

SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

4TH MARCH 2013

Present: Councillors: George Cockman (Chairman), Brian Donnelly (Vice-Chairman), John Chidlow, Philip Circus, Leonard Crosbie, Laurence Deakins, Duncan England, Brian O'Connell, Jim Rae, Kate Rowbottom, David Sheldon, David Skipp

Apologies: Councillors: Jim Goddard, Josh Murphy, Tricia Youtan

Also present: Councillors: Ian Howard, Gordon Lindsay

Officers: Rod Brown, Head of Planning and Environmental Services
Katherine Eberhart, Director of Corporate Resources

SO/58 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14th January 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SO/59 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/60 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no announcements.

SO/61 **TO RECEIVE ANY REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee noted the comprehensive written response from the Cabinet Member for the Local Economy to the recommendations of the Supporting Local Businesses Working Group. The Working Group Members had received the response and a meeting would be convened in three months' time to consider progress on the actions taken in light of the Working Group's recommendations.

SO/62 **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman of the Business Improvement Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2013 and a report on the progress of the Working Group's work programme.

SO/62 Business Improvement Working Group – to receive an update from the Chairman (continued)

The Working Group had reviewed the Council's use of consultants; its recommendations and those of the Finance and Performance Working Group had been noted, and the Council had approved relevant changes to the Contract Standing Orders.

The review of Contract Standing Orders had been completed; the significantly revised CSOs had been approved by the Council and were supported by a new Horsham Procurement Code.

The Working Group had reviewed the Council's process for vehicle procurement. Subject to receiving some final information from the Head of Operational Services, the review was complete. The Chairman of the Working Group would write to the Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources and to Operational Services staff to highlight the successes of the department in relation to vehicle procurement, servicing and repairs, and the positive impact that had on resources.

The Working Group had approved the revisions to the Council's Corporate Policy and Procedures Document on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. It would continue to consider any further proposed amendments.

The Working Group would review the S106 grant process at its meeting on 23rd April 2013.

The Working Group was seeking instruction from the Committee about whether it should conduct reviews that it had been tasked to undertake as part of its work programme but which had not yet commenced. Instruction was sought about the reviews of the performance in Development Management and the performance and productivity of the Planning Services Department. The Chairman of the Working Group felt that the reviews were a separate and wider piece of work to the Chief Executive's review of the issues arising from the Henfield planning appeal.

Committee Members expressed concern that performance levels were below target and also questioned whether the targets were too low.

Members were informed that income from planning fees had increased and that, for the year to date, income was exceeding budget expectations.

The Cabinet Member for Living and Working Communities referred to the changes in the management structure within Planning Services, how the scheme for delegated authority should provide an improved service, and how for major applications, if a decision was not possible within the determination period, that an extension could be sought with the agreement of the applicant.

SO/62 Business Improvement Working Group – to receive an update from the Chairman (continued)

The Head of Planning and Environmental Services referred to the period of staffing changes and promotions since the summer of 2012, the knock-on effect of a significant number of posts having to be filled, and the benefit of retaining experienced planning staff members. He predicted that the positive results of those changes would become fully evident in the next six months.

The Chairman of the Committee outlined an alternative procedure. Instead of embarking on a full review, the Business Improvement Working Group would require a regular update from the Executive and Management on their programme of improvements. This would begin with a statement of the current situation under three headings: Concern, Intended Response, Timescale. This and subsequent statements would form the objects of the Working Group review. Committee Members considered the merit of that suggestion but felt that a review was now required.

The Committee voted and agreed to instruct the Business Improvement Working Group to undertake the said reviews. The Working Group would scope the reviews and regularly report to the Committee.

The Working Group was also seeking the Committee's views about how it could consider proposed improvements and changes to services arising from the Business Transformation Programme in order to clarify its role but avoid duplication of effort with the BTP.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the notes of the Business Improvement Working Group meeting held on 22nd January 2013 be received
- (2) To instruct the Business Improvement Working Group to proceed with reviews of the performance in Development Management and the performance and productivity of the Planning Services Department

REASON

- (1) All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee
- (2) To fulfil the Committee's scrutiny function by authorising the Working Group to review specific Council services

SO/63 **CRIME AND DISORDER WORKING GROUP - TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman of the Crime and Disorder Working Group presented the notes of the inaugural meeting held on 30th January 2013. The Working Group had approved its terms of reference and had received a training session relating to the relevant legislation and the role and duties of the Working Group.

The Chairman had attended the Community Safety Partnership Board (CSP) meeting and the Community Safety Advisory Group meeting.

A draft CSP Plan was being prepared and would be discussed at the Working Group meeting to be held on 13th March 2013.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Crime and Disorder Working Group meeting held on 30th January 2013 be received

REASON

All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee.

SO/64 **FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP - TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman of the Finance and Performance Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held on 6th February 2013.

The Working Group had noted that a forecasted underspend of £474,326 was being projected for the budget 2012/13.

The Working Group had received an analysis of the Council's income sources for 2009/10 compared to those for 2013/14. The Council was increasingly reliant on income sources other than government grants and council tax, such as car parking charges, rent from commercial properties, planning land charges and fees.

The Chairman of the Committee suggested that the Working Group might wish to request further details about the costs of salaries for casual and temporary staff because this had been almost double what had been budgeted, and also enquire about how many agency staff employed by Operational Services had subsequently been offered permanent employment at the Council. The Director of Corporate Resources reported that there would be an increase in those costs because of the Council's increased use of temporary contracts. Overall, however, there was an underspend in relation to the total salary budget.

SO/64 Finance and Performance Working Group - to receive an update from the Chairman (continued)

The Working Group had noted the increased cost of Operational Services vehicles purchasing fuel at the garage forecourt because the depot fuel tank was no longer in use following a fuel theft in late 2012. It had suggested that WSCC be contacted to explore the possibility of the Council benefiting from its fuel purchasing power. A Committee Member suggested that the Head of Operational Services might also enquire about other fuel buying networks that exist in the region and which operate across a wider area and number of local authorities.

The Committee noted that the Council had been successful in attracting funding through the Government's Weekly Collection Fund for an education campaign which would hopefully help to counteract the level of recycling waste rejects and the associated costs of sending those rejected collections to landfill. The campaign was expected to commence in April/ May 2013. The Director of Corporate Resources reported that subscriptions by residents signing up to pay for garden waste collection were, to date, well in excess of what had been expected; from 1st June 2013 valid membership stickers would be required to be displayed on bins.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Finance and Performance Working Group meeting held on 6th February 2013 be received

REASON

All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee.

SO/65 **SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

There had been no further meetings of the Social Inclusion Working Group and therefore there was no update from the Chairman. The Working Group would meet on 11th March 2013 and commence its review of 'Poverty Amongst an Ageing Population'.

SO/66 **HEALTH PROVISION WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

There had been no further meetings of the Health Provision Working Group. The Chairman of the Working Group reported that its Members had attended the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group meeting on 7th February 2013 to hear the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) representatives outline their preparations and objectives; the CCG would take on responsibility for designing health services as from 1st April 2013.

SO/66 Health Provision Working Group – to receive an update from the Chairman
(continued)

The Working Group would invite the CCG representatives to meet again to discuss services at Horsham Hospital, some time after April 2013.

The Working Group Members had wondered how, without a hospital manager, oversight and overall co-ordination of services at Horsham Hospital could be achieved; the CCG would consider that and evaluate the options.

The next Working Group meeting would be held on 20th March 2013.

SO/67 **TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW
WORK PROGRAMME**

There were no suggestions for the Scrutiny & Overview work programme.

SO/68 **ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA BUT CONSIDERED URGENT**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting finished at 6.35 p.m. having commenced at 5.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN