

Waverley Borough Council

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Resources - 19 March 2024

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

Present

Cllr Peter Martin (Chair)	Cllr Peter Nicholson
Cllr Andrew Laughton (Vice Chair)	Cllr Terry Weldon
Cllr Lauren Atkins	Cllr Michaela Wicks
Cllr Zoe Barker-Lomax	Cllr Mark Merryweather
Cllr Janet Crowe	Cllr John Robini
Cllr Jerome Davidson	Cllr Julian Spence
Cllr Andy MacLeod	Cllr Liz Townsend

Apologies

None.

Also Present

Cllr Mark Merryweather
Cllr Liz Townsend
Cllr John Robini
Cllr Julian Spence

74 **Apologies for absence and substitutes** (Agenda item 1)

None were received.

75 **Minutes** (Agenda item 2)

The minutes of the previous meeting of Monday 15 January 2024 and published online were agreed as a correct record.

76 **Declarations of interests** (Agenda item 3)

None were received.

77 **Questions from members of the public** (Agenda item 4)

None were received.

78 **Questions from members** (Agenda item 5)

None were received.

79 **Working Groups** (Agenda item 6)

Cllr Barker-Lomax gave a presentation, updating the Committee on the work of the Workforce Profile sub-group.

80 **Q3 Corporate Performance Report 2024-24** (Agenda item 7)

- 80.1 The Performance Policy Officer introduced the report and welcomed questions, noting the enquiries already received from the Chair and other committee members and that responses would be provided by the relevant Executive Heads of Service.
- 80.2 The Chair voiced concern about the overall number of complaints and poorly performing key performance indicators (KPIs), noting that he received and circulated a breakdown of staff turnover by department provided by officers. He also referred to the Section 151 Officer's commentary at 3.7.1 of the report not corresponding to the table below – officers confirmed that this would be rectified.
- 80.3 Referring to the high level of complaints seen in Communications and Customer Services for four continuous quarters, The Chair noted the response in the commentary section. The Policy and Performance Officer confirmed that the statistics for Q4 2023-24 had not yet been collected and agreed to circulate a response on the matter from the Executive Head of Communications & Customer Services.
- 80.4 Cllr Barker-Lomax asked if a review of processes in departments with low complaints response rates could be investigated. The Policy and Performance Officer clarified that Q3 complaints related to a small number of specific service areas, referring to one complaint to Assets and Property that required legal input, and the high staff turnover in the Planning department. The Section 151 Officer noted that these issues will be addressed at the next meeting of senior managers.
- 80.5 Cllr Davidson referred to the need for greater training for staff before they are in post and capacity in the Legal team. Cllr Nicholson welcomed the appointment of trainees in the Housing Options Team and apprentices in the Legal department.
- 80.6 Cllr Crowe referenced the required improvement in responsive repairs and void rates demonstrated by the table at 7.2.1, noting that the Landlord Services Advisory Board (LSAB) would also consider this data. Cllr Barker-Lomax asked if another contractor could be engaged for the Housing Services' Maintenance contract to provide competition to our current sole contractor. Officers confirmed that they would pass this onto the Head of Housing Services. The Chair also criticised the lack of improvement in responsive repairs.
- 80.7 The Chair enquired about a reference in the Legal and Democratic Services dashboard to potential intervention by the Information Commissioner's officer due to a backlog of freedom of information and subject access requests. The

Policy and Performance Officer stated that they would circulate a written response from the Monitoring Officer addressing these concerns.

The Committee RESOLVED to note with concern the continuing high staff turnover, continuously high level of complaints, and the high level of missed targets in housing repairs, and requested urgent action by the Executive and Senior Management to resolve these issues.

81 **Waverley LCWIP Adoption** (Agenda item 12)

- 81.1 The Sustainable Transport Projects Officer introduced the report, noting Surrey County Council's (SCC's) rollout of the Farnham Infrastructure Plan, Farnham's resulting two LCWIPs and the reprioritisation of the different measures in the dedicated Farnham LCWIP in October 2023. It was clarified that Waverley suggested certain additional changes at this juncture, and that these did not impact the work done by the SCC councillors.
- 81.2 Cllr Laughton stated that he had been informed that certain SCC councillors, as well as other stakeholders, felt that the proposals in the agenda papers are inconsistent with agreements made in October 2023. Officers clarified that the proposals being considered here are in addition to those agreed in October 2023, the prioritisations of which remain unaffected.
- 81.3 Cllr Macleod referred to consultation with SCC members that had previously taken place, that he had not been aware of the new proposed routes before receiving the Waverley LCWIP document, and stated that SCC councillors would be asked to approve this as a Highways matter given the decommissioning of the Local Committee. He also encouraged greater consultation with Farnham councillors and the Waverley Borough councillors that sit on Surrey County Council.
- 81.4 Cllr Cockburn stated that she felt the document was not yet sufficiently developed to be adopted and inform future planning, noting that she felt its aspirations may not reflect those of Farnham residents and that further consultation was imperative.
- 81.5 Cllr Williams clarified that the Waverley LCWIP was not intended to be adopted at this meeting, and that confusion likely arises from the fact that Waverley must have an LCWIP that excludes Farnham, which has its own LCWIP under the Farnham Infrastructure Programme. He also noted that this will be regularly updated and developed to integrate with the emerging Local Plan, and provide a basis for allocation of CIL funding to active travel across the borough. He remarked on the importance of aligning the methodology of each LCWIP to achieve this.
- 81.6 Visiting councillor Cllr Robini stated that he was unaware of the additional proposals and requested consultation as the county councillor for Haslemere. Cllr Davidson added that he felt the policy recommendations being recommended for adoption would benefit from clarification, while

officers confirmed to Cllr MacLeod that the addition of features such as Core Walking Zones was precisely in aid of methodological alignment between the Waverley and Farnham LCWIP, though he felt these additions still warranted further consultation.

- 81.7 Cllr Williams clarified that these additions and other minor changes do not constitute major changes to the plan. Cllr Townsend noted that SCC consult on borough and district LCWIPs as part of realising their design codes for Healthy Streets for Surrey, which are compulsory policy. The Chair declared that he felt the document should be updated to clarify the policy recommendations and better represent its purpose.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that greater consultation with Surrey County councillors, Farnham Town councillors and the public is carried out on the content of the Waverley LCWIP before it is adopted by the Executive.

The Committee also RESOLVED to criticise the lack on consultation up to this point and the framing of the report.

82 **Carbon Neutrality Action Plan (CNAP) Priority Projects** (Agenda item 13)

- 82.1 The Sustainability Manager introduced the report. Cllr Williams noted that the report concerned prioritisation of the most impactful actions, in aid of securing carbon neutrality by 2030, and confirmed to the Chair that social housing's carbon emissions are not considered under the actions relating to the 93% of organisational emissions referred to in the attached appendix.

- 82.2 The Chair enquired about the financial implications of the plan. Officers confirmed that most of the funding being sought is from central government, such as from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund, and that further work on stock surveys is being carried out to estimate the cost of decarbonisation across the entire social housing stock. Cllr Williams noted that the plan always included the need to support, facilitate and encourage other actors, as well as lobby government, though noting that much of this lobbying has been unsuccessful.

- 82.3 Cllr MacLeod stated that not receiving the funding may jeopardise the 2030 objective.

The Committee RESOLVED to welcome greater clarity in the projects delivery decarbonisation, with priority given to the provision of greater detail in the plans for decarbonisation of social housing.

83 **Committee Forward Work Programme** (Agenda item 14)

- 83.1 The Chair stated that it would be difficult to plan work for the next meeting given that it is in June.

- 83.2 The Chair proposed that he and the Vice-chair formulate a response for the 69 High Street review that the committee recommended at the 19 September 2023 meeting. Their findings will be brought before the 18 June meeting of this committee.
- 83.3 The Chair invited members of the committee to suggest any items that they may wish to the work programme.

84 Brightwells Yard Development (Agenda item 11)

- 84.1 The Development Programme Manager introduced the report, noting that this item was coming before the committee for post-decision scrutiny. Officers confirmed to the Vice-chair that several businesses have applied to take over retail units.
- 84.2 The Chair concurred with Cllr MacLeod's comments noting the long lifetime of the Brightwells project and commending the work of officers. Officers confirmed to Cllr Atkins that there were no liquidated damages in the development agreement.

The Committee RESOLVED to note the Executive decision.

85 Fairground Development Project (Agenda item 9)

- 85.1 The Executive Head of Regeneration and Planning Policy gave a presentation on the Fairground and Weydown Development Projects, with contributions from officers and John Percy of Montagu Evans.
- 85.2 The Chair highlighted the capital implications referred to in the recommendations to the Executive and Council, reproduced at paragraph 2 of the report.
- 85.3 Cllr Atkins asked whether massing studies had been carried out for the site and requested to see it if so. Officers confirmed that a massing study has been completed, that they want to maximise the opportunities offered by the site, and that 20 units is the minimum mandated by the Local Plan Part 2 allocations, though 32 has been profiled.
- 85.4 Cllr Atkins raised concern about the risk of being able to let the 20,000 square-foot unit on the ground floor and whether a client could likely still be confirmed. John Percy confirmed that building works would only commence after the occupier was signed up to the scheme and to the development arrangement with the development partner.
- 85.5 The Chair queried whether the plan to have housing above the supermarket unit is attractive to a supermarket client. John Percy confirmed that all arrangements are conditional on client sign-up to the scheme, and that regular engagement demonstrated that the site is a desirable one.

- 85.6 Cllr Atkins asked if a massing exercise document and explanation of the rationale for choosing this form of development could come before Council. John Percy clarified that the planning application would be undertaken by the development partner and that the contract papers would give attention to maximising value, with much of the risk for this passed to the market.
- 85.7 Cllr Atkins asked for clarity on what the nature of the third-party development partner would be. It was clarified that this would be specified by the competition material, but would likely be a developer, could also be the ultimate occupier, and that any partner would need to demonstrate that they could meet the necessary requirements.
- 85.8 Cllr Weldon asked if an option with no commercial component was investigated, and whether a study into impact of the area's existing retail would be. Officers clarified that a mixed-use development was allocated by the Local Plan, and that no survey work has yet been undertaken into the impact on local retail, though officers are very mindful of this and that they would seek assurance that parking on the site could be used by local businesses to prevent adverse impact.
- 85.9 Cllr Nicholson noted the advantage of offering parking space to commuters, local workers and shoppers, and how the proposal would aid in achieving the aims of the Local Plan.
- 85.10 Cllr Merryweather reiterated that the Local Plan Part 2 determined that this be a mixed-use scheme, and that its delivery will allow the development of a youth campus, another allocated site within the plan. He added that thought was given to car parking provision, and that the project is still at an early stage.
- 85.11 Officers confirmed to the Chair that a further paper would be brought back to this committee before award of a contract to any development partner.

86 **Weydown Road Development Project** (Agenda item 10)

- 86.1 The Strategic Assets Manager confirmed that the present Community Hub is an end-of-life asset, and that no alternative solution has yet been proposed.
- 86.2 The Committee agreed that they all wanted to see the opening of a new Community Hub on the Weydown Road Car Park.

The Committee then voted to move into exempt session.

87 **Exclusion Of Press And Public** (Agenda item 15)

The Committee considered the following recommendation of the motion of the Chairman:

Recommendation:

That pursuant to Procedure Rule 20 and in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information (as defined by Section 100I of the Act) of the description specified in Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the revised Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

The vote was carried unanimously.

88 Transformation And Collaboration Standing Item - Update on costs and savings (Agenda item 8)

The Committee discussed various aspects of costs and savings associated with the collaboration agreement with Guildford Borough Council.

89 Property Investment Quarterly Report (Agenda item 16)

The Committee scrutinised the Council's assets and property portfolio.

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and concluded at 9.50pm.

Chairman