

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 October 2020

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

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| * Councillor Dennis Booth | * Councillor George Potter |
| * Councillor Colin Cross | * Councillor Jo Randall |
| * Councillor Angela Goodwin | * Councillor Tony Rooth |
| Councillor Tom Hunt | * Councillor Deborah Seabrook |
| * Councillor Ramsey Nagaty | * Councillor Fiona White |

*Present

Councillors Tim Anderson (Lead Councillor for Resources), Joss Bigmore (Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Service Delivery), Ruth Brothwell, Gordon Jackson, Jan Harwood (Lead Councillor for Climate Change) Julia McShane (Lead Councillor for Community), Caroline Reeves, (Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing and Development Management), John Redpath (Lead Councillor for Economy), John Rigg (Lead Councillor for Regeneration), and James Steel (Lead Councillor for Environment) were also in attendance.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 23(j), Councillor Will Salmon attended as a substitute for Councillor Tom Hunt.

OS24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Tom Hunt.

OS25 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

OS26 RESPONSE TO COVID 19 – UPDATE

The Leader of the Council introduced the item. He stated that the Council's response to COVID-19 continued to be effective, including targeting help at the most vulnerable, protecting the NHS, participating in the local resilience forum, and supporting and enabling business recovery. The Leader of the Council indicated that while the Borough was currently at the lowest alert level the introduction of more strict measures seemed likely at some point. He referred to the relatively low numbers of COVID-19 cases at the University of Surrey and the full opening of schools.

The Managing Director gave a presentation updating the meeting on the Council's response to COVID-19. The Committee was advised that the COVID-19 infection rate had increased to 66.2 per 100,000 and in Guildford the rate was 69.8 per 100,000. The Managing Director indicated that there had been 1,351 COVID-19 related deaths registered in Surrey as at 15 October and 97 deaths in Guildford as at 2 October. He advised the meeting of the new local COVID-19 alert levels introduced by the government and the current levels within Surrey.

The Managing Director advised the Committee of the introduction of an index of performance indicators to track the recovery in the Borough. He informed the meeting that

this index would monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the economy and local communities. The Managing Director asked that suggestions from Councillors to improve the index be directed to the Strategy and Communications Manager.

Next, the Managing Director identified key issues. He discussed local testing arrangements, Surrey Local Outbreak Control Plan, the Council's administration of the test and trace support payment scheme for self-isolating people on low incomes and unable to work from home, and the current support and advice provided by the Council to the most vulnerable in the Borough. The Committee was advised that keyworker testing would soon be provided at the rear of the Council offices at Millmead. In addition, the Managing Director stated that government had awarded the Borough £56,000 for COVID Marshalls to be spent over the next four months. He undertook to provide Councillors with written details of the operation of the local COVID Marshalls.

The Managing Director referred to the financial planning caused by the impact of the pandemic on the Council's costs, income, and reserves.

The Chairman thanked the Managing Director for his presentation and invited questions from the Committee members and other Councillors. No questions were asked.

OS27 MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15 September 2020 were agreed.

OS28 LEAD COUNCILLOR QUESTION SESSION

The Chairman welcomed the Lead Councillor for Climate Change. The Chairman reminded the meeting that it had been necessary to split the question session for Councillor's Harwood's portfolio into two. He stated that the first part had been held in September and looked at planning policy and Planning White Paper questions. The Chairman indicated that the current meeting would cover the remainder of Councillor Harwood's portfolio, with a focus on climate change.

The following information and responses were provided during the ensuing discussion:

- A member of the Committee asked how the Lead Councillor for Climate Change would involve local people and climate action groups in the Council's climate change strategy and its application. In addition, the Committee member suggested the importance of working with partners to deliver a climate change programme and asked how the Lead Councillor would create relationships with partners and who he considered the principal partners. In reply, the Lead Councillor for Climate Change identified three key groups for engagement: institutions, such as the Council, the University of Surrey, and Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust; a cross-section of local action and community groups; and the local business community. He advised the meeting of the need for action to implement strategy. A member of the Committee suggested the value in engaging schools in the climate change strategy and its delivery.
- In reply to a question about the climate change implications of the government's *Planning for the Future White Paper*, the Lead Councillor for Climate Change identified possible advantages if national planning policies aimed to progress environmental aspects in development proposals.
- In reply to a request for an update on the progress of the climate change action plan presented to the Executive in July 2020, the Lead Councillor for Climate Change

indicated that a new member of staff had been recruited and work was on track. He informed the Committee that APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) had been engaged and he hoped to present details to the next meeting of the Climate Change Board. The Lead Councillor for Climate Change stated he would be requesting additional resources to progress the action plan.

- In response to the suggestion that APSE training on climate change provided to Councillors and senior officers be rolled out across the Council, the Lead Councillor for Climate Change advocated lower-cost, in-house training for specific staff, led by himself and members of his climate change team. He indicated the format for future training on climate change was under discussion, but he intended that it would be open to all Councillors.
- The Lead Councillor for Climate Change was asked how action on climate change could be embedded into targets and performance plans for Council departments and officers. He indicated that, in the short-term, this was best done by ensuring relevant decision-makers were aware of the climate change consequences of their decisions.
- A member of the Committee questioned whether given the recent adoption of the Climate Change SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) the Lead Councillor for Climate Change would ensure the impact of climate change was listed on planning officers' reports as a key consideration. In reply, the Lead Councillor for Climate Change indicated that environmental concerns were already given consideration, but this could be explained better in officers' reports.
- A member of the Committee suggested establishing a task group to maximise the air quality benefits of roadside planting. In response, the Lead Councillor for Climate Change stated that air quality was currently addressed in a reactionary manner and funding from central government and Surrey County Council was insufficient to tackle the issue in a proactive way. He indicated a desire to improve air quality monitoring in the Borough to identify and address problem areas.
- The Lead Councillor for Climate Change indicated that he was aware of the Climate Emergency Centre community project and he supported fully its objectives.
- With reference to the removal of trees such as at for the M25 junction 10 / A3 Wisley interchange, a member of the Committee asked if planting of replacement trees could be required prior to any felling. In reply, the Lead Councillor for Climate Change advised that developments were required to demonstrate biodiversity net gains. In addition, he indicated his confidence in the Council's arboricultural officers' attention to such issues and indicated he felt the loss of trees was not a particular cause for concern as the portfolio holder. In response to a further question on the issue, the Lead Councillor for Climate Change confirmed that the felling of trees for development was not a significant issue in the Borough and it would be unfair to Council officers to suggest it was.
- A Councillor suggested that climate change should be addressed in a holistic approach that recognised the importance of other environmental issues such as air quality, biodiversity, and water shortage. In addition, the Councillor proposed the value and relevance of doughnut economics. The Lead Councillor for Climate Change indicated his agreement with such views.
- The Lead Councillor for Climate Change advocated measures to encourage the use of electric cars in the Borough, including increased availability of charging points.

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

OS29 ICT REFRESH PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Service Delivery introduced the item. He praised the efforts of the Lead Specialist for ICT and suggested that the ICT Refresh programme was on a much sounder footing than previously.

The Lead Specialist for ICT summarised the report submitted to the Committee. He explained that the programme consisted of two projects: the end-user device refresh and the infrastructure refresh. He confirmed that the programme was not yet complete: the end-user device refresh project was expected to conclude by the end of the calendar year and the infrastructure refresh by June 2021. He reminded Councillors of key risks such as security, resilience, the programme timeline, and Public Sector Network (PSN) compliance.

The Lead Specialist for ICT indicated that the infrastructure refresh project was to be funded by the ICT renewals hardware/software budget.

In response to questioning, the Director for Resources indicated that a permanent virement of approximately £17,000 from the corporation inflation budget to the ICT licence fees budget would meet ongoing annual revenue charges associated with a migration to software as a service (SaaS).

With reference to dual-hatted members, a Committee member asked if there were plans to work more closely with Surrey County Council to explore the provision of a single end-user device that could be used across all the districts and boroughs in the county. The Lead Specialist for ICT indicated that it would be complex to bridge systems to enable such use but undertook to raise the issue at the county-wide forum for local authorities' ICT managers.

The Lead Specialist for ICT outlined some implications for local authorities' ICT systems from any introduction of unitary local government in the county. He suggested that such mergers would likely require a series of workarounds in the short-term.

In reply to a request from a member of the Committee, the Lead Specialist for ICT undertook to consider including end users in discussions about possible replacements of devices in future.

The Lead Specialist for ICT informed the Committee that ICT hardware was listed on an asset register and most software was listed on a business systems list, although apps on individual work phones might not all be recorded.

RESOLVED: That the progress of the ICT Refresh Programme as set out in the report submitted to the Committee be noted.

OS30 SPEND ON CONSULTANTS AND AGENCY WORKERS

The Chairman welcomed the Lead Councillor for Resources and the Senior Specialist Procurement.

The Lead Councillor for Resources introduced the item, advising the meeting that the amount spent by the Council on consultants and agency workers over the last five years was £24.5 million on consultants and £11.97 million on agency workers. He advised the meeting that consultants were generally engaged without a formal procurement or governance process. In addition, he advised that half of agency workers were not obtained through the

Council's temporary staffing contract with Comensura, rather service managers were going off contract to obtain the workers they require. The Lead Councillor for Resources confirmed that there was an agency worker spend of £3.6 million on Fleet and Waste Management over the previous five years.

The Lead Councillor for Resources praised the proposed introduction of the procurement strategy into the process of managing spend on consultants and agency workers.

The Senior Specialist Procurement confirmed that the report was produced at the request of the Committee and she summarised its findings to the meeting. She indicated that while consultants on the Council's larger projects were engaged as part of a governance process involving a proposed business case, generally they were engaged on a more ad hoc basis for other areas of work across the organisation.

The Senior Specialist Procurement advised that opportunities for consultants spend identified in the report included looking to deliver work in-house where possible and improve cost control and options evaluation through new governance arrangements. In relation to opportunities to improve contracting agency workers, the Committee was advised of a relaunch of the Comensura contract and minimising off-contract spend by requiring a procurement exemption if another recruitment agency was to be engaged. The Senior Specialist Procurement suggested a reliance on agency staff could be expected to decline as the Council's Future Guildford transformation programme was completed.

In reply to a question from a Committee member, the meeting was advised that direct employee expenditure was £38.1 million [for 2019/20]. In addition, the Committee confirmed that the total spend on consultants and agency workers over the past five years was £36.5 million rather than £34.69 million. Members of the Committee suggested that spending an average of approximately twenty per cent of the Council's staffing budget on consultants and agency staff each year was excessive.

Members of the Committee highlighted the Council's apparent reliance on agency workers to provide frontline services such as waste management and suggested it would be preferable to employ workers directly. The Director of Resources outlined the need for a bank of staff able to undertake waste management duties. The Managing Director stated that the use of agency staff for fleet and waste management services was done in an appropriate and responsible way. The Lead Councillor for Resources stated that such information within the report might usefully challenge long established practices.

The Lead Councillor for Community reminded a Committee member of the importance of refuse collection keyworkers. In response, the Committee member concerned apologised and clarified his earlier remarks.

The Committee members indicated that it was difficult to evaluate value for money of the spend from the limited, high-level information within the report and suggested a year on year breakdown of spend by department, greater analysis, and a comparison with equivalent local authorities was required. In reply, the Lead Councillor for Resources advised the report was an overview that identified areas for further analysis. The Senior Specialist Procurement indicated that the report had intended to bring the Committee the summary scope and spend on consultants and agency staff over the past five years. She confirmed that the breakdown of spend by department could be made available to the Committee but suggested that recommendations to better control future spending should be more of a focus. The Director of Resources indicated that Committee members needed more information to better understand the different contexts of the Council's five-year spend on consultants and agency staff.

Questioned why the Council renewed the contract with Comensura, the Senior Specialist Procurement indicated that a compliant procurement process was undertaken with a further direct award to Comensura due to the amount of substantial business improvement changes occurring in the Council and the risk of too much change and a lack of buy in to a new way of recruiting temporary staff. The Senior Specialist Procurement indicated that a contract re-launch was planned for when Future Guildford Phase B had concluded to bring hiring managers to the central corporate contract and offer training and support to be able to use the contract as a first port of call for temporary workers with the primary goal of reducing off-contract spend and thereby increasing compliance and making savings. A member of the Committee suggested the issue of Comensura's contract renewal might have been considered by an Executive Advisory Board.

The Senior Specialist Procurement advised the meeting that consultants' insurances, including professional indemnity insurance, would apply only if a contract was in place.

RESOLVED: (I) That the Executive and the Corporate Management Team be requested to consider the options to better control costs and provide a more robust governance approach to spend on consultants and agency workers as outlined in the report submitted to the Committee; and

(II) That the Committee be provided with an interim update on consultants and agency worker spend in six months' time and with a full report of progress achieved in this spend area in one year.

OS31 GUILDFORD SPORTSGROUND PAVILION REFURBISHMENT - AN ACCOUNT, THE ISSUES, AND THE LEARNING

The Chairman welcomed the Lead Councillor for Environment and the Lead Councillor for Regeneration. He noted that the Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Service Delivery was no longer present.

The Chairman confirmed which Councillors wished to discuss the exempt information within the appendix to the report submitted to the Committee. He indicated that the public would be excluded from the part of the meeting dealing with exempt information.

The Lead Councillor for Environment introduced the item. The Parks and Landscape Manager summarised the background to the refurbishment of the pavilion and the management and delivery of the project. He informed the meeting that the project completed at approximately £325k over budget and the Council's net capital contribution at £875,969 or 38 percent of the total cost.

The Parks and Landscape Manager outlined the learning points identified in the report submitted to the Committee, including the business case for the project, governance of the project and partners, management of contractor performance, variations in the project, and the low contingency sum.

The Lead Councillor for Regeneration suggested to the meeting that the project budget had doubled since 2016. With reference to the lessons learned from the project, he noted the need for appropriate resourcing of projects, the role of the external project manager, skills shortages within the Council, and the need for better drafting of tender documents. He suggested there was a lack of officer and technical resources within the Council for its projects and noted the risks of cost-cutting on project management and supervision.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing and Development Control referred to the difficulties of the refurbishment project and praised the completed pavilion.

A member of the Committee questioned the extent to which information had been classified as exempt and not for publication. The Parks and Landscape Manager confirmed that the classification of information as exempt was the result of a review of the contract the Council entered into with the contractor.

In reply to a question from a Committee member about accountability and responsibility for missed project targets, the Parks and Landscape Manager indicated that the Council's new programme and project governance would resolve many such issues in future.

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of information contained within the Appendix to the report on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act; namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The meeting discussed the performance of the contractor, the frequency of cost-overruns on Council projects, the changes in Council staff involved in the project, the lack of resources for a replacement clerk of works, and the end product delivered by the project. The Lead Councillor for Regeneration indicated that the Council had started to put better project governance into place but there was a need for expertise.

Following the Committee's consideration of the exempt information the public was readmitted to the meeting.

RESOLVED: (I) That the account of the refurbishment within the report submitted to the Committee be noted.

(II) That the learning identified within the report submitted to the Committee be recommended to the Executive for application to other construction related projects.

OS32 MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Chairman referred to two matters outstanding from previous meetings: information relating to Future Guildford and traveller strategy and policy. He confirmed that a covering explanation note on the Future Guildford information had been circulated to Committee members that day. The Managing Director apologised for the delay in preparing the note for the Committee and indicated that the Chief Internal Auditor was able to answer questions about the impact of Future Guildford, including its improvements and its effects on procedures. With reference to the traveller strategy, the Managing Director advised that Surrey County Council was leading on a transit sites project. The Managing Director informed the meeting that the Director of Service Delivery was involved with the project and that forthcoming proposals carried budgetary implications for the Council.

The meeting was reminded that the Committee had authorised the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to consider the issue of whether the Walnut Bridge Project remained as an outstanding matter or be moved to the Committee's work plan.

OS33 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman introduced the item. He indicated that the Submission of a Garden Village Bid for Wisley Airfield had been moved to the Committee's January 2021 meeting and that

members had been asked by email to identify additional areas they would like to see addressed in the report.

The Committee agreed that the schedule of Lead Councillor question sessions for 2021 would be determined by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the amendments agreed in the meeting, the overview and scrutiny work programme as submitted in the report to the Committee be approved.

The meeting finished at 10.19 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman