

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 January 2024

* Councillor James Walsh (Chair)
Councillor Matt Furniss (Vice-Chair)

* Councillor Honor Brooker	Councillor Maddy Redpath
Councillor Jason Fenwick	* Councillor Katie Steel
* Councillor Lizzie Griffiths	* Councillor Dominique Williams
* Councillor Gillian Harwood	* Councillor Sue Wyeth-Price
Councillor Steven Lee	

*Present

Councillors Angela Goodwin (Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services), Catherine Houston (Lead Councillor Commercial Services), Richard Mills, Smith, Goodwin and Houston were also in attendance, with Councillors Merel Rehorst-Smith (Lead Councillor for Regulatory and Democratic Services), Richard Lucas (Lead Councillor for Finance and Property), Joanne Shaw, and Fiona White (Lead Councillor for Planning) in remote attendance.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 23(i), Councillor Philip Brooker attended as a substitute for Councillor Matt Furniss.

OS24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee was advised of apologies from Councillors Matt Furniss, Steven Lee, and Maddy Redpath and a substitution as detailed above.

OS25 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

OS26 MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 19 December 2023 were agreed.

OS27 GUILDFORD & WAVERLEY TRANSFORMATION AND COLLABORATION PROGRAMME

The Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development introduced the item. He advised the Committee that the Business Transformation Manager at Waverley Borough Council was also the Programme Manager for the Transformation and Collaboration Programme between the Guildford and Waverley councils. The Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development advised the meeting that the Executives of both Councils had agreed initial funding to develop and cost proposals for decision. He indicated that the business cases prepared for projects within the Transformation and Collaboration Programme would provide financial information on the proposed changes.

The Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development advised the Committee that the £700k of future savings from collaborative working identified in the report was a high-level target put forward using initial proposals from joint executive heads of service. He indicated that much of the potential savings of £700k was reliant on joint working arrangements between the Councils and that a shared staff structure with harmonised terms and conditions was a fundamental workstream for the programme. The Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development advised that options to co-locate staff within a shared building was a major project of the Transformation and Collaboration Programme. The Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development highlighted the decision of the Executive to invite the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the draft options appraisals, the recommendations and the costs and savings before any final decision by the Executive.

With reference to presentation slides published within the papers for the meeting, the Programme Manager for the Transformation and Collaboration Programme presented an update to the Committee. She confirmed that all services and operations were within the scope of the Programme and options would be considered through a business case process. The meeting was informed that the co-location of staff was a priority project but was out of scope of the Programme and was being managed through the Place Directorate. In addition, the Programme Manager advised that the harmonisation of policies and section 113 agreements to share officers were both outside the Programme's scope.

The Programme Manager explained the two workstreams of the Programme; namely, Workstream One – a shared staff structure and terms and conditions, and Workstream Two – cashable savings projects. The Committee was advised of the non-financial opportunities identified within the Transformation and Collaboration Programme, the limitations and restrictions within which the change had to occur, and the challenges of the change Programme change. The Programme Manager informed the Committee of programme-wide challenges, including current IT incompatibility and limited resources to achieve the ambitious vision and objectives of the collaboration. The Committee was informed of the functions delegated to the Joint Governance Committee, which included responsibility for reviewing the Inter-Authority Agreement and collaboration risk register.

In concluding her presentation, the Programme Manager highlighted the main early-stage risks associated with the Transformation and Collaboration Programme: a failure to prioritise; the financial risk that achieving the vision of the collaboration partnership will be too high; and the scarcity of project and programme management and other related skills and resources across the two Councils.

During the ensuing discussion a number of points were raised and responses offered:

- In response to a query about the challenges facing the Programme, particularly in relation to IT, the Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated that assessments of impact and cost would feature in each business case for change. He told the Committee that officers would appraise all options and that engagement with staff, unions, and the Committee would occur before any formal Executive decisions were taken.
- In reply to a question about unease among staff towards the Programme, the Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development advised that some staff find change unsettling and he noted the importance of ongoing communication and engagement with staff during the Programme. The Committee was advised that staff reaction

to the Programme had been a mixture of anticipation, excitement, and concern.

- A Councillor questioned whether projected savings for the first four years of the Programme were £700k. The Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development advised that the Programme was committed to deliver £700k of savings but that the details of the savings and the respective projects were not able to be shared at this stage. The Programme Manager undertook to provide Committee members with details of financial spend and savings to date.
- In reply to further questions, the Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated that redundancy costs caused by the Joint Management Team re-structure were one-off costs, in contrast to the savings that would recur annually.
- With reference to the recruitment of further staff to help deliver the Programme, the Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated that the Executives of both Councils in November 2023 had not been able to allocate funds to support delivery of the Programme in the long term and had chosen to approve investment for a scaled-back and prioritised approach to initial delivery. He confirmed that the HR Business Partner and the Business Transformation Officer would be shared posts between the two Councils. The Committee was informed that officers had advised the recruitment of two posts to help delivery of the Programme for two years, rather than (for the same cost) four posts for a single year.
- In response to a question, the Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated that the Programme did not include any form of formal local government re-organisation or merger between Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council.
- A Councillor questioned the potential financial benefits of the Programme, its apparent decline in ambition, and the adequacy of financial investment to help deliver the Programme. He suggested that the achievements to date for collaborative working between the two Councils were minor and more could be gained from a move toward

unitary status. He indicated that the Partnership Vision Statement appeared to have reduced from full integration to a focus on harmonisation of processes. He suggested that unitary status was a more logical outcome than collaboration. In addition, the Councillor suggested the benefits of committing greater resources to help deliver the Transformation and Collaboration Programme. In reply, the Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development noted that the five principles of the Partnership Vision Statement within the documents submitted to the Committee were little changed from the five headings of the original vision statement. The Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated that many of the Councillor's comments were for the Executive and the Committee to consider.

- The Lead Councillor for Finance and Property indicated that harmonisation of processes underpinned the opportunities for savings.
- A Councillor questioned whether a common sense, high-level estimates of the potential costs of co-location, shared staff structure, and likely IT changes, had been undertaken to establish the approximate amount of savings necessary to fund such changes. In response, the Joint Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated the importance of Overview and Scrutiny at both Councils acting as a check and balance on the decision-making of their respective Executives, independent external advice would be obtained when necessary, ensure proposals are subject to feedback from councillors, staff, and residents. He stated that business cases and options for decision would be based on accurate costings rather than approximations.

The Chairman thanked officers for attending and answering questions and asked if there was a timeframe for bringing the draft options appraisals, the recommendations and the costs and savings to the Committee. In reply, the Programme Manager suggested the value in bringing an update to each meeting of the Committee (as had been agreed with the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Waverley Borough Council the previous evening).

OS28 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT 2023-24 QUARTER 2

The Policy Officer, Strategy and Performance, introduced the report submitted to the Committee. She advised the meeting that the report contained thirty-

five quarterly KPIs, of which five showed as no data available. The Committee was informed that ENV1 (domestic waste collected per household from the kerbside), ENV2 (household waste recycled and composted), and H&J3 (number of net new additional homes) were subject to a time lag in reporting data, H&J1 (average time to let void housing properties) was part of a wider review of void housing properties, and H&J4 (affordable new homes completed each year) was unavailable due to the officer who provided the data leaving the Council recently.

With reference to a question about the increase in the amount of waste recycled and composted (ENV2) in quarter 1 2023/24, the meeting was advised that in waste data was cyclical in nature and some quarters would always be low performing with an improvement in the following quarter. The Committee was informed that quarter 4 was always a poor performing quarter, but for 2022/23 it was very significantly so. The meeting was advised that officers had been unable to fully establish why this quarter 4 was so low, but believed it was the combination of a series of events: including high street cleaning tonnages from gritted roads and the clearance of the remaining leaf fall; high post-Christmas refuse tonnages; a number of recycling rejections; a lower level of recycling than normal; and some errors in reporting following a change in waste classifications at the tip.

The Committee was advised that the Executive Head of Regeneration and Planning Policy would provide a written response to the question of what more the Council could do to encourage occupancy of the town centre shops.

