

Waverley Borough Council

Minutes Of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Services - 23 January 2024

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

Present

Cllr Carole Cockburn (Chair)	Cllr Jacquie Keen
Cllr Philip Townsend (Vice Chair)	Cllr Gemma Long
Cllr Dave Busby	Cllr David Munro
Cllr Janet Crowe	Cllr John Robini

Apologies

Cllr Jane Austin and Cllr George Hesse

Also present (virtual)

Cllr Graham White
Cllr Jerry Hyman

35 Apologies for absence and substitutions (Agenda item 1)

Apologies were received from Cllrs Jane Austin and George Hesse.

Cllr Graham White attended the meeting remotely.

36 Minutes (Agenda item 2)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 November 2023 as published on the website were agreed as a correct record.

37 Declarations of interest (Agenda item 3)

None were received for this meeting.

38 Questions from members of the public (Agenda item 4)

38.1 Two questions from members of the public were submitted to this meeting and published as supplements to the agenda.

38.2 The following response from the Monitoring Officer was given to the question asked by Mr Tim House:

- All officers below Chief Executive are responsible to the Head of Paid Service rather than to Councillors;
- The Head of Paid Service has not raised any concerns with the Chair of the O&S Committee about lack of political impartiality of any senior officers;
- As part of the scrutiny function, the Council's constitution allows for the Chair of the O&S Committee to call any senior officer to the committee to explain their performance in respect of any matter within their remit. The Chair of O&S has not felt the need to do so.

- Should anyone have any concerns about the conduct or performance of any senior officer within the Council they should address their concerns to the Head of Paid Service through the usual complaint procedure via the website.

38.3 Questions from South Farnham Residents Association and Badshot Lea Community Association have been answered by the Executive Head of Planning Development. This written response will be sent to the questioner by the Scrutiny Officer.

39 Questions from members (Agenda item 5)

39.1 Three questions were submitted by Cllr David Munro and one by Cllr Jane Austin. The Chair clarified that these would be taken under item 8.

40 Committee Forward Work Programme (Agenda item 6)

40.1 The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme. The Chair referenced the fact that much of the Executive work at present was focussed on budgetary matters and encouraged members to suggest items for future consideration.

40.2 The Chair noted that The Surrey Environment Partnership had been raised by members and asked if the Interim Head of Service could be contacted to clarify a date.

41 Funding Assessment Panel (Agenda item 7)

41.1 The Committee agreed to the nomination of Cllr David Munro to sit on a one-off funding assessment panel as part of the Thriving Communities Commissioning Fund.

42 Safer Waverley Partnership (Agenda item 8)

42.1 The Executive Head of Community Services introduced the item and thanked Members for submitting their questions prior to the meeting, reminding the Committee that the Safer Waverley Partnership (SWP) involved a wide range of agencies and stakeholders that share responsibility for many of the operational issues. It was noted that officers could still raise issues and expect responses from these other agencies at the March meeting, where there will be a more detailed discussion of the Partnership.

42.2 The Community Services Manager addressed the written questions submitted by members. It was clarified that officers regularly emphasise the poor performance of the 101 reporting mechanism to Police colleagues. Cllr Munro queried who should take responsibility for this issue and agreed to return to the issues again at the March meeting, when partners will be present to give a response. It was stated that reporting issues to partners was paramount for making them aware and most able to provide effective responses.

- 42.3 The Committee were informed that Neighbourhood Dispute Action Groups had now been disbanded after an unsuccessful pilot and will feature in the March report.
- 42.4 Officers advised that a Joint Health and Wellbeing Board had been established across Waverley and Guildford with a wide range of partners involved and encompassing two sub-groups - one for each borough. The Committee requested that the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board be added to the Committee Forward Work Programme.

43 Economic Development Strategy (Agenda item 9)

- 43.3 The Economic Development Manager referenced events such as Brexit, the pandemic and cost of living crisis in explanation of the need to update the Strategy, and reminded the committee of the need to support businesses to endure the issues they face in recruitment and retention, among other areas. They noted that some of the work in this area would be addressed in parts of the new Local Plan.
- 43.4 The collaborative work with Guildford Borough Council and Addison Young was referenced to emphasise the quantitative and qualitative data collection that took place, alongside other partners such as the local Chambers of Commerce. Colleagues in Waverley's Planning department were contacted, as were a range of external groups and stakeholders.
- 43.5 Cllr Crowe asked whether reviews of the council's waste contract to explore emission reduction will include more opportunities for residents to pursue recycling. It was stated that this would be fed back to the Executive Head of Service and Director, as was a comment about the need to develop public transport.
- 43.6 Cllr Keen referred to the commercial spaces lost to housing development.
- 43.7 Accepting that there were still alterations to be made, non-voting member Cllr Hyman noted that the Strategy does not align with the years of the new Local Plan, contended that Waverley may not be able to afford to widely engage in Passivhaus retrofitting and thus advise others, and queried the home build costs of the Property Development Strategies. He also raised what he felt were contradictions in the policies on congestion. The Executive Head of Regeneration and Planning Policy clarified that the Strategy's 10-year time horizon was planned and that the document will be reviewed as appropriate.
- 43.8 Cllr Robini noted the difficulties of encouraging active travel and building the appropriate infrastructure in Haslemere, and asked how funding would be secured to make the necessary changes. The Joint Strategic Director of Place noted the that wide range and ambition of the strategy would help with securing relevant funding bids after partner organisations are invested and reiterated that active travel measures also fall under the Climate Change Action Plan. The Economic Development Manager referred to a recent trial change to the hopper service.

- 43.9 Cllr Munro asked about the impact that the Strategy will have on housing, that Woolmead's issues be addressed in the document, that a review of congestion pinch points be included in the action plan. The Joint Strategic Director of Place noted the importance of planning to both the Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy and that housing policies form a large part of the Strategy – she also stated that there is work planned regarding Woolmead and would confer with Cllr Munro about this, and that usage of the Invest To Save fund would be considered.
- 43.10 Cllr Busby asked if the Strategy should include reference to the value of existing amenities to the rural economy. The Joint Strategic Director of Place clarified that this would be considered under the Local Plan. The Economic Development Manager noted that the Rural Prosperity Fund was addressing some of these concerns.
- 43.11 The Executive Head of Regeneration and Planning Policy reminded the committee that infrastructure is also reliant on a suite of other supporting documents such as the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and LCWIP. The Chair voiced concern about restrictions on business accommodation having the potential to drive away potential investors and referenced the success of the new Ashgate Gallery. The Joint Strategic Director of Place noted that many businesses now desire space on much more flexible terms.
- 43.12 Cllr Long noted the Digital Voice Switchover scheduled for 2025 and asked about plans for broadband infrastructure given the areas of no service in rural parts of the borough given new hybrid working habits. The Joint Strategic Director of Place noted that many businesses stated that many staff of younger generations have very different travel demands and that these changes can be reflected in the Strategy as well as the new Local Plan.

44 Statement Of Community Involvement (Agenda item 10)

- 44.1 The Interim Planning Policy Manager introduced the report. Cllr Robini queried how developers can be better collaborated with. The Executive Head of Planning Development detailed the comprehensive pre-application service offered and how developers are worked with, especially around strategic sites, noting that work is being undertaken with the Portfolio Holder to clarify this process for developers.
- 44.2 Cllr Munro asked if the BIDs are consulted on the document and referred to the statutory requirement to publish planning notices in newspapers. The Executive Head of Planning Development noted that this is still a legal requirement under a 1963 Act.
- 44.3 Non-voting member Cllr Hyman reiterated the importance of consulting with residents and asked if a document could be made available that demonstrates the differences from the 2019 version. Officers stated that they would endeavour to provide this document, and that the Commonplace engagement platform will be employed to consult with residents, while the Executive are enthusiastic for consultation to take place with young people.

- 44.4 The Chair referenced the increase in Neighbourhood Plans since the 2019 Statement, asked that Neighbourhood Plan groups are consulted with, and referenced problems arising from previous redefinition of sites as suitable for developments. She noted the importance of keeping the databases held by town and parish councils updated. The Interim Planning Policy Manager clarified that Neighbourhood Planning Groups are consulted and the Local Plan Executive Working Group is working on keeping databases current.
- 44.5 Cllr Busby mentioned difficulty that he has experienced following applications on the planning portal. The Executive Head of Planning Development stated that they would examine technical solutions to renotifying all parties upon updates to applications.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

45 Revised National Planning Policy Framework And Its Implications For WBC
(Agenda item 11)

- 45.1 The Interim Planning Policy Manager gave a presentation on changes to the NPPF introduced alongside the December 2023 ministerial statement.
- 45.2 Non-voting member Cllr Hyman emphasised the importance of delivering protections to residents, while Cllr White questioned whether there are plans for Neighbourhood Plans' number of allowed Strategic Site classifications to be reduced from the current 100. The Interim Planning Policy Manager noted that this was being considered due to the necessity of demonstrating 5-year housing land supply.

46 Exclusion Of Press And Public (Agenda item 12)

There were no items to discuss in exempt session, so the Chair closed the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and concluded at 9.05 pm

Chairman