

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY WELLBEING
- 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

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

Present

Cllr Kevin Deanus (Chairman)
Cllr Sally Dickson
Cllr Jenny Else

Cllr Mary Forszewski
Cllr Val Henry
Cllr John Robini

Cllr Joan Heagin (Substitute)

Cllr Jerry Hyman (Substitute)

Apologies

Cllr Kika Mirylees

Also Present

Councillor David Beaman and Councillor Liz Townsend

18. MINUTES (Agenda item 1.)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 June 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTES (Agenda item 2.)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Kika Mirylees and Cllr Jerry Hyman was present as a substitute. Cllr Joan Heagin was temporarily filling the vacancy for the Liberal Democrats.

Noted that since the last meeting, Cllr Cosser had resigned from the Committee and been replaced by Cllr Forszewski.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3.)

There were no declarations

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

22. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (Agenda item 5.)

There were no questions from Members.

23. WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 6.)

Scrutiny Officer, Yasmine Makin, outlined the elements of the Committee's work programme and drew attention to the items scheduled for the November meeting including the annual scrutiny of the Safer Waverley Partnership, the final draft of the

revised Corporate Strategy, the Q2 Corporate Performance Report, and an update on the organisations funded through Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

The Committee agreed that Cllr Foryszewski would replace Cllr Cosser on the SLA Working Group.

In relation to the Safer Waverley Partnership, the Committee noted that there were issues around the recording of rural crime which were being discussed through the Joint Action Group. A new Borough Inspector had recently been appointed for Waverley, and there would be an opportunity to follow-up on this matter with her at the November Committee meeting.

24. DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGY (Agenda item 7.)

Corporate Policy Manager, Louise Norie, introduced the draft revised Corporate Strategy which aimed to drive the direction of the council and what it wanted to achieve over the next four years. There had been two workshops for Members in the previous week, and the feedback received had informed work currently in progress on the next iteration of the draft Strategy, including putting more structure around the objectives and linking them more directly with the vision. There was now an opportunity for the Committee to look at the community wellbeing elements of the strategy in particular, and consider whether there were omissions or areas that needed strengthening.

The Committee noted that:

- care was needed to ensure that strategy and policy was brought forward in the proper way, rather than being communicated via social media;
- the Corporate Strategy needed to give a clear direction to the Chief Executive as to where and how resources should be deployed;
- the vision statement did not set out a 'vision' of what Waverley would look like at the end of the Strategy period, and whilst there was nothing to be disagreed with in the list of objectives, it was too long and too vague;
- the ambitions of the strategy in relation to planning, and particularly the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans, were in conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework and housing targets set by government;
- there was a great deal of uncertainty about the short and medium term future, with the threats of Covid-19, Brexit, and possible local government re-organisation all impacting on what Waverley might hope to achieve;
- there were significant omissions from the strategy in relation to mental health and suicide prevention, and also Waverley's own workforce.

The Committee agreed that the points noted should be considered as part of the next iteration of the Corporate Strategy, and that this should be circulated and available to Members prior to the formal scrutiny of the final draft in the November Overview & Scrutiny committee cycle.

25. RCT COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT (Agenda item 8.) (Pages 7 - 16)

The Community Services Manager, Katie Webb, gave a presentation on the Community Resilience Project, which had been initiated as part of the Council's Recovery, Change and Transformation Programme in response to the Covid-19

pandemic. The Community Resilience Project aimed to give a clear understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the voluntary, community and faith sector, record the responses that had been implemented, assess the outlook for the future and recommend long-term plans for community engagement and partnering.

In response to the presentation (slides attached to these Minutes), officers explained that 'Super Output Areas were area classifications used by the Office of National Statistics.

The Committee was particularly interested in the slide showing the impact of Covid on Waverley in terms of vulnerable population, health impact, and economic impact, where Farncombe featured in the top five impacted areas in Waverley in each category and four Waverley areas had been impacted more than the Surrey average. Committee Members noted that the research had been carried out by Surrey County Council, and asked for more detail behind this, and suggested that the relevant councillors should be informed if there were particular issues in their Ward.

Officers advised that they were engaging with Town and Parish councils to obtain feedback on the local impact on communities, and noted that Ward councillors were also a valuable source of information.

The Committee agreed that this would be a standing item on the Committee's agendas, to provide the opportunity to receive brief updates and identify any matters that the Committee might look at in more depth.

26. RCT ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROJECT (Agenda item 9.) (Pages 17 - 22)

The Economic Development Manager, Catherine Knight, gave an introduction to the Economic Recovery Project initiated as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic to understand the impact on the local economy, understand the Council's ability to support the local economy, and to establish any future actions required. The Project had eight key objectives, including developing an Action Plan for the next 12 months. In fact, many of the actions being set out in the Action Plan had commenced in March as the lockdown came into effect and were on-going. These included talking to key partners across the county and EM3 LEP area, engaging with local businesses and signposting them to sources of support (business grants, rate relief), and engaging with chambers of commerce. An online film map had been launched to support the visitor economy, showing the locations in Waverley used for filming popular films; and a fortnightly business newsletter had been launched.

In response to questions, it was noted that:

- With regard to engaging with village parishes rather than the larger towns, all of them were sent the business newsletter; vacancy rate surveys were carried out in villages with high streets, and they were contacted about accessing the Re-opening the High Street Fund, provided with posts, etc.
- There had been a very significant increase in the number of people in Waverley claiming Universal Credit, up from about 500 to about 4-5,000; and, huge uncertainty about the impact of the furlough scheme ending at the end of October.
- As part of the Council's contingency budget, £80k had been ring-fenced to contribute to the Covid-19 related costs incurred by Town and Parish councils. Whilst this would not cover all costs, neither did the government

grants compensate Waverley for all the costs incurred and income lost due to Covid.

The Committee agreed to note the work of the Economic Recovery Project to support businesses through this time of huge social and economic uncertainty.

27. LEISURE CENTRE INVESTMENTS UPDATE (Agenda item 10.)

The Leisure Services Manager, Tamsin McLeod, gave an update on the previously agreed investment programme for the Farnham and Godalming leisure centres. All leisure centres had been required by government to shut from 23 March as part of the Covid-19 restrictions and only been able to re-open very recently. The impact of the enforced closure, and the constraints on their current operating model, meant that Places Leisure and Waverley were no longer able to proceed with the investment plans for Farnham and Godalming. The only element of the Godalming project that was continuing was the disposal of the school land to create additional car parking. This was a lengthy process, and it was felt to be expedient to continue it now, in readiness for future investment opportunities.

With regards to the Cranleigh Leisure Centre, due to the age and vulnerability of the existing leisure centre, work was continuing on the developing the option for a new build replacement leisure centre for Cranleigh.

The Leisure Centres had all opened on 17 August, after a huge amount of work by Places Leisure to ensure the operating environment was safe for staff and customers. The response by users had been overwhelmingly positive, with feedback focussed on operations being safe, well-organised and people enjoying getting back to exercise.

In response to questions, officers reported:

- Average usage for the first two weeks of opening was about 50-70% of the new capacity based around pre-booked sessions to allow time for cleaning. The September usage figures would give a better idea of what the 'new normal' would look like.
- Haslemere LC was not referred to in the report because it was the last to have been improved under the previous cycle of investment.
- The closure of the crèche at the Farnham LC reflected the very low usage, which was likely due to members having alternative child care arrangements.
- For Cranleigh, 'do nothing' was not an option, due to the increasing maintenance costs of the current centre. The business case for the new centre would need to be revisited in the context of Covid-19 impacts.
- The Clip'n'Climb operator had withdrawn their interest in the Farnham LC, as they had felt that similar facilities in Alton and Fleet had satisfied the potential market. This had forced a revision to the investment plans for the Farnham LC, although these were now on hold.

The Committee was pleased to hear that the re-opening of the Leisure Centres had been positively received, and noted the status of the investment programme for Farnham, Godalming and Cranleigh leisure centres.

28. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT (Agenda item 11.)

The Committee received Corporate Performance Report for the first quarter of 2020/21, covering the period April- June 2020. The Council's operations during this period were greatly impacted by the Covid-19 lockdown initially, and then latterly preparing for easing of restrictions.

The Head of Commercial Services , Kelvin Mills, advised that many staff in his service were redeployed to help phone businesses to signpost them to the business grant schemes, and to phoning the isolated and vulnerable in the community. The Green Spaces Team had responded to the huge increase in visitors to parks and countryside areas, particularly Frensham Pond; and, Careline, Waverley Training Services, and Building Control had all adapted their normal ways of working to support their customers through the emergency period.

The Head of Housing Delivery and Communities, Andrew Smith outlined the work of the Communities Team during the lockdown period to establish a residents' helpline, join a cross-services team phoning shielded residents, support the day centres in expanding their community meal services, and working with Citizens' Advice Waverley. As reported to the Committee earlier in the meeting, the Community Resilience Project had been initiated to understand the impact of Covid on the local communities in Waverley and how best to support community organisations going forward.

There were no material comments from the Committee and the report was noted.

29. CLOSING REMARKS (Agenda item)

In closing the meeting, the Chairman expressed his gratitude to the Scrutiny Officer, Yasmine Makin, for her support to the Committee over the last two years. Yasmine was moving to a new role with Guildford Borough Council, and would be greatly missed by the Scrutiny Chairmen and Committee Members.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and concluded at 9.12 pm

Chairman