

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 September 2021

- * Councillor Paul Spooner (Chairman)
- * Councillor James Walsh (Vice-Chairman)

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| * Councillor Chris Blow | * Councillor Maddy Redpath |
| * Councillor Guida Esteves | * Councillor Tony Rooth |
| Councillor Graham Eyre | * Councillor Will Salmon |
| * Councillor Angela Goodwin | * Councillor Deborah Seabrook |
| * Councillor George Potter | * Councillor Fiona White |

*Present

Councillors Jan Harwood (Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Climate Change), Julia McShane (Lead Councillor for Community and Housing), Ramsey Nagaty, and James Steel (Lead Councillor for Environment) were also in attendance.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 23(i), the Mayor, Councillor Marsha Moseley, attended as a substitute for Councillor Graham Eyre.

OS25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee was advised of an apology for absence from Councillor Graham Eyre and a substitution as detailed above.

OS26 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

OS27 MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 July 2021 were agreed.

The Chair informed the Committee that he had agreed Councillor Seabrook could make a statement to the meeting. Councillor Seabrook apologised for any insult that may have been caused to the Council's then Parks and Landscape Manager by her questions during the Committee's consideration of the review of the Guildford Crematorium project [Minute OS63, Guildford Crematorium Redevelopment Post Project Review, 2 March 2021 refers]. Councillor Seabrook indicated that the then Parks and Landscape Manager had acknowledged and accepted her private apology and requested it be repeated in public. Councillor Seabrook then clarified the meaning of her questions to the then Parks and Landscape Manager and her misunderstanding about his previous project management experience; she confirmed that her intention had been to highlight the need for the Council to resource projects sufficiently and not ask officers to run them in addition to their core job.

OS28 RESPONSE TO COVID-19 – UPDATE

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Climate Change briefly introduced the item before the Managing Director gave a presentation on the current COVID-19 situation and the Council's response, beginning with an update on local cases.

The Managing Director indicated that the COVID-19 infection rate in Surrey was 280.4 per 100,000, lower than the national rate of 331.6 per 100,000 and the South East rate of 300.9 per 100,000, while Guildford's rate was 264.1 per 100,000. The Managing Director advised that in the previous week there had been 3,365 new cases in Surrey, of which 394 were in Guildford. The meeting was informed that as at 12 September there were 2,950 registered COVID-related deaths in Surrey, with 250 in Guildford.

The Managing Director advised the meeting of two key COVID-19 issues: vaccination and testing; and events. The meeting was advised that the vaccination centre at Artington was open. He indicated that vaccination rates in Guildford were in line with local, regional, and national rates with 82 per cent of those aged over 16 having had their first jab and 74 per cent their second. The meeting was advised that the Legends Festival on 28 and 29 August was the first large-scale event to return to the Borough. The Managing Director stated that the government was monitoring the number of cases relating to large scale events, but it was too early to determine their impact on case numbers.

In response to a question about providing councillors with information on the government's winter COVID plan so they might better advise residents, the Managing Director indicated that such opportunities would be explored. The Senior Specialist Public Health advised the meeting that information would be within the weekly Community COVID champions briefing email.

A Committee member asked about the compulsion of care homes to ensure workers were vaccinated against COVID-19, the current vaccine uptake by care home workers locally and likely impact on care homes, and for details of the areas of low vaccine uptake in the Borough. In response, the Senior Specialist Public Health advised the meeting that she would obtain the relevant information about care home workers and share with Committee members. In addition, the Committee was advised that detailed information on vaccine uptake locally was included within the weekly Community COVID champions briefing email.

In reply to a question, the Senior Specialist Public Health confirmed that the highest number of COVID cases in Guildford was in the 10–19-year-old age group.

In response to a question, the Senior Specialist Public Health advised the meeting that anti-vaccination activity in the Borough had been minimal. The Senior Policy Officer advised the meeting of the process to report anti-vaccination publicity.

RESOLVED: That the Committee continue to receive updates on the response to COVID-19.

OS29 LEAD COUNCILLOR QUESTION SESSION

The Chair introduced the Lead Councillor for Environment and reminded the meeting of Councillor Steel's areas of responsibility: waste; licensing (including health and safety regulation); parking; parks and leisure; arts and tourism; bereavement; and environmental health and protection.

The session began with questions about the waste and recycling service. In response to a question about delays in supplying new bins and difficulties in collections, the Lead Councillor for Environment stated that the Council were struggling to get hold of some containers and bins. He indicated that there were supply issues due to a global plastics shortage, an international shipping container shortage, and a shortage of haulage due to issues with drivers. The Lead Councillor for Environment provided the Committee with details of the availability of containers, including food waste caddies, sharps boxes, and refuse, recycling, and garden bins. The meeting was informed that the delays on some

container types and the issues with securing supplies were likely to continue for a number of months.

In reply to a query about the disruption of waste and recycling collections, the Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that the Borough had not witnessed service disruption from a shortage of drivers. The meeting was advised that post-Covid use of leave combined with some isolating staff and sickness had occasionally impacted services. The Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that there was a risk of future service disruption if drivers left for higher paying driver roles elsewhere as had occurred in some neighbouring boroughs.

In reply to a question, the Lead Councillor for Environment suggested that missed bin collections could be reported through MyGuildford online or by contacting the Council by telephone.

In reply to questions about recycling, the Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that the amount of recycling contaminated by the wrong items being recycled was low. He advised the Committee that the issue of contaminated recycling was addressed through identifying the source and providing educational information to the property or business concerned. In addition, the Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that the Surrey Environmental Partnership provided key recycling literature to all properties across the county.

In response to a question about benchmarking recycling rates, the Lead Councillor for Environment advised the meeting that Guildford was currently ranked third among waste collection authorities in Surrey and nineteenth nationally.

In reply to a question about the recycling of the Borough's plastic waste, the Lead Councillor for Environment confirmed that plastic waste export details and end destinations were published as part of the waste data flow reports to Defra.

A member of the Committee questioned whether the decision to replace the Council's waste fleet vehicles with fossil-fuelled vehicles was being reconsidered. In response, the Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that the diesel waste fleet vehicles had been purchased last year and were currently in use. He stated that this was expected to be the last fleet of new diesel waste vehicles purchased by the Council. The Lead Councillor for Environment advised the meeting that there were no viable hydrogen-powered dustcarts available to purchase. In addition, he advised the Committee of issues installing the infrastructure for hydrogen or electric powered vehicles at the Council's current depot. The Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that he believed it would be achievable, subject to funding being available, to decarbonise almost all the Council's fleet of vehicles by 2030.

With reference to the increase in the minimum charge for off-street car parking introduced in the winter, a member of the Committee asked whether there were statistics to show whether car park use had increased or fallen. The Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that car park usage was approximately eighty per cent of pre-Covid levels. The Lead Councillor for Environment undertook to provide details of usage levels to the Committee members.

A member of the Committee asked for an update on the return of the park and ride service. The Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that the capacity at Artington was reduced due to the vaccination centre, Onslow not operational and was being used by the NHS as a testing centre, Merrow was back up and running, and Spectrum was operating at a reduced level. The Lead Councillor for Environment undertook to provide fuller details to the Committee members.

In reply to a question about the possible closure of the Tourism Information Centre (TIC), the Lead Councillor for Environment advised the meeting that there were efforts underway to maximise the digital impact of the TIC. He indicated that there was currently a desire to have a physical form of TIC to provide an in-person service for members of the public who required it.

A member of the Committee asked the Lead Councillor for Environment to outline his visitor and tourism strategy and update the Committee on his interactions with counterparts across the county and at Surrey County Council. In response, the Lead Councillor for Environment confirmed meeting the Chairman of Visit Surrey and advised the Committee that the tourism and visitor strategy across Guildford and Surrey should be technologically advanced. He advocated the importance of tourism being eco-friendly and sustainable.

[At this point in the meeting the Lead Councillor for Environment had internet connection difficulties and the Committee considered the next item of business before concluding the question session as below].

In reply to a question about a lack of data for the Council's performance indicators for statutory nuisance investigations, the Lead Councillor for Environment stated that as part of implementing the new structure and forming the new team within Environment and Regulatory Services a comprehensive set of KPIs and performance measures were being developed including COM18 about statutory nuisance. He indicated that councillors would start seeing regular performance data in corporate reports.

The Lead Councillor for Environment advised the meeting that his current portfolio priorities were the contract extensions involving G Live and Freedom Leisure and responding to the national waste strategy.

In response to questions about Spectrum 2.0, the Lead Councillor for Environment stated that the rebuild project had been paused until assessments of the current building had been completed. He advised the meeting that the results of surveys of Spectrum should be available in early or mid-2023. The Lead Councillor for Environment referred to options for the future management of the Council's leisure facilities, including collaboration between Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council.

The Chair thanked the Lead Councillor for Environment for attending and answering questions.

OS30 SAFER GUILDFORD PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

The Lead Councillor for Community and Housing introduced the item, advising the meeting that the achievements of the Safer Guildford Partnership (SGP) for the past year were set out within the report submitted to the Committee. She indicated that the report included the draft Safer Guildford Partnership Plan setting out the priorities for the period 2021-24. The Lead Councillor for Community and Housing praised the Partnership's operational delivery groups, highlighted the contribution of councillors at the Joint Action Group (JAG), and suggested councillors share the information and updates provided by the Partnership with residents.

The Senior Policy Officer gave a presentation summarising the content of the report submitted to the Committee. She indicated that the purpose of the report was to provide the Committee with the opportunity to examine the activities of the SGP in the last year and to advise and comment on the appropriateness of the draft priorities for the coming three years. The Senior Policy Officer highlighted outcomes achieved in the previous year and key challenges faced by SGP partners in the last year.

The Senior Policy Officer advised the meeting that when setting the future priorities and resources of the SGP key considerations included being realistic about the additional resources each partner could provide and ensuring the work of the SGP added value to single agency day to day work.

As part of the presentation from the Senior Policy Officer, the Committee was reminded of the five draft key priorities for the next three years: continued response to the impact of Covid-19 on people's safety; responding to Domestic abuse; protecting our communities from ASB/ Community Harm; protecting our communities from serious harm; and encouraging our communities to help themselves. In outlining the key risks for the SGP over the next twelve months, the Senior Policy Officer acknowledged that all partners were likely to have less resources and increased financial pressures.

During the ensuing discussion a number of points and clarifications were made:

- A member of the Committee asked whether increased ASB interventions reflected an increased focus by the SGP or increasing issues. In reply, the Senior Policy Officer referred to the difficulties of answering such a question and suggested that the work and effectiveness of the SGP was increasing. Inspector Sam Turner, Surrey Police, advised the Committee that there were increasing reports to police and partner agencies in Surrey year-on-year. He indicated that he did not focus on the number of issues reported and instead was encouraged by the positive outcomes from action by the SGP and the resulting number of closures or convictions.
- The Senior Policy Officer confirmed that learnings from the ongoing Domestic Homicide Review established in 2020-21 would be shared with all agencies involved.
- The Committee was informed that Community Triggers were generally submitted by residents experiencing anti-social behaviour. The Senior Policy Officer advised that full information, including the application form, was provided online. She informed the meeting that numbers of Community Triggers within the Borough were higher than in some neighbouring partnerships due to better promotion.
- In response to questions, Inspector Turner outlined the steps taken to tackle county lines, including helping children and vulnerable residents who may become involved as victims, and advised the Committee of the outcomes of two recent convictions. He indicated that county lines was not a matter that could be solved and was a national issue. In addition, he indicated that illegal drugs were not an issue that arrests would solve and that it was in part a social and public health issue.
- The Senior Policy Officer informed the meeting that in Surrey the allocation of funding to help local authorities meet the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was currently being determined. She indicated that domestic abuse was the responsibility of all SGP partners to tackle. Inspector Turner advised the meeting of the recent introduction of a dedicated domestic abuse team within Surrey Police following a restructure.
- A member of the Committee suggested the value of the Junior Citizens scheme and questioned whether stopgap measures could be undertaken while the scheme was under review. The Senior Policy Officer indicated that the content and delivery of the scheme was included within the review and the review would continue over the next year. She advised the meeting that the scheme was in addition to outreach work by SGP partners. Inspector Turner advised the meeting of the police's youth engagement officers in the Borough and their role and he suggested they were

intended to target youth-related issues rather than deliver a scheme such as Junior Citizens.

- A member of the Committee suggested using analytics to measure the effectiveness of social media campaigns for referrals to the SGP and thereby improve key performance indicators. In response, the Senior Policy Officer indicated she would take away the suggestions put forward and noted that the SGP's role was to enhance and support the communications of its partners.
- Committee members praised the annual report and the outcomes and achievements detailed within it.

The Lead Councillor for Community and Housing praised the officers and partners involved in the SGP and thanked the Committee members for their questions.

The Chair thanked the Lead Councillor for Community and Housing, Inspector Turner, and the Senior Policy Officer for attending.

RESOLVED: That the draft Safer Guildford Partnership Plan 2021-24 as set out in section five of the annual report submitted to the Committee be supported.

OS31 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair introduced the item. He reminded the Committee that the next work programme meeting of the chairs and vice-chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Advisory Boards was the following day.

With reference to the re-scheduling to next year of the Committee's consideration of Future Guildford, a member of the Committee suggested that an update on the Council's customer service be provided to members. The Chair confirmed that a briefing note would be requested for Committee members.

A verbal update on the Affordable Housing task and finish group was provided to the Committee by the vice-chair of the task group. The Chair indicated that the terms of reference for the task group would be submitted to the Committee for information.

With reference to the timescale for determining the future of the Spectrum as announced by the Lead Councillor for Environment earlier in the meeting, a member of the Committee suggested scheduling an item to review the potential options for the management of the Spectrum. The Chair indicated that the matter would be discussed at the work programme meeting of the chairs and vice-chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Advisory Boards the following day.

RESOLVED: That the work plan as presented in the report submitted to the Committee be approved.

The meeting finished at 9.20 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman