

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
21 NOVEMBER 2022

Present: Councillors: Tony Bevis (Chairman), Philip Circus, Paul Clarke, Ruth Fletcher, Billy Greening, Nigel Jupp, Richard Landeryou, Tim Lloyd, John Milne, Bob Platt and David Skipp

Apologies: Councillors: Ian Stannard

Absent: Councillors: Josh Potts and Jack Saheid

SO/33 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The approval of the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 26 September, was deferred to the next meeting in the light of a request for more detail to be included in Minute No. SO/26 (Report on the Council's Finance and Performance in 2022/23).

SO/34 **MINUTES OF CALL-IN MEETING, HELD ON 20 OCTOBER**

The minutes of the additional meeting held on 20 October in response to a call-in request were approved and signed by the Chairman.

SO/35 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillors Nigel Jupp and John Milne advised that they were also Councillors for West Sussex County Council.

SO/36 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Announcements.

SO/37 **REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IN 2022/23**

The Interim Director of Resources introduced the report on the Council's Finance and Performance in 2022/23 at Month 6. A more favourable return on investment income and an increase in parking income offset rising costs, in particular for HVO fuel, in Housing due to an increase in board and lodging costs, and a reduction in Planning income. Long-term outstanding debt was starting to fall but the pay settlement with a fixed sum for all employees created a further challenge and the overall funding position forecast was now £0.23m deficit.

The Capital programme remained underspent with a projected outturn of 63% of planned spend over the year. It was noted that some projects took more than one year to undertake, but needed to be included in the Capital programme before the budget was spent. Expenditure also tended to be back-weighted towards the second half of the year allowing necessary consultation before

operative progression. The Director of Resources would encourage officers to set a less ambitious and more realistic capital programme for next year.

The Director of Resources talked through the five KPIs given red status, as set out in the appendix. Members were advised that the figures for households in temporary accommodation would improve once Roffey Place, which will provide accommodation for 50 adults finding pathways out of homelessness, is opened in December. The arrears collection of business rates had not been prioritised due to the additional pressure on the team caused by the need to process Covid-relief funding, but this could now be prioritised. And the increase in fly-tipping may be because reporting had been made easier so more cases were being brought to the Council's attention.

Members were advised that the Council was working with the leisure centres operator on the challenges caused by the increased cost of energy. They were looking at ways of decreasing their energy use at the leisure centres, and solar panels were going to be installed at The Bridge. Overall the income received had reduced, though the take up of swimming had increased.

With regards to The Capitol, energy use would be reduced with the introduction of halogen lighting. The price of tickets was not currently being reviewed.

- Members discussed the anticipated deficit on Horsham Museum and requested that the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Culture be invited to the next meeting to answer questions on the museum's attendance. It was also requested that the Cabinet Member for Finance & Parking be asked for his comments on the financial performance of the museum.

In response to questions raised, the Director of Resources agreed to look into the following:

- To check that the use of what3words for reporting fly-tipping was clearly explained on the council's website.
- The replacing of the top deck at Swan Walk was scheduled for November. It was requested this be queried as it may be easier to undertake earlier in the year.
- Establishment of a Climate Change Panel (Appendix E): Members sought assurance that there would be an opportunity for all Councillors to be involved. The Director of Resources would ask the Environmental Coordination Manager for further details.
- Councillor Nigel Jupp, local Member for Billingshurst, questioned whether a decision had been made on the £165k for Billingshurst carpark. The Director of Resources advised that such a specific question could be better answered outside the meeting and would supply a response.

- Rookwood Golf Course study (Appendix E): Members requested confirmation of the schedule for when this study would be completed before further consultation in 2023.

SO/38 **TASK & FINISH GROUPS - AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION**

The membership of the proposed Task & Finish Group to scrutinise the use of Consultants was agreed. Membership was confirmed as David Skipp, Philip Circus, Paul Clarke and John Milne. An initial meeting would be convened as soon as possible.

Councillor Billy Greening suggested that the contract with the current leisure centres operator should be scrutinised and suggested that the Cabinet Member for Finance & Parking should be questioned on this at the next meeting. It was agreed that the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Culture should be included in this item as well.

- Members requested a briefing note for circulation prior to the meeting. The Director of Resources agreed to provide a briefing note regarding the leisure centre's contract and further details regarding the changes caused by Covid and its aftermath.

SO/39 **POLICE PERFORMANCE**

Previous discussion had led to an agreement to request Jeremy Quin MP to attend the next meeting, but Cabinet reshuffles have made this a less viable option. It was proposed to revert to the previously considered option and submit questions and concerns through the Cabinet Member for Housing & Public Protection to be raised at the WSCC Police & Crime Panel. Issues of immediate concern included domestic burglary, knife crime and road crime.

- The Chairman will write to the Cabinet Member for Housing & Public Protection on behalf of the committee.

SO/40 **S106 CONTRIBUTIONS**

The report of the Task & Finish Group that had looked at this issue in 2017 had been circulated for review. It was agreed that it remained an issue of concern that did not always deliver the expected outcomes. Councillors could challenge the terms and management of agreements affecting their wards, but it was considered that this should not be dependent upon individual Councillor endeavour.

- The Chairman suggested, and it was agreed, that Councillor Milne would produce a paper for a future meeting of the Committee setting out appropriate terms of reference for a future Task & Finish Group. He would seek officer advice when drafting these.

SO/41 **SCRUTINY TRAINING**

It was confirmed that training for Scrutiny has now been organised for all members of the Committee and will be delivered by Zoom on 12 December. Supporting paperwork would be circulated after the session.

SO/42 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN FOR 2022/23**

The Work Plan was noted. The Chairman stated that there were sufficient items on the current Work Plan, given the pressures of the forthcoming budget and Local Plan.

SO/43 **CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was noted. It was noted that the Local Plan, scheduled to be considered on 18 January, was on the current published Forward Plan.

SO/44 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.32 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN