

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 February 2023

* Councillor Paul Spooner (Chairman)

* Councillor James Walsh (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ruth Brothwell	* Councillor Maddy Redpath
Councillor Guida Esteves	* Councillor Tony Rooth
* Councillor Graham Eyre	Councillor Will Salmon
* Councillor Angela Goodwin	Councillor Deborah Seabrook
* Councillor Richard Morris	* Councillor Fiona White

*Present

Councillors Tom Hunt (Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services), Julia McShane (Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing and Community), and John Rigg (Lead Councillor for Regeneration) were also in attendance, with Councillors Ramsey Nagaty and John Redpath (Lead Councillor for Customer and Commercial Services) in remote attendance.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 23(i), Councillors Cait Taylor and Catherine Young attended as substitutes for Councillors Will Salmon and Guida Esteves respectively.

OS45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee was advised of apologies for absence from Councillors Guida Esteves, Will Salmon, and Deborah Seabrook and substitutions as detailed above.

OS46 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

OS47 MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 January 2023 were agreed.

OS48 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH (EWMH) SERVICE – UPDATE

The Executive Director for Children's Community Services, Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SABP), the Director of Children and Young People's Services, SABP, and the Children's Emotional Health Alliance Programme Director, SABP, updated the Committee on Mindworks Surrey.

With the aid of presentation slides circulated in advance with the agenda papers, the Committee was advised that Mindworks Surrey was an alliance of national and local partners commissioned to deliver services for children and young people across the county. The Committee was reminded of the range of services offered through Mindworks Surrey.

The Children's Emotional Health Alliance Programme Director, SABP, advised the Committee that the Amplify participation group had organised the Wellbeing Festival for children, young people, and families to be held on 4 March 2023 at Guildford County School.

The Committee was informed of increasing engagement with schools and plans to introduce an Independent Schools Reference Group in 2022/23.

The Children's Emotional Health Alliance Programme Director, SABP, indicated the importance of improving transitions for children and young people, as they moved both from primary to secondary school and for 16-25 year olds moving into adulthood. The Committee was advised of the work of Community Wellbeing Teams, School-based Needs Teams, Mental Health Support Teams, and the Reaching Out service. In addition, the Children's Emotional Health Alliance Programme Director, SABP, highlighted the themes and strategies for improvement identified from the Woking and the Guildford & Waverley Mindworks Prototype projects.

The Director of Children and Young People's Services, SABP, indicated that during January 2023 demand for Mindworks Surrey services was forty percent higher than contracted for; the Executive Director for Children's Community Services, SABP, advised that such a level was in line with regional and national demand.

During the ensuing discussion a number of questions were asked, and clarifications offered:

- Members of the Committee questioned the transition between services for children and young people as they moved from primary to secondary school and then onto adulthood. The Director of Children and Young People's Services, SABP, confirmed that the Community Wellbeing Teams, School-based Needs Teams, and Mental Health Support Teams operated together as a single, virtual team. She indicated that Mindworks Surrey partners sought to work jointly in both service delivery and governance. The Committee was advised of the Reaching Out service for 16-25 year olds who were difficult to engage. In addition, the Committee was informed of the New Leaf service for children and young people affected by developmental trauma and who were in care, care leavers, or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- The Executive Director for Children's Community Services, SABP, advised the Committee of the implementation of a digital tool to help Mindworks Surrey partners share information relating to the transition of children and young people from primary to secondary school and then onto adulthood.
- In reply to a question, the Committee was advised that New Leaf services were funded by several funding streams, including Surrey County Council, the NHS, and Surrey Police. The Director of Children and Young People's Services, SABP, offered to show the New Leaf service to a member of the Committee.
- The Executive Director for Children's Community Services, SABP, confirmed that the number of referrals to Mindworks Surrey services exceeded the contracted service levels and had caused a significant deficit to build up. She indicated that such a deficit was unsustainable, and that the financial recovery needed had prompted an acceleration of the i-THRIVE model, with increased group / peer support, and more training for schools to enable the earliest support possible.
- A member of the Committee questioned the extent to which the value of investing in services such as Mindworks Surrey had been pursued with central government. In reply, the Executive Director for Children's Community Services, SABP, advised the Committee of efforts to lobby for parity of funding between children's and adult's mental health services and for recognition of the increasing demand for children's mental health services.

