

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
22 JULY 2019

Present: Councillors: Leonard Crosbie (Chairman), Brian Donnelly (Vice-Chairman), Michael Croker, Billy Greening, Frances Haigh, Nigel Jupp, Lynn Lambert, Richard Landeryou, Josh Potts, Jack Saheid, David Skipp and Ian Stannard

Apologies: Councillors: Tim Lloyd and Louise Potter
Absent: Councillors: Roy Cornell

Also Present: Councillor Ruth Fletcher

SO/14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th March and 3rd June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SO/15 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Jupp declared that he was West Sussex County Councillor for Southwater and Nuthurst.

SO/16 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman stated that he wished to bring forward agenda item 7 concerning the Government Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny so that the presentation be given immediately after agenda item 5 in order to help Councillors consider the business of the Committee, particularly agenda item 10 on the work programme suggestions to take forward.

SO/17 **FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE REASONS GIVEN FOR PLANNING EXTENSIONS**

In response to a request from the Committee, the Head of Development explained the reasons for extensions of time for planning applications. The Government had set timeframes in which Planning authorities should make decisions on planning applications.

Within her presentation she covered the fact that the application time could be extended and the council was using this mechanism slightly more than others. 72% of major applications in Horsham District in the period January – December 2018 were granted an extension of time compared to 66% from the comparator group and 35% of the council's non-major applications were granted extensions for non-major applications compared with 27% for the comparator group.

That extensions were being granted because planning took a proactive approach rather than merely refusing an application. This reduced the number of planning applications that went to appeal. Improvement could be made to the system for recording why extensions of time had been granted.

The Chairman asked what measures were in place to ensure developers adhered to the planning conditions agreed. The Head of Development confirmed that the Planning department monitored the delivery of developments against the agreement. She also clarified the difference between an extension of time and a legal agreement.

SO/18 **GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The Chairman gave a presentation on the key points from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny from May 2019. He noted that the role of Overview and Scrutiny was to hold decision makers to account, that those on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had to have an independent mindset and the Committee had the power to access exempt information in a timely manner.

There was a question from a councillor regarding requests for information and whether all members of the Committee had to be informed. The Chairman confirmed that Councillors were free to approach council staff for information but that they should inform the Chairman and the Scrutiny Officer of the purpose. Those on task and finish groups should also inform the other members of the group. Discussion at the Committee meetings should help to reduce the need for all the members of the Committee to approach officers.

There was also a discussion around how members of the Committee were going to develop an independent mindset. It was emphasised that the neutrality of the Chairman was important. He could approach other Councillors on behalf of the Committee.

SO/19 **PROCEDURES RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chairman had taken a motion relating to the procedures of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Governance Committee on 9th July 2019. This motion was noted but would need to be considered in greater detail at the next meeting of the Governance Committee. It was confirmed that the date of the next meeting of the Governance Committee had yet to be set.

SO/20 **REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES, FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE**

The Committee received the year end quarterly report on the Council's corporate plan priorities, finance and performance in 2018/19 from the Director

of Corporate Resources. During the discussion, it was noted that the Council had a revenue surplus at the year end. The following issues were highlighted:

- An increase in demand for garden waste and parking disc renewals and the lead up to the elections meant the number of calls abandoned stood at 7% when the target was 5%.
- The percentage of in year business rate collection was slightly down as a result of changes to the value of some properties.
- The new finance computer system would ensure payments were made on time.
- The Council had built the greatest number of new affordable homes provided in West Sussex.

In response to a question regarding the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act on the number of homeless people in Horsham District and whether West Sussex County Council's (WSCC) policy was affecting homeless numbers, it was noted that the Act had a major impact on Horsham District Council's budget. The small additional grant from the Government did not cover the cost of the extra work which needed to be done.

There was a request for figures to show whether there had been increased attendances at the leisure centres and at the Capitol in the light of the expenditure on building The Bridge at Broadbridge Heath and as a result of the Year of Culture which began in January 2019.

It was noted that the Council's reserves were healthy and this was in part due to the New Homes Bonus from the government because Horsham District was an attractive area in which to build.

It was noted that councillors needed to inform the Scrutiny Officer in advance of the meetings of questions which they wanted to ask about performance and other issues so that officers could have the information available.

RESOLVED

- a) That further information on the historical profile regarding the provision of affordable homes in Horsham District be provided to the next meeting and
- b) That figures detailing changes to attendances at the leisure centres and at the Capitol in the light of the investment in The Bridge and the Year of Culture be provided.

SO/21 **CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee noted the items on the Cabinet Forward Plan. It was noted that the proposed car park charges for Piries Place car park were higher than for the previous car park.

Concerns were expressed about the timings for seeking information on the items on the Forward Plan. The Director of Corporate Resources said that should it be necessary, Councillors could request a single item meeting.

SO/22 **WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

The Chairman of the committee wished each councillor who had proposed a work proposal suggestion to speak to their own proposal.

The following work programme suggestions were discussed:

- i) Notification of delegated planning decisions to Ward Members
A request that when Planning Officers made a decision on a planning application, they should notify the ward members and give them three working days to respond.
- ii) WSCC's role as off-street parking consultee on planning applications
- iii) Waste and recycling efficiency
A proposal to review the efficiency of the waste and recyclable system.
- iv) Cycling Protocols
- v) Cycling Infrastructure
To establish from West Sussex County Highways how they would build good cycling infrastructures across Horsham District
- vi) Piries Place Car Park
The projected return on investment and whether it represented value for money.
- vii) Coast to Capital Energy Strategy
To consider whether HDC currently had projects or policies which supported or conformed to the Coast to Capital Energy Strategy, whether there were businesses in Horsham District which specialised in these technologies and whether there were any aspects of the strategy where HDC could feasibly take action or could generate policies in support of the strategy. It would also look at whether there were other actions where HDC could submit bids for funding or encourage businesses to make bids.

viii) Public Consultation Process

This would look at the effectiveness of consultation carried out by HDC.

ix) Health Provision

This would call the Clinical Commissioning Group and GP practices to account on how they propose to reduce waiting times for appointments

RESOLVED

- a) That the proposals on planning decisions and having County highways as a consultee regarding off street parking be finessed and submitted to Planning and Parking for further information.
- b) That recycling efficiency be put onto the work programme and scoped ahead of the next meeting.
- c) That the two proposals on cycling be included in the work programme, and scoped ahead of the next meeting.
- d) That an update on the Piries Place car park be provided by the Director of Corporate Resources regarding the work to date and financial plans including projected income and length of investment in six months' time.
- e) That enquiries regarding the Coast to Capital Energy Strategy be made and discussed with the relevant cabinet member.
- f) That a question be prepared for the Director of Place regarding the methodologies behind the public consultation process. The Committee would also look at what guidance was available to local government regarding consultation.
- g) That a review of public health provision be included in the work programme.
- h) That the following other proposals from Councillors would be circulated to members of the Committee for comment:
 - I. A review of engagement with local environmental groups
 - II. A review of Horsham District Council's Community and Wellbeing Initiatives
 - III. A review of Horsham District Council's planning policy for affordable housing for key workers
 - IV. A review of Horsham District Council's planning policy for rural housing
 - V. A review of what Horsham District Council is doing regarding housing for the ageing population

SO/23 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

RESOLVED

That this item would be taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23rd September 2019.

SO/24 **CRIME & DISORDER ANNUAL UPDATE**

RESOLVED

That this item would be taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23rd September 2019.

The meeting was adjourned.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN