

# Crawley Borough Council

## Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission Monday 5 October 2015 at 7.00pm

### Present:

Councillor B A Smith (Chair)  
Councillor K Sudan (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors M L Ayling, Dr H S Bloom, K Brockwell, C A Cheshire, I T Irvine,  
R A Lanzer, L Vitler and W A Ward

### Also in Attendance:

Councillors M G Jones, S J Joyce, B McCrow, C J Mullins

Mr J G Smith MBE, Honorary Freeman and Alderman

### Apology for Absence:

Councillor R G Burgess

### Officers Present:

Rob Channon Interim Head of Community Services (Operations)  
Karen Dodds Head of Crawley Homes  
Heather Girling Democratic Services Officer  
Chris Harris Head of Community Services  
Lee Harris Chief Executive  
Karen Rham Parks and Streetscene Manager

## 45. Members' Disclosure of Interests and Whipping Declarations

The following disclosures of interests were made by Members:-

Member	Minute Number	Subject	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor Dr H S Bloom	51	Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel Final Report	Personal Interest – Wife is a Trustee of Crawley Community Voluntary Service
Councillor C A Cheshire	51	Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel Final Report	Personal Interest - Patient Representative of Crawley Clinical Commissioning Group
Councillor C A Cheshire	51	Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel Final Report	Personal Interest – Trustee of Crawley Community Transport
Councillor C A Cheshire	51	Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel Final Report	Personal Interest – Trustee of Crawley Community Voluntary Service

Councillor R A Lanzer	51	Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel Final Report	Personal Interest – Member of Central & South Sussex Citizens' Advice Bureau
Councillor K Sudan	51	Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel Final Report	Personal interest - CBC Representative for Relate
Councillor L Vitler	51	Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel Final Report	Personal interest – work in Mental Health Wellbeing Services.
Councillor L Vitler	51	Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel Final Report	Personal interest – attends Young Crawley Children & Families CCVS Forum

#### **46. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on [7 September 2015](#) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. The Chair welcomed officers to the Commission's meeting and once again conveyed thanks to all staff who worked in the Parks and Streetscene teams and the service as a whole. Councillor Irvine raised an issue on item 33 (Community Policing – Policing in Sussex) and wished to minute that following the withdrawal of the poster campaign run by Sussex Police to counter sexual violence, it was acknowledged by the Police and Crime Commissioner that it was key for Sussex Police to consult with partners when producing campaigns. Partnership working was of paramount importance (for example door supervisor training) and will be key in the future of policing.

#### **47. Public Question Time**

No questions from the public were asked.

#### **48. Review of the Amendments to the Under Occupation Incentive Policy**

The Commission considered report [CH/166](#) of the Head of Crawley Homes. The report reviewed the effectiveness of the amendments made to the Policy in January 2015.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Head of Crawley Homes, the following points were expressed:

- Appreciation that the amended policy was providing assistance financially to support Council tenants affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy and encouraged those under occupying their home to downsize into a smaller property.
- Acknowledgement that Council tenants who wished to downsize will be assessed on the Housing Register as Band A+ or A, and must meet various criteria.
- It was suggested that perhaps there may be scope to quantify the scheme's success and to also increase the number of homes released. However it was noted that there was low demand for larger properties which were being released and still high demand for two bedroom properties.
- Recognition that the development programme was focusing on the identified need in terms of accommodation requirements.

- Whilst concern was expressed for the vulnerable or those requiring additional support it was acknowledged that the Tenancy Support Officer was able to assist or refer to external support agencies.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Commission welcomed the update and noted the review of the Policy.

### **49. Five Year Business Plan for Tilgate Park and Nature Centre**

The Commission considered report [HCS/02](#) with the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and the Head of Community Services. The report explored proposals to further improve the attractions and facilities at Tilgate Park and the Nature Centre, whilst maintaining the existing infrastructure and raising income to reach a self-financing position by 2020/21.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing, the Head of Community Services and the Parks and Streetscene Manager the following points were made:

- Appreciation that there will continue to be a mixture of 'fun and wilderness'.
- Concern was expressed by some Members that the environment at Tilgate Park was not conducive for exotic animals. The importance of animal conservation was highlighted over their exhibition and income generation. However, it was noted that animals in captivity tend to live longer and the animals at the nature centre are well cared for. The Council has access to a wider zoological family for breeding which in some cases is complex (as it is in the wild). It was confirmed that the wider selection of animals will assist in improving education which is paramount, together with maintaining interesting attractions.
- Acknowledgement that the research undertaken for the Five Year Business Plan had resulted from independent customer feedback from previous visits along with income projections based on the effect from the opening of the 'European Zone'.
- Support by most Members for the general improvements in attractions, facilities and gardens, providing a sensible and measured approach in order to assist in the park and nature centre becoming self-financing. The management of the facility will be of paramount importance, needing to ensure that visitors receive a good experience, at the park and nature centre.
- Acknowledgement for the request for a 'remembrance garden' however it was felt this should be created sensitively, taking into account all views and needed to be well managed.
- Support for work to improve income opportunities through other areas such as secondary spend including the shop, café and partnership working.
- Support for the ongoing marketing and promotion campaigns to increase awareness of the park's attractions (for example improved signage and redesigned maps). There was particular endorsement for differential charging and the re-establishment of the 'Passport to Leisure' or 'Leisure Plus' scheme that previously existed (or similar), providing subsidised leisure use to Crawley residents.

## **RESOLVED**

That the contents of the report be noted and the Cabinet Member and Head of Community Services consider the comments. The Cabinet Member was thanked for his enthusiastic presentation.

## 50. Allotments and Delivery of Service Provision Update Report

The Commission considered report [HCS/01](#) of the Head of Community Services, which provided an update on the current Allotments Systems Thinking Review, together with the service improvements undertaken.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and the Interim Head of Community Services (Operations), Members' main comments included:

- Support for the consultation that had taken place with allotment holders. The continuing communications were welcomed and will allow further improvements to be made along with an enhanced customer service.
- Appreciation that offering a range of plot sizes provided allotment holders the opportunity to select a plot size that met their needs and the charges were on a sqm basis.
- Acknowledgement that a new tenancy agreement was in place, however it was hoped that allotment holders that do not abide by the agreement would be contacted swiftly.
- Acknowledgement that there was an inconsistency and under provision of allotment plots across different areas of the town. There was support for the allocation of allotments in new neighbourhood developments wherever possible, however the necessary land needed to be available.

### RESOLVED

That the Commission welcomed the update report and noted the review.

## 51. Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel Final Report

The Commission considered report [OSC/242](#) of the Chair of the Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel, Councillor K Sudan. The report provided information, actions and recommendations following the Scrutiny Panel Review.

During the discussion with the Chair of the Panel, the following points were expressed:

- The Panel Chair thanked the officer for the work she had undertaken throughout the scrutiny review.
- There was recognition that given the amount of work currently being undertaken in Crawley it was felt that the establishment of a full Fairness Commission model resided better with '1<sup>st</sup> tier' authorities. It was felt that Crawley has a very good voluntary sector.
- There was support that any proposed structure would not replicate the Local Strategic Partnership (Crawley Together) as the town had evolved and this may not prove advantageous.
- It was understood that a hybrid option was the recommended approach, as this added value but at little cost. It would be effective at drawing information together from voluntary organisations together with data such as the Local Picture and Community Profile information.
- There was concern that the proposed structure lacked robustness and needed to be refined. It was confirmed that the Panel anticipated various selected Members attending each of the CCVS Forums and being responsible for an area before reporting back to the 'Community Needs Panel' on priorities. This Panel would

look at fact (data) together with commentary, along with Lead Officers from Community Development who it was envisioned may be responsible for the Panel (officers had been involved in the Scrutiny Panel discussions). It was envisaged meetings would take place when required, after the CCVS Forum meetings.

- It was felt that the criteria for membership in the proposed structure needed to be refined. It was added that there would be value in Members attending the CCVS Forums and attendance from both political groups would be welcomed as this would add value.
- The Commission accepted the recommendations in principle but thought further work may be required by the Scrutiny Panel to refine the structure.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Commission welcomed the report and agreed to support the recommendations to the Cabinet but thought the Scrutiny Panel could further refine the structure.

The Chief Executive left the meeting after this item.

### **52. Portfolio Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing**

The Commission noted the update given by Councillor Mullins on his portfolio and questioned him on a variety of other issues relating to his [portfolio](#).

The following topics were discussed:

- It was important that aspects of the portfolio included both physical and mental wellbeing.
- There was support to increase the leisure facilities within the town, particularly at K2 Crawley.
- The Wellbeing Service (which is run in partnership with West Sussex County Council and the local NHS) regularly provides advice on healthy eating, together with ways for improving general health and wellbeing.
- There was recognition that noise could potentially be attributed to poor health.
- The current anti-smoking campaign 'Stoptober' was welcomed by Members but it was felt that increased publicity may increase registration.
- There was support for a Members' seminar on Wellbeing.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission thanked Councillor Mullins for attending and for the informative discussion that had ensued.

### **53. Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee (HASC)**

Councillor W A Ward provided an update on the HASC meeting held on 1 October 2015. The major items discussed were as follows:

- The number of care homes in Crawley had significantly reduced. The support provision was discussed for those remaining in terms of training, budget and maintaining standards.

- It was acknowledged that the existing care homes may be outside of the borough, putting increasing pressure on the remaining carer, particularly if they do not have access to a vehicle.
- There was recognition that the Dementia Framework was an initiative set up by WSCC and the Task and Finish Group had recently concluded its review to scrutinise the Dementia Framework 2014-2019.

#### **54. Scrutiny Panels**

Below is a brief update on the Commission's Panels:

##### **Review of Democratic Structures**

Councillor B A Smith informed the Commission that the first meeting of the Scrutiny Panel was scheduled to take place on 13 October 2015.

#### **55. Forward Plan – November 2015 and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's Following Meetings**

The Commission considered the latest version of the Forward Plan and the provisional lists of reports for future Commission's meetings.

##### **RESOLVED**

That the reports already referred from the Forward Plan included:

##### **December 2015**

Crawley Borough Local Plan: Crawley 2030

Crawley Borough Local Plan: Local Development Scheme 2015–2018

Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2015-2016

Skills Development Plan

Town Centre Regeneration Programme

#### **56. Closure of Meeting**

The meeting ended at 9.45pm.

**B A SMITH**  
**Chair**