

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 September 2019

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

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| * Councillor Colin Cross | * Councillor Masuk Miah |
| * Councillor Liz Hogger | * Councillor John Redpath |
| * Councillor Tom Hunt | * Councillor Tony Rooth |
| Councillor Gordon Jackson | * Councillor Deborah Seabrook |
| Councillor Steven Lee | * Councillor Patrick Sheard |

*Present

Councillors Angela Goodwin, Lead Councillor for Housing (social and affordable), Homelessness, Access and Disability, Jan Harwood, Lead Councillor for Planning, Planning Policy, Housing Delivery through planning, Ted Mayne, Caroline Reeves, Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Sustainable Transport, Transformation and Regeneration, Economic Development, and Governance, James Steel, Lead Councillor for Leisure, Heritage, Tourism, and PR and Communications, Fiona White, Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Safeguarding, Inclusion, Public Safety, Community Safety and Vulnerable Families were also in attendance.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 23(j), Councillors Jo Randall and George Potter attended as substitutes for Councillors Gordon Jackson and Steven Lee respectively.

OS13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee was advised of apologies for absence from Councillors Gordon Jackson and Steven Lee and consequent substitutes as detailed above.

OS14 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

OS15 MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 July 2019 were approved.

The Chairman confirmed that comments and recommendations raised within the minutes would be progressed.

OS16 LEAD COUNCILLOR QUESTION SESSION

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council and the Director of the Environment. The Chairman thanked the Leader for attending to answer questions relating to the Environment and Rural Strategy portfolio.

During the ensuing discussion a number of points were made, including:

- The Leader of the Council indicated that she would be taking the Environment portfolio as part of a re-structuring of the Executive. The Committee was advised that Climate Change would be included within every Executive portfolio.

- In reply to a request for information about the Green Options under consideration, the Committee was advised of the Rural Economic Strategy, the Innovation Strategy, and more recent initiatives. In addition, the Leader of the Council indicated that further information on green options would be announced by the Council next month.
- With reference to single-use plastics, the Committee was advised that two water fountains [bottle filling stations] were to be installed in the town centre. The Leader of the Council indicated that the cost of installing these facilities would be provided to the Committee members.
- With reference to the Green Town Through Green Growth element of the portfolio, the Leader of the Council indicated that at this stage improved co-operation between the district and borough councils of Surrey and Surrey County Council was a priority. The Leader of the Council indicated that quick-wins were a priority.
- The Leader of the Council indicated that poverty could be much harder to address in rural settings than in urban areas. With reference to the Committee's recent Food Poverty review, the meeting was advised that an update on the recommendations would be provided to the Committee in November. The Committee was informed that the Community Wellbeing team were leading on the initiatives.
- In reply to questions, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the concept of Green Town Through Green Growth did refer to the whole Borough. The Leader of the Council stated that the concept had arisen from previous work on Smart Cities. The meeting was informed that partners in the initiative were likely to include Surrey County Council, the University of Surrey, Royal Surrey County Hospital, the Environment Agency, Network Rail, train operating companies, and local businesses. A member of the Committee suggested a name change to 'Green Borough Through Green Growth'.
- The Committee was advised that Walnut Bridge, the new footway/cycleway in Bannisters Field, and a Guildford Community Bike Share scheme were examples of Green Town Through Green Growth projects.
- In reply to a question, the Director of the Environment confirmed that three bids had been received in the Walnut Bridge tendering process.
- In response to a question, the Leader of the Council rejected the value of an early review of the Local Plan.
- With reference to Council-owned farms and Council-managed assets such as Chantries, the Committee questioned how the rural landscape was protected and enhanced. The Leader of the Council indicated that officers managed the Council's countryside estate in accordance with best practice.
- Members were advised that although the buildings at Tyting Farm were converted to residential use, the farmland had been retained by the Council.
- The Leader of the Council agreed to provide details of the oversight that the Council had over the farmers on Council-owned land.

- The Committee was advised that the Council currently had no specific plans for Green Great Britain Week on 4-8 November 2019. The Leader of the Council indicated that it would be realistic to mark the annual event in 2020.
- In response to a request, the concept of green capital was outlined to the meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of the Council and the Director of the Environment for attending and answering questions.

OS17 SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Angela Goodwin, Lead Councillor for Social and Affordable Housing, Homelessness, Access and Disability, Susan Conway (Service Manager for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in South West Surrey, Surrey County Council), Andrew Evans (Policy, Planning, and Projects Manager, Surrey County Council), the Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager, and the Exchequer Services Manager to the meeting.

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager introduced the report submitted to the Committee. She indicated that the Children and Social Work Act 2017 had placed corporate parenting responsibilities on borough and district councils for the first time.

The Committee was advised of changes following the Ofsted rating of Children's Social Care Services as inadequate in 2015 and 2018.

The meeting was informed that the Children and Social Work Act 2017 had raised the age of support for care leavers from twenty-one to twenty-five years. Andrew Evans (Policy, Planning, and Projects Manager, Surrey County Council) advised the Committee of the corporate parenting role of local authorities. He informed the Committee of the corporate parenting principles within the statutory guidance [<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers>].

The Committee was informed of the aim for a consistent local offer to care leavers within the county, particularly in relation to Council Tax relief and access to leisure services. The meeting was informed of Surrey County Council's decision to pay 75 per cent of the Council Tax costs for care leavers in independent or semi-independent living. With reference to a possible future change in Surrey County Council's 75 per cent funding of the cost for their care leavers, the Exchequer Services Manager confirmed that legally the Council was liable for the full cost of the proposed Council Tax reduction for care leavers.

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager indicated that the Council did not offer any concessions or discounts solely for care leavers. She noted that a care leaver might benefit from concessions if a student, or on a low-income or unemployed.

The Committee was advised of the Council's existing housing offer to care leavers. The meeting was informed that once care leavers reach 21 years their housing application is reviewed and then considered as any other applicant.

The Exchequer Services Manager informed the meeting that forecasting the costs of a Council Tax exemption for care leavers was difficult. The Committee was advised that further information would be required from Surrey County Council, including the age profile of the care leavers, whether they were claiming existing exemptions and discounts, or whether they were not liable for Council Tax. In addition, the Committee was advised that consideration should be given to whether any reduction offered would be available to all care

leavers in the Borough that met the criteria rather than just Surrey County Council care leavers.

The Committee was advised that a Council Tax reduction for care leavers might increase requests for a similar reduction from other groups.

The Lead Councillor for Social and Affordable Housing, Homelessness, Access and Disability indicated the importance of developing a local offer for care leavers and for improved awareness of the existing support available.

In the ensuing discussion and questions a number of points were made and clarifications offered:

- A member of the Committee suggested that, pending a wider review of the housing allocations policy, the age at which care leavers' housing applications are reviewed and considered in the same way as any other housing applicants be increased to 25 years. In response, the Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager indicated she would raise the suggestion with the Housing Advice Manager.
- The Committee was advised that there were currently 612 Surrey County Council care leavers, with 44 in Guildford Borough, and that the number of care leavers for the county council would increase next year. The Committee was advised that Surrey County Council had 970 looked after children (LAC), with 78 from the Borough, and 61 placed in the Borough. The meeting was informed that only 10 LAC in the Borough were from the Borough and that approximately half of care leavers and LAC lived outside the county.
- A member of the Committee suggested that the Council should do no less than neighbouring local authorities in west Surrey to help support care leavers. In reply, the Committee was updated on the Council Tax support to care leavers offered by Mole Valley District Council, Woking Borough Council, Surrey Heath Borough Council, and Elmbridge Borough Council.
- In response to a question about work experience and guidance for care leavers, the Committee was advised of the statutory duty to provide a Pathway Plan for young people who have been in care.
- A member of the Committee questioned whether directing funding to an extra apprenticeship or a similar initiative, or providing each care leaver with access to funds, would be more beneficial than providing Council Tax support for care leavers.
- The Committee was informed that a number of districts and boroughs in the county currently offered access to swimming and leisure centres to care leavers. The meeting was advised that Waverley Borough Council included free access to leisure centre services for LAC and their carers / carers' families.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Social and Affordable Housing, Homelessness, Access and Disability, and the Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council officers for attending.

RESOLVED: That, with due regard to budget constraints and future cohort complexities, all the key options identified within the report submitted to the Committee for improving support to care leavers living in the Borough be commended to the Executive.

OS18 JET REVIEW

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Fiona White, Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Safeguarding, Inclusion, Public Safety, Community Safety and Vulnerable Families, the Waste, Parking, and Fleet Services Manager, and the Team Leader Environmental Enforcement.

The Waste, Parking, and Fleet Services Manager summarised the report submitted to the Committee. He outlined the role and work of the JET (Joint Enforcement Team) since its formation in 2017. The Committee was informed that the Executive would need to decide whether to continue, grow, or end the JET and that the Committee was requested to express its views on the identified options.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Safeguarding, Inclusion, Public Safety, Community Safety and Vulnerable Families praised the establishment of the JET under the Council's previous administration. She highlighted the work of the JET, including its involvement with the Real Change Operations Group to help tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Guildford town centre.

In response to questions, the Team Leader Environmental Enforcement advised that increasing the JET would enable the team to be more efficient. The Waste, Parking, and Fleet Services Manager indicated that expanding the JET would enable more balance and less prioritisation within its current remit, rather than widen the scope of the team.

The Committee was advised that almost all districts and boroughs in the county had a JET and that the approach and focus of each team could differ.

The Waste, Parking, and Fleet Services Manager indicated that the JET service had not yet been considered in the Council's Future Guildford transformation programme.

In reply to a question, the Committee was advised that school parking issues had not featured in the JET's work during 2019 and had been dealt with by the Council's Parking Team.

Members of the Committee noted the work of the JET in both rural and urban areas.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Safeguarding, Inclusion, Public Safety, Community Safety and Vulnerable Families and officers for attending.

RESOLVED: That, subject to resources, the proposal to make the JET permanent and explore opportunities for its expansion as part of the Future Guildford programme be commended to the Executive.

OS19 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report setting out the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2019-20.

The Committee was advised that the suggested review of the Transport Network be progressed through a Sustainable Transport task and finish group that would review measures undertaken and seek to identify further actions. The meeting was advised that there was capacity for two task and finish groups at any one time and currently none were established.

The Committee was updated on the postponement of the Woodbridge Road Sports Ground Pavilion Refurbishment Project: post-project report and the likely deferral of the Post-project review of ICT infrastructure scheduled for November 2019.

The Committee was advised of the addition to the work programme of the Review of Grants and the Tourism and Visitor Strategy.

In addition, the Committee was reminded of the special meeting arranged for 17 December to consider the implementation of Future Guildford and the possibility of considering other items at that meeting.

In response to member requests, an item examining the circumstances around the submission of a Garden Village bid for Wisley Airfield, including the waiving of call-in, was added to the Committee's work programme.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Chairman, in consultation with the Vice-Chairman, to progress the scoping and establishment of a Sustainable Transport task and finish group.

The Chairman undertook to review the feasibility of an investigation into the closure of GP surgeries within the Borough.

OS20 MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Committee considered an update on matters outstanding from previous meetings; namely, the number of Council employees not paid the Real Living Wage and the establishment of working groups to scrutinise the Council's G-Live and Leisure Partnership Agreement contracts monitoring.

The meeting finished at 8.50 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman