

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Tuesday, 3 September 2019 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

T Rana (Chair)

T G Belben (Vice-Chair)

M L Ayling, D Crow, G S Jhans, R A Lanzer, T McAleney, A Pendlington and K Sudan

Also in Attendance:

Councillor B J Burgess, J Hart and B A Smith

Officers Present:

Ann-Maria Brown Head of Legal, Democracy and HR

Paula Doherty Community Services Manager

Ian Duke Deputy Chief Executive

Heather Girling Democratic Services Officer

Kate Wilson Head of Community Services

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor R G Burgess and R S Fiveash

1. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

The following disclosures were made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor T McAleney	Safer Crawley Partnership Annual Review and Forthcoming Priorities (Minute 4)	Personal Interest – Employed by Crawley Open House

2. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

3. Minutes (Part A minute)

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 24 June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Safer Crawley Partnership Annual Review and Forthcoming Priorities

The Commission received an update from Chief Inspector Baker, Inspector Starns, Head of Community Services, Community Services Manager, together with the Chair of the Safer Crawley Partnership on the annual performance report of the Community Safer Partnership along with the future priorities.

During the discussion, the following points were expressed:

- Recognition of the good partnership working within the council together with external partners, including Police, West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, Probation Service, Crawley CCG, WSCC and a range of Voluntary Groups.
- Acknowledgement that intelligence gathering would continue to assist in the Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) approach.
- It was important to work with agencies to raise awareness of what serious and organised crime involves whilst encouraging the public to report observations and concerns.
- Concerns were raised regarding a perceived lack of PCSO presence. Recognition of the current issues within the town and the actions being taken to address these along with the community / neighbourhood policing role. There was scope to have further engagement with schools.
- Acknowledgement of key achievements, including joint disruption activity undertaken, targeted work to identify and safeguarding vulnerable individuals at risk, loan shark awareness sessions and introduction of direct input intelligence from partners to police. Recognition that increased flexible communication plus shared information unlocks barriers.
- There was continued joint working in relation to tackling the issue of street homelessness, begging and street drinking. Diverted Giving awareness raising events had been a sensitive but successful approach.
- Recognition that reporting issues through formal channels was key. Alternative methods of reporting were clarified to assist both residents and Councillors. It was particularly stressed that whilst social media platforms can be effective ways for engaging with residents, that this was not an effective way to report concerns because agencies may well not pick it up.
- Confirmation was sought on the Community Safety survey which was carried out on an annual basis as part of the Safer Crawley Partnership's annual strategic assessment process and promoted via the council's website and social media, local press and via direct emails.
- Acceptance that further challenges still remained and priorities for 2019-2020 included serious and organised crime, street community and protecting vulnerable individuals. Protecting vulnerable individuals cut across the other two priorities of Serious and Organised Crime in relation to the exploitation of vulnerable individuals and Street Community due to chaotic and complex needs associated with this group of individuals.

RESOLVED

That the Chair thanked officers for their contribution. Particular thanks was made to Chief Inspector Baker and Inspector Starns for their attendance at the Commission. The presentation had been very interesting and informative.

5. Cabinet Member Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Community Engagement

The Commission noted the update given by Councillor Brenda Smith and questioned her on a variety of issues relating to her portfolio.

The following topics were discussed:

- The nature of the portfolio, including the variety of the role. Whilst the position incorporates engagement and liaison with many interesting community groups, the function also brings with it challenges.
- The service area responsibility covers community and neighbourhood development and within this field, the Community Development Team have supported neighbourhood forums throughout the town, assisting these forums in their establishment, fun days as well as enhancing community action and the successful Armed Forces Day event.
- The service also involves assisting in consultation for various services including the Local Plan, Community Arts and activities for young people.
- The Commission was updated that Safeguarding Policy had recently been refreshed to take into account recent updates.
- The recent public space protection order had been effective in some areas of the town where warnings had been issued.

RESOLVED

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

6. Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review 2018/19

The Commission considered report LDS/155 of the Head of Legal, Democracy and HR. The report sought to update Members on the number, nature and the findings of complaints about Crawley Borough Council which were made to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in 2018/19 and to highlight any changes made from upheld cases to assist with learning lessons and improve the Council's performance. The Statutory Overview and Scrutiny Guidance for Local Authorities published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in May 2019 states that "Scrutiny members should have access to a regularly available source of key information about the management of the authority – particularly on performance, management and risk".

During the discussion with the Head of Legal, Democracy and HR, Councillors made the following comments:

- It was acknowledged that the number of complaints referred to the LGSCO was relatively low during 2018/19. The LGSCO has a number of remedies, and it was

noted that it can recommend monetary payments to be made where it determines that complaints should be upheld.

- Corporate Management Team regularly focused on the complaints data and proactively addressed common complaint issues and emerging trends within areas in order to improve service delivery.
- Councillors regularly receive quarterly complaint information within the Councillors' Information Bulletin.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report.

7. Establishment of and Appointments to Scrutiny Panels

Following the Full Council meeting in July 2019, the Commission was recommended to consider the establishment and any nominations received for the 'Climate Change' Scrutiny Panel.

It was agreed that nominations would be sought prior to the next meeting so Panel membership could be agreed.

RESOLVED

- That nominations were sought (via Democratic Services) for the membership for the Panel, in accordance with political proportionality.
- That a Chair for the new Scrutiny Panel be established at the next meeting.

8. Forward Plan - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

23 September 2019

- Council Tax Empty Homes Premium.
- Crawley Homes Additional Staffing Requirement.

4 November 2019

- Waste & Recycling Contract (provisional referral)

25 November 2019

Note from Democratic Services: All the reports listed below with the exception of Three Bridges Improvement Scheme Final Design are Policy Framework Documents.

- Budget Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25
- Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2019/2020
- Crawley 2035: Crawley Borough Local Plan 2020-2035
- Review of Statement of Licensing Policy Gambling Act 2005 (2020-2022)
- Homelessness Strategy 2019 - 2024
- Tenancy Strategy 2019
- Three Bridges Improvement Scheme Final Design

3 February 2019

- 2020/2021 Budget and Council Tax
- Treasury Management Strategy 2020-21
- Capital Strategy 2020/2021

9. Exempt Information – Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

10. Minutes (PART B - minute)

Exempt Paragraphs 3 & 4

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

Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under the authority.

An update was provided on the recent Occupational Sick Pay for Crawley Homes' Contractor Staff report. It was requested that Councillors be kept informed as to its status.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.05 pm

T Rana
Chair