 2023 was appended with member suggestions.

21.2 The Chair and Cllr Robini agreed that the new rules were agreeable. It was confirmed to Cllr Busby that officers were consulted on the MoU.

21.3 The importance of exploiting members' local knowledge was raised by Cllr White. It was suggested that members were free to raise thoughts with officers when applications were distributed weekly.

- 21.4 Cllr Keen was mindful of recent staff turnover and queried training arrangements for new staff. The Executive Head of Planning Development responded that many opportunities were being explored to share knowledge and increase staff skills.
- 21.5 Cllr Hesse asked about the possibility of increasing the planning charge for larger dwellings, and would like to see this communicated to DLUHC so that WBC could better remunerate and retain staff.
- 21.6 Sending informative planning literature out to the public was suggested by Cllr Townsend. Officers agreed to work on this.
- 21.7 The Committee noted the report.

22 UPDATE ON THE PREPARATION OF A NEW LOCAL PLAN (Agenda item 11)

- 22.1 Interim Planning Policy Manager Andrew Longley introduced the report, subsequent to the resolution of Full Council in July 2023 to commence the preparation of a new Local Plan. The report detailed the timescale, costs and risk management strategies being deployed in preparing the new plan. It was also noted that Full Council would be consulted in accordance with the timetable.
- 22.2 It was confirmed that a Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment would be commissioned, and that a briefing with Town and Parish Councils would be scheduled for November. The chart at Figure 1 of the papers was updated for the Executive, and milestones at paragraph 4.5.1 of the report was featured in an update to the Local Development Scheme.
- 22.3 It was noted that officers were focused on updating the Statement of Community Involvement, which would come to the Committee before finalisation in 2024.
- 22.4 The Chair asked about the contents of the November briefing and that Community Planning Groups be included, raising a concern about the rate of construction in Farnham. The Interim Planning Policy Manager responded regarding the 5-year housing supply, and stated that any decisions would consider housing need as well as the amount the borough can accommodate.
- 22.5 The Interim Planning Policy Manager noted that the November briefing would not give allocation numbers to towns and parishes as officers were still awaiting the National Planning Policy Framework from government and so this would be premature. A call for sites would go out to towns and parishes as one part of a renewed Land Availability Assessment.
- 22.6 The Chair highlighted the importance of preserving the AONB, ancient woodland and the greenbelt, to which the Interim Planning Policy Manager responded that the Adopted Development Plan remained in place. The Chair agreed there were certain vulnerabilities with no 5-year housing plan in place

and reiterated the importance of messaging about land prohibited for development. Officers stated that this would feed into the new Local Plan.

22.7 The Executive Head of Planning Development clarified to Cllr Hesse that any schemes that had already been approved or had begun construction would count towards construction figures and areas for development potentially revisited.

22.8 Cllr White queried whether the plan allowed for the restriction of property sizes. The Interim Planning Policy Manager clarified that the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment was the best instrument to investigate the most appropriate housing mix and to decide on sizes. It was noted that a variety of affordable housing schemes were being investigated and that the Viability Assessment would determine the feasibility of delivering the homes planned.

23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda item 12)

23 There were no items to be considered in exempt session so the Chair closed the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and concluded at 9.08pm

Cllr Carole Cockburn - Chair