- In reply to a question about the time taken for someone on the neurodivergent pathway to receive post-diagnostic support, the Director of Children and Young People's Services, SABP, advised the meeting that early support was provided ahead of a formal, confirmed diagnosis. She indicated that the neurodivergent pathway at Mindworks Surrey had been revised to place greater emphasis on assessment of need and less on the mechanics of diagnosis. The Committee was informed that this change enabled support to be provided in a timelier way, although it continued to be the case that a significant proportion of the demand at Mindworks Surrey was for diagnostic assessment for neurodevelopmental need. The Director of Children and Young People's Services, SABP, advised that the wait for a diagnosis of ADHD or ASD exceeded 12 months.
- The Committee was advised that in Surrey the number of children and young people requiring a Tier 4 admission was low compared to other areas. The meeting was reminded that the inpatient facility at Emerald Place, formerly known as April Cottage, could only accommodate 12 children. The Executive Director for Children's Community Services, SABP, stated that children requiring inpatient services were placed as close to home as possible, with a strong rationale needed for placing anyone outside the county. She indicated that there was not any child currently waiting for a specialist admission. The Director of Children and Young People's Services, SABP, explained the crisis pathway for the 18-25 year old age group in Surrey provided by the Working Age Adults Division, SABP. The meeting was informed that the pathway included a crisis line and access to crisis outreach services and locally provided inpatient care.
- In reply to a question about unmet need, the Executive Director for Children's Community Services, SABP, advised that the upskilling approach of the i-THRIVE framework aimed to help support children and young people in part by building resilience in communities and families. The Children's Emotional Health Alliance Programme Director, SABP, indicated that by increasing early interventions and support the i-THRIVE framework sought to minimise need for specialist services for severe mental health problems. She informed the Committee of the prototyping work with communities, carers, and others. The Children's Emotional Health Alliance Programme Director, SABP, indicated that academic research showed most children who experienced mental health problems could go on to lead productive lives.
- The Executive Director for Children's Community Services, SABP, undertook to provide a link to the Best Start for Surrey Strategy, due to be published in early March.
- In reply to a question about record sharing, the Director of Children and Young People's Services, SABP, informed the Committee that progress had been achieved towards an ambition for a shared electronic patient record.
- The Executive Director for Children's Community Services, SABP, told the Committee of a social prescribing pilot in East Surrey.

The Chairman thanked the Executive Director for Children's Community Services, Surrey and Borders NHS Foundation Trust (SABP), the Director of Children and Young People's Services, SABP, and the Children's Emotional Health Alliance Programme Director, SABP, for providing an update and answering questions. He noted the endorsement of the Committee for the Children's and Young People's EWMH Service and its backing for all efforts the Council could take to support and assist Mindworks Surrey.

OS49 UPDATE ON GUILDFORD-WAVERLEY COLLABORATION

The Joint Chief Executive of Guildford and Waverley Councils advised the meeting of two developments since his last attendance at the Committee. He indicated that the amount of savings achieved as a result of the creation of the Joint Management Team had exceeded the annualised target of £300k, with the new management structure costing the Council £420k less than the previous one. In addition, the Joint Chief Executive advised the meeting that the Joint Executive Head of Planning Development would start in post in March and the Joint Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services commence in April.

There were no questions or comments from Councillors.

The Chairman thanked the Joint Chief Executive for attending and updating the Committee.

OS50 LEAD COUNCILLOR QUESTION SESSION

The Chairman introduced the question session with Councillor Tom Hunt, the Lead Councillor for Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services. The meeting was reminded of Councillor Hunt's specific areas of responsibility: Planning applications; Planning enforcement; Planning integration and improvement; Democratic and committee services; Elections; Executive and civic support; GDPR; Information security, governance; Legal; and Overview & Scrutiny support.

During the ensuing discussion several points were made, and clarifications offered:

- In response to a question alluding to the possible designation of the Council for special measures by the government because of its poor performance in determining planning applications on time, the Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, advised the meeting that there had been no response to date from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC) to the Council's letter of 2 February 2023. He suggested a response was expected within 4-6 weeks' time.
- The Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, was asked to provide an update on the plan outlined by the Interim Executive Head of Planning Development in an email sent to Councillors on 25 January 2023. The Interim Executive Head of Planning Development advised that the action plan sent to DLUHC was constantly being reviewed and added to, and that many actions had been enacted, for example, the approval by Council of the changes to the Member Referral process. She indicated that eight temporary members of staff had been recruited since mid-January 2023 to help deal with planning applications, and two further temporary members of staff would begin in the major development applications team soon. The Interim Executive Head of Planning Development informed the meeting that an Improvement Board for Planning Development was to be established, as an Executive working group, to oversee the improvements.
- In response to a question about the need to prioritise the oldest planning applications, the Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, advised the Committee of measures taken to help tackle the backlog in planning applications, including the recruitment of additional staff. He noted that the backlog of planning applications was partly due to the turnover of planning officers at the Council. The Interim Executive Head of Planning Development advised that a recruitment drive for planning officers would commence soon.

- The meeting was advised of a Councillor comment praising the success of the planning enforcement team in reducing the number of enforcement cases and dealing with new cases more swiftly.
- In reply to a question, the Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, stated that he viewed the rise in planning applications after the Covid pandemic and the reductions and changes in the planning team as a result of the Council's Future Guildford transformation programme as the point at which the backlog in applications started. He referred to staffing difficulties in the Council's planning service, including the departure of seven full time planners and fourteen temporary members of planning staff in the period between September 2020 and September 2022. The Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, advised the Committee of difficulties recruiting planning officers and suggested that a critical culture and commentary toward planning officers in the Borough was unhelpful to recruitment.
- As evidence of improvement, the Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, advised the Committee that for October – December 2022, seventy-two percent of non-major planning applications were processed within the eight week target period.
- The Interim Executive Head of Planning Development informed the Committee that the service aim was to clear the backlog in older planning applications while continuing to process more recent ones. She indicated that there would be a blitz week in March 2023 to focus on the backlog of applications. The Interim Executive Head of Planning Development confirmed that overtime had been offered to planning officers previously, but the intention was to not over-use it.
- In response to questions about the North Street development, the Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, outlined the options available to the developer. He indicated that questions about a possible building height policy should be directed to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Finance and Planning Policy.
- In reply to a question, and with reference to the merits of the Bosco Verticale in Milan, the Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, indicated that he did not have a set view on the issue of a building height policy for the Borough.
- In reply to a question about contact with applicants, the Interim Executive Head of Planning Development confirmed that extensions of time were sought for all householder and other minor planning applications approaching the eight weeks completion period but providing applicants with an explanation for each delay would be time-consuming. In response to a follow-up question, the Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, reminded Councillors that if they emailed queries and questions about specific planning applications to the Planning Development then officers would respond.
- The Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, welcomed the suggestion that apprenticeships be considered to help alleviate planning staff recruitment difficulties.
- The Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, indicated that the Council would continue to publicise Voter ID requirements for

voting in person at the upcoming local elections and he agreed that encouraging postal votes was sensible.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Planning Development, Legal & Democratic Services, and the Interim Executive Head of Planning Development for attending and answering questions.

OS51 LEAD COUNCILLOR QUESTION SESSION

The Chairman introduced the question session with Councillor John Rigg, the Lead Councillor for Regeneration. The meeting was informed of Councillor Rigg's specific areas of responsibility: Corporate capital projects; Housing delivery; Transport; and Regeneration.

A member of the Committee asked how the Council was future-proofing Shaping Guildford's Future (SGF) and the Town Centre Master Plan to ensure that the work was not undone should there be a dramatic change to control of the Council following the elections in May 2023. The Lead Councillor for Regeneration suggested that the solutions SGF proposed to address infrastructure, transportation, homes delivery, and flooding, would not change fundamentally due to political control at the Council. He suggested that issues addressed by SGF should be apolitical. The Chairman suggested that many of the Council's projects progressed during the past four years were continuations of ones begun previously.

In response to questions about the costs of SGF, the Lead Councillor for Regeneration stated that approximately £2million had been spent on the project and for the next stage of SGF a further £3million was in the capital budget for September 2023. He indicated that SGF was a long-term project, and that the role of the Council was largely one of facilitating the involvement of the private sector.

In reply to a question, the Lead Councillor for Regeneration stated that the Council wanted to find a solution for the repair of the Tumbling Bay Weir and had met the National Trust that afternoon.

In response to a question, the Lead Councillor for Regeneration spoke of the frustrations of his portfolio over the previous four years, including public opposition to the specifics of regeneration proposals.

In response to a query, the Lead Councillor for Regeneration explained his support for a building height policy to alleviate public concern and progress regeneration in Guildford.

In reply to questions about the North Street development and the proposed bus station, the Lead Councillor for Regeneration indicated that he did not understand the objections of Surrey County Council. In addition, he suggested that the developer had not raised the issue of the bus station until very recently.

The Lead Councillor for Regeneration explained the division of Executive portfolio responsibilities in relation to housing and housing delivery.

In response to a question on car parking charges, the Lead Councillor for Regeneration indicated that as the May elections approached then members of the Executive could be expected to express different views on some issues.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Regeneration for attending and answering questions.

OS52 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) indicated that it had not been possible to complete the work of the Affordable Housing task group for submission to the Committee in the current municipal year. He advised the meeting that the Affordable Housing task group would meet once more to capture its findings and recommendations and then after the May election the Committee could determine how to proceed.

RESOLVED: That the work programme attached at Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Committee be approved.

The meeting finished at 9.12 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman