

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 October 2022

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

Councillor Chris Blow	Councillor Maddy Redpath
* Councillor Guida Esteves	Councillor Tony Rooth
* Councillor Graham Eyre	* Councillor Will Salmon
* Councillor Angela Goodwin	* Councillor Deborah Seabrook
* Councillor George Potter	* Councillor Fiona White

*Present

Councillors Joss Bigmore (Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Governance), John Redpath (Lead Councillor for Economy), and James Steel (Lead Councillor for Environment) were also in attendance, with Councillors Julia McShane (Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Community and Housing) and Ramsey Nagaty in remote attendance.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 23(i), Councillor Ann McShee attended as a substitute for Councillor Maddy Redpath and Councillor Bob McShee attended as a substitute for Councillor Chris Blow.

OS16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee was advised of apologies for absence from Councillors Chris Blow, Maddy Redpath, and Tony Rooth and substitutions as detailed above.

OS17 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

OS18 MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 July 2022 were agreed.

OS19 LEAD COUNCILLOR QUESTION SESSION

The Chairman welcomed the Lead Councillor for Environment and reminded the meeting of Councillor Steel's areas of responsibility: Waste, Licensing (including Health and Safety regulation), Parking, Parks and Leisure, Arts and Tourism, Bereavement, and Environmental Health and Protection. The Chairman advised that the Lead Councillor for Environment had been informed of several potential question areas in advance of the meeting and that other question areas and specific queries would arise.

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

- In reply to questions about the Visit Surrey website, the Lead Councillor for Environment advised that Visit Surrey continued to be the top performing website for the visitor economy for Surrey. The Lead Councillor for Environment informed the meeting that many tourism or visitor economy businesses were working already with Visit Surrey and that the Council working with Visit Surrey avoided duplication of

information and resources for businesses. In addition, the meeting was informed that by using Visit Surrey the Council benefited from the use of campaigns managed centrally by Visit Britain and Visit England.

- The Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that the Council did not have feedback from residents concerning the Council's collaboration with Visit Surrey. He advised that ninety percent of people using the Visit Surrey website came from near-neighbour counties. The Committee was advised of the top Guildford-related webpages viewed on Visit Surrey since February 2022: the landing page; Shere; Newlands Corner; the paddling pool; the Lido; and the Jubilee page.
- In reply to questions, the Lead Councillor for Environment advised that it was not possible to measure the number of businesses taking up the free advertising events listing offered on the Visit Surrey website. The meeting was informed that the Council's web team were producing a video on Guildford for use on the Visit Surrey website. A member of the Committee suggested the value of measuring the effectiveness and value of the Visit Surrey website to Guildford businesses as the website continued to develop.
- In response to a query from a member of the Committee and with reference to the large number of questions to be put forward during the item, the Chairman noted the advantages of succinct answers during the Lead Councillor question session and the value of circulating fuller details to Committee members after the meeting.
- In reply to a question, the Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that Guildford had a dedicated section of the Visit Surrey website. A member of the Committee asked if the Council would be promoting the Guildford dedicated section of the Visit Surrey website. In reply, the Lead Councillor for Environment indicated queries would be directed to the appropriate part of the Visit Surrey website.
- In response to questions about the Council's waste and recycling fleet, the Lead Councillor for Environment advised the meeting that the Council was monitoring the development of electric vehicle and hydrogen trucks. He advised that power infrastructure limitations at the Council's current depot limited its ability to purchase larger electric vehicles, although planned electric vehicle infrastructure at the new depot would help a more rapid replacement of diesel with electric vehicle trucks. The meeting was informed that four dustcarts were needed this year and there was sufficient power and some funding to support these as electric vehicles.
- In reply to a question, the Lead Councillor for Environment advised that it was not possible at the current stage to state with accuracy the cost implications of making the whole waste and recycling fleet either electric vehicle or hydrogen.
- A member of the Committee asked about the conversion of the waste and recycling fleet to use hydrogenated vegetable oil. The Executive Head of Environmental Services advised that the benefits and costs of such a change were being examined at Waverley Borough Council and a similar exercise could be undertaken at Guildford Borough Council.
- A member of the Committee asked how the national waste strategy would affect the Council and the Borough. In response, the Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that the government had not finalised their plans and that the implications

for residents and Council operations would be dependent on these plans and associated legislation. In response to further questions about the practicalities and requirement for residents to store wheelie bins and containers, the Executive Head of Environmental Services indicated that recycling was planned on a property level across the Borough.

- In reply to a question on the running of G-Live, the Lead Councillor for Environment advised the Committee of a change in the venue director, recovering audience numbers, and the effect of the pandemic on the venue's programme.
- The Lead Councillor for Environment advised the Committee of actions taken relating to chemical reduction measures and a pesticide-free Guildford, including implementation of a programme of chemical-free playground maintenance, the trialling of chemical-free maintenance of hard surface areas, and work with Guildford Environmental Forum and other volunteers.
- In reply to a question about identified areas of concern within his portfolio, the Lead Councillor for Environment referred to the increased cost of utility bills at leisure venues, the limited staff resources for the Council's parks, and the potential implications of the national waste strategy. In response to a follow-up question from a Committee member, the Head of Culture, Heritage and Leisure Services indicated that the challenge of resources was across all Council departments and not all service levels were likely to be maintained.
- The Lead Councillor for Environment advised the meeting that all aspects of on-street parking would be managed directly by Surrey County Council from April 2023 and that decision-making for on-street parking had been removed from the Joint Committees earlier in the year. The Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Governance indicated the need for a governance process between the Council and Surrey County Council to ensure the change in on-street parking arrangements did not lead to divergence in on and off-street parking and enforcement policies. In addition, he highlighted the issue of park and ride arrangements. A member of the Committee referred to the difficulty of progressing on-street parking reviews in the period before management reverted to Surrey County Council in April 2023.
- In reply to a question on feedback from visitors, residents, or shopkeepers about car park charges, the Executive Head of Environmental Services referred to the high and steady usage by visitors of the Borough's car parks. The Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Governance noted the policy tensions of income generation from Council car parks alongside support for high street businesses through the provision of affordable car parking, together with disincentivising short journeys and encouraging use of park and ride, and the cost of living crisis.
- A member of the Committee expressed concern at the probable effect on air quality from the park and ride service no longer operating at the Onslow and Spectrum sites. In response, the Lead Councillor for Environment indicated that the sites were dependent on Surrey County Council securing an operator.
- In reply to a query about anti-idling, the Lead Councillor for Environment advised that there was nothing in the current licence conditions with regard to taxis or private hire vehicles leaving engines idling when stationary. He suggested that officers would

remind taxi and private hire drivers of the Highway Code requirement not to leave a vehicle engine running unnecessarily while the vehicle was stationary on a public road.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Environment and officers for attending and answering questions and noted that the briefing notes provided to the Lead Councillor for Environment would be circulated to Committee members.

OS20 SAFER GUILDFORD PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Community and Housing, Inspector Alick James (Borough Commander, Surrey Police), Cath Jago (Chief Executive, South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Outreach Service), Louise Gibbins (Project Officer, Community Safety at Surrey County Council), and the Senior Policy Officer, Strategy and Communications, and the Policy Officer, Strategy and Communications. All were attending remotely.

The Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Community and Housing introduced the item and advised that the purpose of the report submitted to the Committee was to advise on the activities of the Safer Guildford Partnership during 2021-22 and provide an opportunity for comment on the appropriateness of the Safer Guildford Partnership Action Plan for 2022-23.

The Senior Policy Officer, Strategy and Communications, advised the meeting that the significant work within the Partnership was achieved largely through operational groups and Surrey-wide groups and forums.

The Chief Executive of South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Outreach Service and the Project Officer, Community Safety, Surrey County Council gave a presentation on the Partnership's impact on Domestic Abuse, one of the Partnership's priorities during 2021-24.

The meeting was advised that more than a quarter of women and around 1 in 6 men had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16, that on average two women a week in England and Wales were killed by their partners or ex-partners, and more than 15 women a week attempted suicide as a result of domestic abuse. The Committee was informed that on average, victims at high risk of serious harm live with domestic abuse for 2-3 years before getting help. The meeting was informed that 345 Guildford residents were actively supported during 2021/22.

The presentation outlined the work of the Safer Guildford Partnership to tackle domestic abuse by raising awareness among communities, customers, and staff, of both the issue and the support available. The meeting was advised about the actions and outcomes on domestic abuse, including the Domestic Abuse pledge and the growth in referrals to South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Outreach Service between Sept 2021 and Aug 2022, together with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

- In reply to questions, the Senior Policy Officer, Strategy and Communications, advised that the Safer Guildford Partnership's action plan had changed over the previous three years to become less complex and more focused and achievable. The Project Officer, Community Safety, Surrey County Council, informed the meeting of the difficulties of resolving anti-social behaviour issues and the advantages of the Partnership attempting to identify such problems at an earlier stage.

- In reply to a question about domestic abuse education for students, the Project Officer, Community Safety, Surrey County Council, advised that the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office had recently secured almost £1million of government funding which would be used in part to deliver specialist training in domestic abuse and related issues for teachers delivering PSHE lessons in the county. The value of a future update on the initiative from the Healthy Surrey team was suggested.
- A member of the Committee questioned the outcomes of the Guildford Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) review and what evidence would be required to include Ash and Kingston Meadows in East Horsley. In response, the meeting was advised that PSPOs were not the only ASB tool available and that the conditions included in the town centre PSPO would not necessarily be appropriate for Ash or East Horsley. Inspector James indicated that more traditional police responses could be more effective in reducing ASB and crime than a PSPO.
- With reference to an example of ASB in Burpham, another member of the Committee questioned the process to evaluate the need for action. In reply, the meeting was advised of changes, including the revision of the terms of reference and referral process of the Safer Guildford Partnership's Joint Action Group over the previous six months. The Head of Regulatory Services advised the members of the Committee that referrals could be made to the Joint Action Group online.
- Inspector James updated the meeting on county lines activity in the Borough.
- A member of the Committee suggested the value in quantified targets to judge the progress of the Safer Guildford Partnership action plan for 2022-23. In reply, the Senior Policy Officer, Strategy and Communications, undertook to re-evaluate such an approach.
- In response to a question, the Project Officer, Community Safety, Surrey County Council, advised the Committee of the YUVA (Youth Using Violence and Abuse) service.

The Chairman thanked all the attendees for their contributions to the item.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the comments above, the draft Safer Guildford Partnership Action Plan 2022-23 as set out in section 5 of the report submitted to the Committee be endorsed.

OS21 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 QUARTER 1

With reference to the report submitted to the Committee, the Chairman indicated that Councillors with specific queries about performance indicators had been asked to submit these to the report author in advance of the meeting to enable an explanation to be given at the meeting.

The Policy Officer introduced the item and advised the meeting that previously the performance monitoring report had been considered by the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee. In addition to the initial review of indicators in Quarter 4, with reference to section 4.7 of the report the Committee was informed that a workshop to further consider the set of key performance indicators against the key themes, priorities, and core values within the Corporate Plan had been re-scheduled to early November 2022.

A member of the Committee suggested the value of some pre-COVID information to give additional context to some of the performance indicators. In response, the Policy Officer advised that such information tended to be shown for the previous five quarters only, but could be provided going back further for certain indicators in future reports if requested.

Members of the Committee familiar with the report through membership of the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee stressed the need to submit questions in advance of the meeting and the value in qualitative measures to monitor performance.

The Chairman thanked the Policy Officer for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report submitted to the Committee, along with the Performance Monitoring Report for quarter 1 of 2022/23 attached as appendix 1, be noted.

OS22 CUSTOMER SERVICES: PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS UPDATE

The Lead Councillor for Economy introduced the item. He praised the progress of both the customer service team and the internet team and requested that Councillors share complaints with him.

- A member of the Committee questioned whether there was sufficient focus within the Council's customer services on the residents that were unable to use online platforms, particularly those trying to access services by telephone. In response, the Lead Councillor for Economy indicated that encouraging use of online services would free-up the phone service for those that were unable to use the internet and stated his confidence in the need and success of such an approach. The Strategic Director of Transformation and Governance stated that the aim was to move seventy-five percent of customer contacts online and that over 47,000 residents had signed up to a MyGuildford account. The Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services indicated that approximately eighty-five percent of residents contacting the Council's customer services had an online MyGuildford account.
- The Lead Councillor for Economy confirmed that the target operating model of customer contact – 75 percent of customer transactions undertaken online, 20 percent via telephone, and 5 percent face to face – came from the Future Guildford transformation programme. The Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services offered to share the customer service strategy with Committee members.
- In response to a question, the Lead Councillor for Economy suggested that automated service chatbots could help meet customer needs 24/7. He confirmed that additional investment would be required to deliver such improvements.
- With reference to the report submitted to the Committee, a member of the Committee queried how often the two-day average response time for online enquiries was met.
- The Lead Councillor for Economy stated that those people waiting on the Council's customer service phone line for ten minutes were offered a call back; the Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services confirmed that the goal was to lower the ten-minute waiting period.

- In response to a request from Committee members, the Lead Councillor for Economy and the Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services undertook to provide the October contact statistics for customer services.
- The Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services referred to the Council's customer insight testing and requested that Councillors share customer feedback.
- A member of the Committee suggested publishing the quietest times of day for customers to contact customer services. In response, the Executive Head of Communications and Customer Services indicated that doing so risked increasing call volumes and that there was seldom a time of day when people were not phoning customer services.
- A member of the Committee referred to a KPMG internal audit report, considered by the Council's Corporate Governance and Standards Committee, which had reviewed the Council's customer complaints handling. He stated that the audit had recommended the establishment of a central complaints team within the customer services team and the reporting of performance indicators for complaints handling. The Committee member asked if there was sufficient resource within the customer service team for such complaints handling and whether performance indicators would be updated to reflect the recommendation. The Lead Councillor for Economy advised that there were not sufficient resources within the customer services team to undertake complaints handling and suggested that it was not necessarily a role for customer services, or within his portfolio. The Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Governance advised the meeting that there was a management action plan to address the findings of the internal audit and that it could be shared with Committee members. The member of the Committee reiterated the request for relevant performance indicators for complaints handling to be reported to the Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Economy and the Executive Head of Communications and Customer Service.

RESOLVED: That an update on the performance and progress of the Council's customer service be provided to the Committee within 6-8 months.

OS23 UPDATE ON GUILDFORD-WAVERLEY COLLABORATION

The Strategic Director for Transformation and Governance introduced the item and highlighted the joint management team structure attached as appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Committee. He advised the meeting of both the interim and the recruitment arrangements for the Executive Heads of Planning Development and Legal & Democratic Services.

In response to a comment from a member of the Committee, the Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Governance contrasted the consultation with officers over the Guildford and Waverley collaboration with that undertaken for the Future Guildford transformation programme and praised the Joint Chief Executive.

RESOLVED: (I) That the update on the Guildford-Waverley collaboration provided in the report submitted to the Committee be noted.

(II) That regular updates on the Guildford-Waverley collaboration continue to be provided to the Committee.

OS24 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman indicated that that at its pre-meeting Committee members had discussed the need to cover as much as possible of the overview and scrutiny work programme in the current municipal year and identify key issues for future scrutiny.

The meeting finished at 10.00 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman