

Crawley Borough Council

Cabinet

Supplementary Agenda

Wednesday, 27 September 2023



Chief Executive

6 Matters referred to the Cabinet and Report from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

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Attached is a copy of the OSC Comments to Cabinet from its meeting on: 25 September 2023.

NOTE: The Leader has agreed that, although this report and information was not available for at least five clear days before the meeting, there are special circumstances justifying its urgent consideration.



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Cabinet

Wednesday 27 September 2023

Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on Monday 25 September 2023

OSC/314

1. Cabinet Agenda Item 7 – 2023-2024 Budget Monitoring – Quarter 1

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report [FIN/633](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance.

During the discussion with the Leader of the Council, Head of Corporate Finance, Head of Crawley Homes and Chief Accountant, the following comments were made:

- Recognition that there was a projected overspend in year, following the impact of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, demands on services including Homelessness, reduced income and inflation factors. It was commented that the situation was not sustainable but would be consistently monitored and continued to be reported in future monitoring reports as well as the Budget Strategy.
- Confirmation was provided on the latest position regarding New Burdens funding, together with further information on the work currently being undertaken following the decision to grant British citizenship to people of Chagossian descent, the resultant pressures and potential impact for the town's housing.
- Clarification sought and obtained on the costings on various elements for the new town hall.
- Explanation sought as to the pay award offer, the additional cost projected for the General Fund together with the vacancy provisions documented within the report. (*The Head of Corporate Finance subsequently confirmed that the correct figure was £280k as quoted in appendix 1(ii)*).
- It was noted that the General Fund balance would be close to the recommended minimum of £3m by the end of the financial year if no corrective action was taken.
- Recognition of the pressures and concerns within Homelessness as the service continued to see sustained pressures in all forms of temporary accommodation. It was noted that the service proactively sought suitable temporary accommodation (and it was difficult when this did not materialise), in order to minimise out of borough placements and nightly paid accommodation. It was noted that there were financial, resource and letting benefits resulting from an efficient turnaround of void properties.
- Acknowledgement that the Decarbonisation Fund was being deployed on a 'fabric first' approach on a defined list of properties.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

2. Cabinet Agenda Item 11 – Proposed Land Disposal of St Catherine's Hospice Site

Exempt Paragraph 3 –

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report SHAP/88 of the Head of Strategic Housing.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Housing Enabling & Development Manager, the following comments were made:

- Acknowledgement that the proposal aimed to preserve the legacy of this site and to achieve significant social value in the continued provision of care and support, which was inclusive of on-site affordable housing.

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- Recognition that as part-landowner, the Council had restricted the future use of the assembled site for the continued provision of a care facility or to provide sheltered accommodation, and the market had been assessed accordingly.
- Clarification was sought and obtained on the financial details and options provided within the report.
- General support for the report as it was recognised that the site carried a sentimental element and therefore it was paramount that any interests retained and represented the sensitive usage of the site, particularly for the ongoing benefit of Crawley.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

3. Cabinet Agenda Item 12 – Future Acquisitions for Affordable Housing Delivery

Exempt Paragraph 3 –

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report CH/201 of the Head of Crawley Homes.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Housing Enabling & Development Manager, the following comments were made:

- Recognition that it would allow officers to explore opportunities and viable options from across the market in different forms and to proceed when appropriate, following the necessary consultation.
- Acknowledgement that the options proposed had significant potential to contribute towards addressing Crawley's housing needs and would ease the reliance on expensive nightly paid accommodation.
- Clarification was sought and obtained on the financial details and the various options documented within the report.
- Confirmation provided on the recommendations that they were in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

Councillor Ayling
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission
25 September 2023