Similarly, the response to a question on efforts to secure more temporary accommodation was that the Neighbourhood Housing Lead had been unable to attend the meeting in person but was happy to speak to the Councillor raising this issue. In addition, the Committee was advised that two schemes were being planned to meet the need, but work had not started as the Council were currently reviewing all assets and the best use of them.

The Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services responded to a question about the measures put in place for training the Council's call handling teams and, in particular, how these staff were trained to help residents with health conditions or impairments that may need extra care and time to help them with their queries. The Committee was advised that all customer service staff attended equality and diversity training, customer

service team leaders monitored calls for feedback, and training to help staff deal with customers with mental health needs was planned.

With reference to H&J4, the number of affordable new homes built each year, a Councillor questioned whether his proposal that the number of social homes be reported separately from the number of affordable homes had been progressed since last year. The Policy Officer, Strategy and Performance, undertook to provide an update to the Committee on the suggestion.

In relation to H&J7 (time taken to assess new housing benefit claims), a member of the Committee asked for details of staff numbers processing claims. The Policy Officer, Strategy and Performance, indicated she would provide details to Committee members.

The Chairman noted the progress achieved with COU9 (speed of determining planning applications for minor applications) and COU10 (speed of determining planning applications for other development) and thanked officers for their work in preparing the report submitted to the Committee.

OS29 CUSTOMER SERVICES: PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS UPDATE

The Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services introduced the item. She highlighted the important and timely service that the Council's customer services team provided to residents. The Joint Executive Head of Communications and Customer Service indicated that the report submitted to the Committee showed continued improvement in customer service.

A Councillor praised the progress maintained by the customer services team.

RESOLVED: That subsequent performance updates on the Council's customer services be provided to Committee members by email.

OS30 OPERATION OF THE LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT 2022-23

The Lead Councillor for Commercial Services introduced the item and thanked the members of the scrutiny working group that scrutinised the monitoring of the leisure management contract. The meeting was advised that the report summarised the contractor's performance on its operation of the Council's leisure facilities at Guildford Spectrum, Guildford Lido, and Ash Manor Sports Centre for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

A member of the scrutiny working group present at the meeting praised the Spectrum facility and the work of the contractor and officers.

In response to questions, the Joint Executive Head of Commercial Services indicated that the ramp at the Spectrum was the responsibility of the Council and that seasonal staff at the Lido would be trained on how customers could feedback complaints and suggestions.

The Lead Councillor for Commercial Services advised the meeting that feedback from service users was gathered by Freedom Leisure and shared with Council officers. A member of the Committee suggested use of a QR code posted near entrances to encourage users to give feedback online.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Commercial Services and the Joint Executive Head of Commercial Services for attending.

OS31 G LIVE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The Lead Councillor for Commercial Services introduced the item and thanked the members of the scrutiny working group that scrutinised the operation of the G Live contract. She advised the Committee that a new contract to operate G Live was currently out for procurement and expected to commence in September 2024. The Committee was informed that the financial performance of the venue in 2022-23 was the best since its opening in 2011. The Lead Councillor for Commercial Services drew attention to the estimated economic contribution of G Live to the local economy in the past contract year – approximately £4.2million.

The Lead Councillor for Commercial Services praised the creative learning department at G Live and highlighted the Bussy Malone Summer Youth Project.

The Joint Executive Head of Commercial Services noted the financial performance of G Live, the attendance and wide range of events, and the success of catering at the venue. He indicated that the venue now provided more street food than sit down meals.

In answer to questions on the profit sharing arrangements and the upcoming tendering process for the operation and management of G Live, the Joint Executive Head of Commercial Services indicated that the new tender had an absolute minimum requirement of no subsidy from the Council.

In response to a question, the Joint Executive Head of Commercial Services undertook to provide Committee members with details of the day and evening vacancy rates and hires for the venue.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Commercial Services and the Joint Executive Head of Commercial Services for attending.

OS32 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Service Officer (Scrutiny) advised the Committee that the Draft Communications Strategy had moved from the March 2024 meeting to unscheduled items following a request from the Joint Executive Head of Communications and Customer Service.

The Chairman reminded members of the visit to The Hive on 24 January and outlined the items scheduled for the next meeting on 30 January.

The meeting finished at 8.29 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman