

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 March 2024

* Councillor James Walsh (Chair)

* Councillor Philip Brooker (Vice-Chair)

* Councillor Honor Brooker

Councillor Jason Fenwick

* Councillor Lizzie Griffiths

* Councillor Gillian Harwood

Councillor Steven Lee

* Councillor Maddy Redpath

* Councillor Joanne Shaw

Councillor Katie Steel

* Councillor Dominique Williams

Councillor Sue Wyeth-Price

*Present

Councillors Angela Goodwin (Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services), Catherine Houston (Lead Councillor Commercial Services), Richard Lucas (Lead Councillor for Finance and Property), Julia McShane (Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing), Carla Morson (Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development), Merel Rehorst-Smith (Lead Councillor for Regulatory and Democratic Services), Howard Smith, and Fiona White (Lead Councillor for Planning) were also in attendance. Councillor Yves de Contades was in remote attendance.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 23(i), Councillor Stephen Hives attended as a substitute for Councillor Katie Steel.

OS40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee was advised of apologies from Councillors Steven Lee, Katie Steel, and Sue Wyeth-Price and a substitution as detailed above.

OS41 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or disclosures of non-pecuniary interests.

OS42 MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 30 January 2024 were agreed.

OS43 LEAD COUNCILLOR QUESTION SESSION

The Chairman welcomed the Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services, Councillor Angela Goodwin. The Committee was reminded of Councillor Goodwin's portfolio responsibilities: Communications and Engagement; Complaints; Ombudsman; Customer services; Case Management; Digital services; Freedom of Information; and ICT and Business Systems.

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

- In response to a question on improving the performance of Customer Services, the Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services advised the Committee that over seventy-five percent of phone calls were answered within twenty seconds and the target would be to answer eighty percent of calls within that time. The meeting was informed that this eighty percent target was achieved weekly throughout February 2024. The Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services indicated that the average phone wait time was less than the industry best practice standard of two minutes. The Committee was advised by the Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services that responding to phone contacts was not an area of current concern. In addition, the Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services informed the meeting that the return of customer services staff from secondments in the coming weeks would improve phone call response times.
- The Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services advised that the Key Performance Indicators for Customer Services needed to be reviewed and updated and the Council's Customer Charter refreshed.
- In reply to a question about phone wait times for customer services and increasing the use of online communication and contacts, the Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services indicated the advantages to residents of digital contact and stated that phone contact would always be provided as an option.

- The Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services advised the meeting that at the beginning of March there were 65,868 residents with a MyGuildford digital account.
- In reply to questions, the Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services indicated that online searches on the Council's website were reviewed and used to improve search results. The meeting was informed that feedback on the Council's social media channels was monitored by the Council's communications team and responses provided.
- In answer to a question about the possible use of a live chat function on the Council's website, the Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services indicated that other local authorities that used such a tool had been contacted but there were no immediate plans to introduce it at the Council.
- With reference to case management at the Council, a member of the Committee asked about the handover processes and safeguards to ensure that responses to residents were not adversely impacted when staff departed the Council. In reply, the Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services outlined the role and extent of case management within her portfolio and the manner in which cases were re-allocated when staff were absent from work or left the Council.
- In response to a question on introducing shared IT systems as part of the Guildford Waverley Collaboration and Transformation Programme (GWCTP), the Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services indicated that any such changes to IT systems would be managed by the GWTCP. She advised that each business case associated with the GWTCP would be assessed on its own merits to ensure the benefits of the change. With reference to the Future Guildford transformation programme, the Chairman indicated the importance of staying on top of proposed changes to IT systems.
- In reply to a member of the Committee questioning the lack of feedback to some residents on the progress of their enquiries to the Council, the outlined how enquiries were handled and requested that details of

delays be passed on to her. The Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services indicated the value in Councillors providing feedback to improve the Council's case management.

- In response to a question on the prioritisation of enquiries from the public, the Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services advised that housing repairs and similar potentially urgent or emergency requests were given priority.
- In answer to a question on the problems in the Council's housing repairs service, the Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services confirmed that tenants in Council housing had been contacted with information about the service and possible delays to repairs in properties. In addition, the meeting was informed that drop-in sessions had been organised to gather tenant feedback.
- In response to a question, the Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services confirmed the close working relationship between communications staff at Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council.

The Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services highlighted work by the Communications Team, including the fortnightly update by email for councillors, and the Lead Councillor for Finance and Property praised the financial updates issued by the team.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services and the Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services for attending and answering questions.

OS44 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT 2023-24 QUARTER 3

The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development introduced the item and outlined the role of performance monitoring at the Council.

The Policy Officer, Organisational Development, introduced the report submitted to the Committee. She advised the meeting of the numbers of quarterly KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) within the report rated as red,

amber, or green respectively and how many of the quarterly KPIs showed as no data available. The Policy Officer, Organisational Development, stated that the KPIs were to be revised and improved for publication from quarter 1 of 2024/25.

With reference to a question about the targets set for the Council's KPIs and the value of comparing performance to peer authorities, the Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated that the Council's benchmarking of targets against the performance of other local authorities could be improved and would be included in the upcoming work on the Council's performance monitoring and management.

In reply to a question on the differences between Guildford Council and Waverley Council in the reporting of performance to Overview and Scrutiny, the Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated that the review of performance monitoring would take place at both Councils

With reference to household waste KPIs (ENV1 and ENV2) the lack of any target for the Borough and the identification and use of targets by other local authorities was questioned. In reply, the Policy Officer, Organisational Development, confirmed that the query had been raised with the Executive Head of Environmental Services and the explanation would be circulated to Committee members.

In response to a question on increase in the KPI for the number of homeless families in bed and breakfast (H&J5), the Policy Officer, Organisational Development, indicated that a review of the housing performance indicators was scheduled for discussion with the Interim Executive Head of Housing Services.

With reference to the KPI for affordable new homes completed (H&J4), a Committee member questioned the lack of data for quarters 2 and 3. In response, the Policy Officer, Organisational Development, advised that the gap was due in part to a staffing change and that from quarter 4 onwards the information would likely be provided by the planning service rather than by housing services. A Councillor praised the breakdown of H&J4 into affordable rent, social rent, and shared ownership, as requested at a previous meeting of the Committee.

In reply to a question on the quarterly variations in the percentage of affordable housing units granted planning permission on eligible sites (H&J11), the Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated that the formatting of some KPIs could be re-assessed in the upcoming review. The Policy Officer, Organisational Development, advised that the Executive Head of Regeneration and Planning Policy had indicated the quarterly figures were skewed by large developments that due to viability reasons had less than the forty percent target of affordable housing units. The Chairman requested that the full explanation be shared with Committee members by email.

With reference to COM2 KPI (snapshot of rough sleepers), a member of the Committee requested additional information on the increase being attributed to neighbouring and nearby local authorities not helping rough sleepers beyond the legislative requirements. In response, the Policy Officer, Organisational Development, advised that the Council was working with the HOST outreach and support service and that rough sleeper figures may reflect some individuals not wanting to participate with services.

In reply to a question, the Executive Head of Organisational Development noted that the performance monitoring reports at Guildford Council and Waverley Council could better link KPIs to corporate strategy outcomes. He suggested commentaries from the Chief Executive Officer and the Section 151 Officer could be added to Guildford's performance monitoring reports.

With reference to H&J12 (percentage of homes not meeting the Decent Homes Standard), the Chairman requested a target be added and that breakdowns of property types, social landlord, and ward location be included in future. The Policy Officer, Organisational Development, confirmed the suggestion would be included as part of the upcoming review of performance monitoring reports.

A member questioned the proposed doubling of the target time taken to assess new Housing Benefit claims (COU5) from eight days to sixteen. In reply, the Committee was informed that further information from the Revenues and Benefits Manager included new claim processing statistics from the DWP and would be circulated to Committee members.

In reply to a question from the Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing, the Executive Head of Organisational Development confirmed that the Executive would ultimately determine the target time for assessing new Housing Benefit claims.

The Chairman thanked officers and the Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development for attending.

OS45 AIR QUALITY STRATEGY - WORKPLAN UPDATE

The Lead Councillor for Regulatory and Democratic Services introduced the report submitted to the Committee and thanked the Environmental Protection Lead and the Compliance Officer, Environmental Control, for their work. She highlighted the collaborative actions relating to air quality mitigation on the A3 Guildford by National Highways, the Council, and Surrey County Council. The Lead Councillor for Regulatory and Democratic Services noted the Council's statutory duties in relation to air quality and the submission of an Air Quality Annual Status Report. In addition, she spoke of the health risks from air pollution and the importance of measures such as Ella's Law.

The Environmental Protection Lead referred to smoke control areas in the Borough and particulate pollution, before indicating that the current main pollutant of concern in Guildford was nitrogen dioxide. The Compliance Officer, Environmental Control, informed the Committee that nitrogen dioxide levels were provided from fifty-five diffusion tubes at sites in the Borough. The Environmental Protection Lead indicated that diffusion tubes provided monthly readings of nitrogen dioxide levels and confirmed that the Council had ceased real time monitoring many years previously. He advised that National Highways did undertake some real time monitoring at sites in the Borough.

The Committee was advised the Committee of the three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the Borough. The Environmental Protection Lead outlined the Electric Towns and Cities Initiative Guildford scheme for a section of the A3 trunk road in Guildford. He advised that the scheme for the A3 had a total funding of £11 million; by way of comparison, the meeting was advised that the funding available through Defra's air quality grant scheme, for which local authorities in England could apply, totalled £6.5 million for the year. The Environmental Protection Lead advised that National Highways was responsible for addressing the exceedance on the A3.

The Environmental Protection Lead advised the Committee that the air quality action plans for Guildford town centre and for Shalford were challenging. He indicated the value of improving air quality across the Borough as well as within AQMAs. In addition, the meeting was advised of officers' enforcement duties.

During the ensuing discussion several points were raised and clarifications offered as follows:

- In reply to questions, the Environmental Protection Lead indicated real time monitoring of air pollution in the Borough had ended because it had been judged as not cost-effective. The meeting was advised that the running costs of each of the two real time monitoring units in the Borough had been approximately £20k.
- In response to a question on the most importance actions to take to tackle air quality, the Environmental Protection Lead suggested the value of raising public awareness and education about air quality issues, rather than a focus on enforcement.
- With reference to schools hosting pupils from schools that have RAAC, a member of the Committee asked if the Council had the ability to measure the impact on air quality of such an increase in traffic around a school or whether the Council was dependent on gathering monthly data from diffusion tubes. In reply, the Environmental Protection Lead noted that such circumstances could cause an hourly exceedance of air quality standards. He advised the meeting that relatively low-cost, real time monitoring equipment existed, but was not Defra approved. 1.22
- In response to suggestions, the Lead Councillor for Regulatory and Democratic Services agreed the value in an anti-idling campaign targeting schools and advised that there was a communications strategy in place to highlight the issues at the beginning of the school year. She indicated the merit in considering an anti-idling policy for Council staff, visitors, and contractors and agreed that green infrastructure could help reduce exposure to particulate matter in appropriate locations. The Environmental Protection Lead outlined the process for extending the boundaries of the smoke control areas in Guildford. The Compliance Officer, Environmental Control, advised the meeting that Defra was encouraging local authorities to review their smoke control areas. The

Environmental Protection Lead indicated the value in linking Air Quality issues with Climate Change.

- In response to a comment from a Committee member, the Environmental Protection Lead noted that the neighbouring Waverley Borough Council did not have smoke control areas.
- The Environmental Protection Lead advised the meeting that an economic feasibility study of proposed air quality work should be published in the mid-summer and would be considered by the Council's Executive.
- In answer to questioning, the Environmental Protection Lead informed the Committee that the action plan for Guildford town centre AQMA contained seven key measures, including the potential introduction of charging zones or a low emission zone.
- The Compliance Officer, Environmental Control, advised the meeting of the variation in background levels of nitrogen dioxide in the Borough and the factors affecting air pollution exceedances near roads. She explained Defra studies showed an exponential decrease in air pollution from traffic, with levels dropping considerably at a distance of 4-5 metres from the road. The Compliance Officer, Environmental Control, advised that exceedances in the Compton and Shalford AQMAs were at sites where residential properties were within one metre of the road.
- With reference to Farnborough Airport, the Environmental Protection Lead informed the meeting that pollution from passenger road traffic was probably greater than the air quality impacts of the aircraft.
- With reference to the St. Mary Wharf town centre development and the Dunsfold Park site, a Councillor raised the issue of the likely increase in traffic volume and air pollution in Shalford. In reply, the Environmental Protection Lead advised the meeting of his views on a Construction Traffic Management Plan for the St Marys Wharf development.
- The Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing advised the meeting of initiatives and measures relating to air quality and indicated the importance of working together to tackle the issue.

- In reply to a question on the Electric Towns and Cities Initiative Guildford scheme for the A3 trunk road in Guildford, the Environmental Protection Lead confirmed that eligibility for the scheme was not restricted to van owners in the Borough.
- The Chairman suggested the value of the council adopting an anti-idling policy for staff using vehicles on Council business, Council contractors, and visitors to Council premises and referred to the example of Colchester Borough Council.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Regulatory and Democratic Services, the Environmental Protection Lead, and the Compliance Officer, Environmental Control, for attending.

RESOLVED: (I) That the actions and progress on air quality matters contained in the 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report be noted.
 (II) That the proposed review of the Air Quality Strategy 2017-22 be endorsed.
 (III) That the collaborative actions and proposals relating to air quality mitigation on the A3 Guildford by National Highways, Guildford Borough Council, and Surrey County Council be noted.
 (IV) That the Executive be requested to adopt a Motor Vehicle No Idling policy for staff, contractors and visitors on Council premises, and staff using a vehicle for conducting Council business.
 (V) That the Executive be requested to improve the Council's communications on air quality, particularly the air pollution concentrations in the Borough and the benefits of clean air.

OS46 GUILDFORD-WAVERLEY TRANSFORMATION AND COLLABORATION PROGRAMME: UPDATE

The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development introduced the item and reminded the meeting of the Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council Partnership Vision.

The Executive Head of Organisational Development provided a short verbal update on the Guildford and Waverley Transformation and Collaboration Programme (GWTCP). With reference to the previous update to the Committee [minute OS27, 16 January 2024 refers], he indicated that due to work pressures finance officers had not able to provide the breakdown of financial spend and savings to date but had undertaken to provide this

requested information for the next scheduled meeting of the Committee [on 4 June 2024].

The Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated that the Council had agreed its annual Budget and committed through the GWTCP to save a total of £600k over the next three years. In addition, the Committee was reminded that the Council had committed to invest in business transformation staff.

The meeting was informed that the GWTCP structure remained unchanged, although the Joint Chief Executive had decided to prioritise the Cashable Savings Projects workstream.

In response to questions, the Executive Head of Organisational Development indicated that costs caused by the formation of the Joint Management Team were one-off costs, in contrast to the savings that would recur annually. He stated that the principal aim of the GWTCP was to bridge the Budget gaps of both Councils. The Lead Councillor for Finance and Property advised the meeting that the Council's current cost of capital was approximately seven percent.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development and officers for attending the meeting.

OS47 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) directed members' attention to the Committee's work plan on pages 173-180 of the agenda papers.

The Committee agreed to arrange consideration of the Thames Water's Water Resources Management Plan for the next available meeting.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the scheduling of the Thames Water: Water Resources Management Plan item for the next available meeting, the work programme as attached at Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Committee be approved.

The meeting finished at 9.13 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman