

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 January 2020

* Councillor Paul Spooner (Chairman)

* Councillor James Walsh (Vice-Chairman)

* Councillor Colin Cross
* Councillor Graham Eyre
Councillor Liz Hogger
* Councillor Tom Hunt
Councillor Steven Lee

* Councillor Masuk Miah
* Councillor John Redpath
* Councillor Tony Rooth
* Councillor Deborah Seabrook
* Councillor Patrick Sheard

*Present

Councillors Paul Abbey, Ted Mayne, Julia McShane, Lead Councillor for Community Health, Support and Wellbeing, Caroline Reeves, Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for the Environment & Sustainability across the Borough, Transformation, Sustainable Transport, Economic Development, and Governance, Pauline Searle, Lead Councillor for Countryside, Rural Life, and the Arts, and James Steel, Lead Councillor for Tourism, Leisure, and Sport, were also in attendance.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 23(j), Councillor George Potter attended as a substitute for Councillor Steven Lee.

OS32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee was advised of apologies for absence from Councillors Liz Hogger and Steven Lee and a substitute as detailed above.

OS33 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

OS34 MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 12 November 2019 and 17 December 2019 were agreed.

OS35 FOOD POVERTY

The Lead Councillor for Community Health, Support and Wellbeing introduced the report submitted to the Committee. She indicated that supporting vulnerable and less advantaged people in all the Borough's communities was a strategic priority for the Council. The Committee was advised that the Council wished to work in partnership with communities and pursue a collaborative approach.

The Lead Councillor for Community Health, Support and Wellbeing advised the Committee of further actions to progress the recommendations of the Committee's food poverty report, including a community resource hub being developed in Westborough, contacting parish council clerks to help address needs of rural communities, and a Borough-wide donation scheme to be accessed on a pay-as-you-feel basis. In addition, the Committee was advised that in the coming months development and training sessions would be offered to all councillors on food poverty and insecurity.

During the ensuing discussion a number of questions were asked and responses provided:

- The Lead Councillor for Community Health, Support and Wellbeing confirmed that a reply would be sought from the Secretary of State to the letter from the Leader of the Council.
- Members suggested timescales and milestones would help to monitor progress of actions. In response, the Community Development Manager advised the Committee that working with the voluntary sector and communities involved gradual approaches and meant firm timescales could be difficult to establish. The Lead Councillor for Community Health, Support and Wellbeing indicated that much of the work of the community development team would be ongoing.
- The Committee was advised of progress: the February half-term launch of the 'Hive', a community resource hub at the Park Barn Centre that includes a 'Thrive at the Hive' zone; the launch of a Food Forum in the week commencing 17 February; and delivery of holiday hunger programmes by Guildford Philanthropy and the FoodWise charity, supported by the Council, from Easter onwards. The Community Development Manager indicated that a Food Poverty Strategy and Action Plan would be developed following the first meeting of the Food Forum.
- With reference to the rescheduling of the item from November 2019 (due to purdah) and the verbal updates on progress provided to the meeting, the Chairman expressed disappointment that the report submitted to the Committee had not been updated.
- With reference to low and insecure incomes, the cost of living, and the issue of the Council's accreditation with the Real Living Wage Foundation, Committee members suggested the Council should pay its staff and contractors the Real Living Wage. In response, the Managing Director indicated that the issue would be picked up in the service models considered as part of Future Guildford and would feature in an update to the Committee on the transformation programme in March 2020.
- The Managing Director confirmed that information was available about the pay rates of contractors used by the Council. He indicated that the financial implications of achieving accreditation with the Real Living Wage were currently unquantified but would be identified through Future Guildford. A member of the Committee questioned the morality of the Council not paying the Real Living Wage.
- The Committee was advised that the rollout of Universal Credit had slowed and that zero hours contracts currently had a bigger adverse impact on residents in the Borough than difficulties caused by Universal Credit. The Community Development Manager indicated that information about the impact of Universal Credit would be provided to Committee members.
- A member of the Committee suggested the value in continued monitoring of implementation of the Food Poverty recommendations through a further update to the Committee.
- In response to a question about measuring the impact of food poverty and insecurity interventions, the Committee was advised that this would be possible following the development with partners of the Food Poverty Strategy and Action Plan.

The Chairman summarised the discussion, commented on the datedness of the written update submitted to the Committee, and thanked the Lead Councillor for Community Health, Support and Wellbeing and officers for attending and answering questions.

RESOLVED: (I) That the actions taken to address the issues of food poverty and food insecurity in the Borough be noted.

(II) That a further update on the implementation of the recommendations be provided to the Committee in approximately six months' time.

OS36 LEAD COUNCILLOR QUESTION SESSION

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council.

Three question areas were provided to the Leader of the Council in advance of the meeting: the town centre masterplan; Council funding and priorities; and climate change and supplementary planning documents (SPDs). In responding to these issues and other questions put at the meeting, a number of clarifications and responses were offered:

- With reference to the timeframe for a town centre masterplan, the Leader of the Council indicated that funds for its preparation needed to be agreed by Council, and that a report updating the position would be considered at the March meeting of the Council's Executive.
- In response to questions about the possibility of increased local authority funding from central government and the Council's priorities, the Leader of the Council confirmed that relationships would be built with relevant decision-makers within central government. The Leader of the Council advised the meeting of ongoing initiatives to address homelessness in the Borough, including a new model of hubs for rough-sleepers that was funded by central government.
- In reply to a question, the Leader of the Council confirmed that county lines drug trafficking was a known problem in the Borough. A member of the Committee suggested the value in Councillors receiving a regular update, perhaps every six months, on the crime issues identified in the Borough.
- The Leader of the Council was asked for the timescale for implementing SPDs (Supplementary Planning Documents) that would oblige developers to minimise their carbon footprint and include resilience to climate change. In response, the meeting was advised of consultation dates for the SDF (Strategic Development Framework) and the Climate Change SPD. The Leader of the Council indicated the need for responses to the climate change challenge to be larger than Borough-wide.
- In response to a question, the Leader of the Council indicated she was not aware that information about the membership and outcomes of the Climate Change Innovation Board was not published. She agreed to look into the matter.
- In reply to a question about most pleasing successes, the Leader of the Council highlighted the communication improvements and initiatives introduced and planned at the Council.

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

OS37 REVIEW OF THE ANNUAL REPORT AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE G LIVE CONTRACT, 2018-19

The Lead Councillor for Countryside, Rural Life, and the Arts introduced the item and provided a brief overview of the eighth contract year. The Committee was advised that 2018-19 produced a surplus that resulted in over £70k being returned to the Council.

The meeting was advised that a Scrutiny sub-group had received a detailed briefing on the G Live contract from the Leisure Services client team and two members of the group had attended the presentation of the G Live Annual Report.

Members of the Scrutiny sub-group commented favourably on the maintenance and operation of the G Live venue.

A member of the Committee queried the 80:20 division of the surplus generated from the operation of the venue and suggested any future contract arrangements should be a 50:50 split of surplus between the Council and the operator. In response, the Leisure Services Manager suggested the worth of seeking to establish a sinking fund from the surplus as part of any future contract.

The meeting discussed whether the possibility of Council or a Council-owned organisation running G Live should be part of the procurement process. In response, the Committee was advised that it was considerably cheaper and more efficient for a private company to run G Live than for the Council to do so .

In addition, the question of whether the Council had the expertise necessary to operate such a venue was raised. In response, the Committee was advised that although all the site staff would transfer under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) there was a head office contribution and a benefit from being part of an organisational whole that included fifteen other venues.

With reference to customer satisfaction information within the G Live Annual Report, members of the Committee questioned the quality of the catering. In response, the Leisure Services Manager indicated that further data was necessary to identify any specific catering issues and it might be that the target was inappropriate.

With reference to the balance and range of the programme at G Live, Committee members commented on the amount of classical music and the number of community events in the main hall.

The Chairman summarised the discussion. He noted that the Committee members had indicated their satisfaction with the performance of the G Live contract and the Council's monitoring arrangements over the eighth year of the current contract.

The Lead Councillor for Countryside, Rural Life, and the Arts praised the work of the Council's Leisure Services Manager and the Contracts Officer, Leisure Services.

OS38 MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Committee considered information on matters outstanding from previous meetings; namely, the use of the New Homes Bonus and an update on the implementation of the Future Guildford transformation programme.

OS39 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report setting out the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2020-21.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny provided an update and asked the Committee to confirm its wishes in relation to the two potential task and finish groups listed within the work programme report. In addition, he highlighted the number of agenda items scheduled for the March meeting of the Committee.

With reference to the list of unscheduled items within its work programme, the Committee discussed a possible new task and finish group. Members considered the merits of in-depth reviews of social housing, the visitor and tourism strategy, access to GP surgeries within the Borough, and traveller encampments and incursions.

In relation to a meeting with the local Clinical Commissioning Group about access to GP surgeries within the Borough, the Managing Director indicated that the issue of a meeting with the Committee would be progressed with the Director of Guildford & Waverley Integrated Care Partnership.

With reference to the issue of traveller strategy and policy, the Managing Director confirmed that information sessions for Councillors were in the process of being arranged. In addition, he indicated that following a meeting of Surrey Chief Executives on 17 January he would be able to provide further information about the viability of a local review of traveller strategy and policy. The Chairman thanked the Managing Director.

RESOLVED: That both the Sustainable Transport and the Older People’s Service Review task and finish groups be removed from the Overview and Scrutiny work programme, and that an in-depth task and finish group examining social housing issues in the Borough be established.

The meeting finished at 8.42 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman