

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - RESOURCES - 27 SEPTEMBER
2022

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

Present

Cllr Stephen Mulliner (Chairman)
Cllr Joan Heagin (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Roger Blishen

Cllr Jerome Davidson
Cllr John Neale
Cllr Peter Nicholson

Apologies

Cllr David Else, Cllr Chris Howard, Cllr Peter Martin and Cllr George Wilson

Also Present

Councillor Brian Edmonds (via zoom) Jerry Hyman and Councillor Mark Merryweather

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTES (Agenda item 1)

Apologies for absences were received from Councillor Peter Martin, Councillor Chris Howard, Councillor David Else and Councillor George Wilson. Apologies were also received from Mark Mills Scrutiny Officer.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES (Agenda item 3)

The minutes were approved for the meeting held on 20 June 2022.

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

There were no questions from members of the public.

5 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (Agenda item 5)

There were no specific questions from members of the Council. However, Councillor Jerry Hyman attended the meeting to ask questions relating to item 6 Corporate Performance, item 9 Business Transformation and item 14 Property Investment Advisory Board update.

6 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1 (Agenda item 6)

Louise Norie, Policy Manager, introduced the Q1 performance report noting that the Heads of Service were in attendance to answer any questions. She informed the Committee that there had been a significant improvement in the performance indicators for the Q1 compared to the previous 2 quarters and highlighted that for

the first time the report included Capital Monitoring. The Chair discussed the performance indicators on page 23 and noted the reduction of red indicators had decreased from 53 to 39. The Chair brought the Committees attention to the General Fund Account Summary on page 27 of the papers and noted that the Finance and Property treasury income had shown a sharp improvement because of the hike in interest rates, equating to £472,000 of income. However, there had been an adverse impact on General Funding due to the inflation on contracts and utility bills. He also noted that Planning had faced challenges due to higher costs and lower income.

Councillor Heagin welcomed the extra Capital Monitoring information element of the performance report and sought further information on the cancellation of the Broadwater Lake project. Responding to the query, Peter Vickers, Head of Finance and Property addressed the Committee. He advised the Committee that the Broadwater Lake project was an unsuccessful CIL bid from the Parks Department for improvements, which would not be taken forward. The Chair noted the issue with responding to complaints, highlighting the poor performance against targets. He noted that the council had performed above its targets responding to media queries, he informed officers that he hoped to see an improvement in responding to both level 1 and level 2 complaints.

Moving to the Housing Operations Service Dashboard, the Chair discussed the progress on the overdue housing maintenance jobs, he informed the Committee that this had been partly due to recruitment and software compatibility issues. Annalisa Howson, Housing Service Improvement Manager, responded to the comment advising the Committee that there was an interface between Ian Williams and the Housing Team, and the council were trying to enhance the interface to provide more live data and information which would improve the service. She noted that the project was underway and expected to complete within 6 months. Councillor Edmonds raised a query regarding the order of priority of outstanding jobs. Annalisa Howson advised the Committee that the Council did have an emergency and routine repairs system to prioritise jobs when residents contacted Housing Services.

The Chair decided to combine section 8 of the service dashboard on Housing Delivery and Communities with agenda item 12 on the Housing Development update, because of the imminent Housing Strategic Delivery Review. The Chair recommended the review be brought to the O&S Resources committee on 7 November. The Chair noted that all projects apart from Ockford Ridge (Site C) were on hold. Andrew Smith, Head of Housing and Communities, confirmed that the Chair was correct. He also confirmed that the review and report would go to the O&S Resources Committee on 7 November.

The Chair invited Councillor Hyman to address the Committee. Councillor Hyman raised queries regarding the variances between the approved budget and the forecast outturn throughout the report. The Chair noted that there was a difference in the figures, Peter Vickers confirmed that it was Q1 and there was no overspend reported at this stage. Councillor Hyman raised a query regarding the redevelopment of Rowleys, responding to the query Andrew Smith informed the Committee that this was incorrect, he noted that there were plans to replace the roof.

7 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 7)

The Committee noted the work programme, the Chair confirmed that the Housing Revenue Strategic Business Plan Review together with the MTFP, would be brought to the extra O&S Resources meeting on 7 November. He confirmed that there would be a meeting at the end of November for regular Committee business. The Chair informed the Committee that the task and finish group on Housing Allocation Policy had finished and the Housing Revenue Account working group has been overtaken by the strategic review.

8 COLLABORATION WITH GUILDFORD (Agenda item 8)

The Joint Chief Executive Tom Horwood addressed the Committee, he confirmed that since the last meeting the Joint Management Team had been formed and the structure would be in place as of 1 October. He noted that all but two roles were filled, and the council would be going out to recruitment, in the meantime interim arrangements would be put in place. Tom Horwood advised the Committee that once the Joint Management Team were in place, the next phase of the project will begin, which would be to bring forth business cases for further collaboration to the Corporate Management Board, Executive and Councillors for further discussion.

Councillor Edmonds queried the management place for the combining systems. Tom Horwood confirmed that Governance was in place in the form of an Inter Authority Agreement, which sets out how the two councils relate to each other. He noted that councillors also set up a Joint Governance Committee which would review the risk assessment. Tom Horwood advised the Committee that there was still work to be done, including how systems work with each other, he added that some of that work would be addressed by business cases on a service-by-service basis.

9 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION (Agenda item 9)

Ian Doyle, Joint Strategic Director of Transformation and Governance addressed the Committee and introduced the report, he advised the Committee that the format of the dashboard had been updated, as per the chair's request, however the latest version was not included within the report. He confirmed that officers would circulate the amended template version to the Committee members after the meeting. Ian Doyle informed the Committee that the Business Transformation programme with Guildford was the evolution of the current Business Transformation programme and led by the Head of Organisational Development who would start on the 1 October.

Ian Doyle confirmed that it would be the next stage of what the Committee had observed and would be brought to the Committee for regular scrutiny in the same manner as the earlier programme. Member welcomed the new format for the progress report and queried the merging of Waverley and Guildford IT systems and the related benefits. Ian Doyle advised the Committee that it was a major part of the programme and a high priority, but it was too early to advise on the details. Councillor Edmonds raised a query regarding the Planning Review savings and Building Control Savings. The Chair confirmed that the savings came from staff savings and Peter Vickers noted that a restructure took place due to a retirement and the service was more resilient going forward.

Councillor Hyman queried the savings to date, highlighting staff travel saving and queried if there were other elements that should be included. The Chair felt that these were questions to be answered by David Allum at the next meeting. Councillor Heagin wondered if the cost of living would drive more people to work from the council offices. Ian Doyle advised that it would be difficult to predict but felt that fuel/petrol increases may discourage some staff. Councillor Follows addressed the Committee and noted that the topic had been discussed at the Cost of Living working group and at a similar meeting with Surrey County Council it was noted that 10% of staff were using foodbanks.

10 WORK FORCE PROFILE UPDATE (Agenda item 10)

The Chair and the Committee welcomed the report. Sally Kipping, HR Manager addressed the Committee and advised that the report was a supplementary report to the Workforce report submitted to the Committee in June 2022, she noted that the report in front of the Committee focused on recruitment and retention. She noted that the pandemic was one of the biggest upsets to the employment market. Councillor Neal queried the indicators regarding reasons for leaving the council and if there were any reasons relating to the improvement of IT Systems. Councillor Edmonds queried the reasons for staff leaving on page.108. Robin Taylor, Head of Policy and Governance, addressed the Committee and noted that lack of career opportunities was not a reason given at any of the exit interviews.

Sally Kipping noted that the Cost of Living did effect staff members, and it was evident in the survey results, specifically as one of the top three reasons for leaving the council. Robin Taylor advised the Committee that officers would look at the exit interview questions during the next review of recruitment and retention. Councillor Heagin welcomed the report and wanted further clarity on the final recommendation section regarding ongoing support and reassurance and what form it would take. Responding to the query Sally Kipping advised that there was an active managers group with a communications plan which allows the group to regularly communicate with messages or support and reassurance. She noted that the group was led by Annie Righton, and it was the primary source of support.

The Chair noted the report on the Gender Pay Gap, Sally Kipping advised the Committee that the deep dive provided more detail behind the pay gap. The Chair raised a query regarding the mean gender "bonus" gap. Sally Kipping responded to the query, advising the Committee that this related to the long service award/bonus, and most had been female and the reason for the percentage in the report. Councillor Edmonds queried if the gender pay gap was reflective of graduate and non-graduates as salary rates could be significantly different. Sally Kipping advised the Committee that the review looked at salaries across job grades. She noted that she was very delighted with the JMT structure and that there were a number of women in very senior roles at the council.

11 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT (Agenda item 11)

Louise Norie addressed the Committee and introduced the Annual Complaints Report. She noted that the Social Care and Local Government Ombudsman looked at 20 complaints and 11 were closed after initial inquires. She noted that only 4 detailed investigations were carried out and only 2 were upheld. Louise Norie noted that they are still waiting on the Housing Ombudsman final report and the figures

were from the Waverley data. She also noted the changes to the Housing Tenants Complaints Panel as of the 1 October 2022. Louise Norie explained that the last section of the report related to complaints dealt with under the Waverly complaints process, where there had been 290 level 1 & 2 complaints. She noted that 51 percent were not upheld, 28 percent were upheld, and 21 percent were partly upheld. She also noted that 84 percent of all complaints were responded to on time but failed to reach its target of 95%.

The Chair noted that it would be helpful to view the outcome of complaints closed data year on year and suggested that a 3- 5 year comparative table would be useful. Councillor Neal queried the 'Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation' outturn of 0 on p.125 of the report pack. Louise noted that some Councils offer remedies whilst the case is still being investigated and that this was something that Waverley do not do. The Chair felt that the overall performance of 84 percent was an area of concern, and the council should be working towards improvements.

12 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (Agenda item 12)

Discussed a part of item 6.

13 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda item 13)

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and concluded at 8.46 pm

Chairman

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