

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 30 September 2024 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

M L Ayling (Chair)

H Hellier (Vice-Chair)

I Ashraf, E Barrott, T Bidwell, D Crow, N Hilton, G S Jhans, K Khan, R A Lanzer, S Pritchard and J Russell

Also in Attendance:

Councillors I T Irvine, M G Jones and A Nawaz

Officers Present:

Elizabeth Brigden

Planning Policy Manager

Heather Girling

Democratic Services Officer

Amanda Kendall

Head of Crawley Homes

Sallie Lappage

Strategic Planning Manager

Chris Page

Deputy Chief Executive

Clem Smith

Head of Economy and Planning

Roy Wood

Built Environment Team - Senior Project Manager

1. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

The following disclosures were made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor S Pritchard	Cabinet Member Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development (Minute 5)	Personal Interest - Chair of Planning Committee
Councillor H Hellier	Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) (Minute 6)	Personal Interest – NHS Public Governor
Councillor R A Lanzer	Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) (Minute 6)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) (Minute 6)	Personal Interest – WSCC Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 30 September 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

Questions asked in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 14 were as follows:

Questioner's Name	Responder
<p>Mr Symonds, Ifield –</p> <p>In the Crawley Local Plan - declared 'sound' by the Planning Inspector - it states in Policy CL8 Paras 4.67 - 4.70: Development Outside the Built-Up Area - West of Ifield Rural Fringe: 'Proposals which respect this area of locally special rural fringe, its nature conservation and recreation value, its positive relationship with the urban edge and links to the wider countryside, will be encouraged'. Does that mean the 'Ifield Country Park - Gatwick' proposal be encouraged by this Council?</p> <p>Supplementary –</p> <p>In the 2022 SYSTRA Study - 'Crawley Western Link Road Northern Section' [Client/Project Owner: Crawley Borough Council] - it states in Paragraph. 2.2.3: 'Within the context of these strategies the main purposes of this northern section of the CWLR [Crawley Western Link Road] are to...'support the development of the West of Ifield housing'. It was thought this Council was opposing the West of Ifield development. Please could this Council provide clarification of its position regarding West of Ifield?</p>	<p>Head of Economy and Planning –</p> <p>Thank you for your question. Once we receive detailed information as to what those proposals entail, officers will then give consideration to those proposals and make recommendations to Members as to what the council's position should be. At this moment in time, we have not seen the detail in relation to what's proposed in that context, although it is acknowledged that a preliminary draft case for the Ifield Country Park has been received. As you rightly say the council's policies is as you've stated in your quote from the Local Plan. Please note, Crawley Borough Council can only progress proposals within the Crawley Borough Boundary and on land it owns and manages.</p> <p>One of the reasons Crawley Borough Council is opposing the proposed West of Ifield development as per the Full Council Motion in October 2021 is the impact on Crawley's existing road network, and the lack of attention to infrastructure provision within the proposals. The Crawley Western Link Road Study was undertaken by Systra in 2022 as part of the Crawley Borough Local Plan evidence base. It formed part of the council's due diligence to ensure we can identify the infrastructure needed within Crawley boundaries for the multi-modal transport links to account for the possibility of West of Ifield scheme being permitted by Horsham DC in the future. The text being referred to is from a consultant's piece of work and the meaning of the word 'support' has therefore a completely different meaning and context.</p>

4. Crawley Borough Local Plan 2023-2040

The Commission considered report [PES/459](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning and supporting documents.

The Crawley Local Plan Review was undertaken to ensure the borough's Local Plan remains up to date. The new Crawley Borough Local Plan was prepared based on the outcomes of monitoring the implementation of the 2015 adopted Local Plan, feedback from previous stages of formal public consultations and updating the supporting technical evidence base. Following Full Council, held on 22 February 2023, which approved the Draft Local Plan for Publication and Submission, formal public consultation took place between May and June 2023. The draft Local Plan was Submitted to the Secretary of State for its independent Examination on 31 July 2023. Two Inspectors were appointed to carry out the Examination of the Plan. Examination Hearing Sessions were carried out in two parts, held during November 2023 and January 2024. Following the discussions at the Hearings, the Inspectors issued a post-hearing letter, dated 31 January 2024. The council published Main Modifications to the Local Plan, arising from the Inspectors' letter, for a formal six-week public consultation between February and March 2024. The council received the Inspectors' final Report into the of the Crawley Borough Local Plan on 6 September 2024. This confirmed the Local Plan has been found to be legally compliant and sound, subject to required Main Modifications set out in the Report. The Crawley Borough Local Plan 2023-2040 has been prepared alongside a number of statutory supporting documents (including a Local Plan Map, a Sustainability Appraisal, a Habitats Regulations Assessment and a Consultation Statement) and a substantial technical evidence base.

The reports requested Cabinet to recommend to Full Council to approve the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2023-2040 (and supporting documents) for its adoption, in accordance with the recommendations, and subject to the Main Modifications necessary for soundness, set out in the Inspectors' Final Report.

Throughout the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Head of Economy and Planning, Forward Planning Manager and the Planning Policy Manager, Councillors made the following comments:

- Recognition of the positive comments within the Planning Inspectors' report, particularly with reference to the questionable longevity of safeguarded land for the possible Gatwick southern runway due to the potential developable land, together with the further acknowledgement of the town's space constraints for new build housing of all tenures and need for neighbouring local authorities to exercise the 'duty to co-operate' to assist with the town's housing need.
- Clarification sought and obtained on the Gatwick Green allocation. It was confirmed that the Gatwick Green was allocated by securing its exclusion from safeguarding and concurrently allocated for another purpose (economic use). The area of land allocated to Gatwick Green was no longer safeguarded.
- Support for the work undertaken to combat the constraints of water neutrality and the retrofitting work being undertaken. It was noted this issue had also impacted neighbouring authorities.
- Acknowledgement that waste water was now part of the critical infrastructure, and a potential constraint for future development. The new Local Plan required developers to address infrastructure at an early stage.

- Recognition that infrastructure and transport were key, and the new Crawley Local Plan would ensure the town's future development and infrastructure needs could be delivered to support the sustainable growth of the borough, within its accepted physical constraints, and whilst continuing to protect its important built and natural environmental assets.
- Confirmation provided regarding the 'backdating' of the Local Plan, together with the advice and evidence requested throughout the Planning Inspectorate process in terms of post adoption and evidence. National Planning Policy Requirements state a Local Plan must last at least 15 years post adoption, and the Local Plan was originally submitted July 2023 with anticipated adoption 2024. However the Planning Inspectors requested background data and evidence to be addressed for preceding years, resulting in a Local Plan 2023-2040.
- Clarification sought and obtained on the anticipated housing need, along with the minimum number of dwellings, in comparison with neighbouring authorities. It was noted that a supply-led housing requirement of a minimum of 5,330 dwellings was supported with the unmet housing need recognised as 7,505 dwellings. There was recognition of the acute affordable housing need in the borough, supporting the 40% requirement (25% town centre) for affordable housing contribution on all housing sites, which included smaller sites.
- The Commission commended the work of the Planning Team on the compilation of the Local Plan.

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.

5. Cabinet Member Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development

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

Councillor Nawaz provided the Commission with a detailed overview of the portfolio, along with key achievements to date and future projects. The following topics were then discussed:

- Planning officers were praised for their continued work, however concern was raised over the delay in the processing of planning applications. It was confirmed that there had been many challenges which had impacted; Covid, water neutrality as well as the Gatwick DCO work whereby the council was coordinating the response for other local authorities. It was acknowledged that new management systems and resources had been instilled to reduce the backlog, which was proving successful.
- The regeneration programmes that had been implemented had resulted in significant investment throughout the town, as a result of successful partnership working. The Institute of Technology was highlighted as a positive example, whilst it was noted other projects such as Three Bridges station had been challenging, and was likely to progress later next year, ultimately resulting in improvement to the public realm.
- Future projects were also planned including Station Gateway and it was noted that maintenance of the schemes was an integral part of the projects and part of discussions with other stakeholders.
- It was acknowledged that there were challenges in meeting the council's housing need and it would be important to continue engage constructively.

RESOLVED

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

6. Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC)

An update was provided from the most recent [HASC](#) meeting. Key items of discussion included:

Access to Diabetes Technology in West Sussex

In February 2024 Diabetes UK wrote to the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee asking for the topic of access to diabetes technology to be reviewed, due to concerns around the local Sussex policy for access to wider technology for people with type 1 diabetes not being fully aligned with national guidance and a lack of a commissioned pathway for people living with type 2. Diabetes UK attended the meeting and provided a report which set out the context of the current diabetes landscape, alongside providing an up-to-date position on access to diabetes technology in West Sussex. The report was currently being considered.

Update on the delivery of the two-year improvement programme 2023-25 to assist the delivery of the Adult Social Care Strategy 2022-25 and preparation for Care Quality Commission Assurance of Adult Social Care

The document set out a number of areas for improvement, which had been identified for delivery as part of the two-year improvement programme. The delivery of this programme was being supported by the County Council's transformation fund. Ongoing management oversight of the capacity required had been planned and resourced for the improvement programme during the remainder of 2023/24 and throughout 2024/25, with the procurement of Roretta Ltd to provide external capacity to support delivery, up until 30 June 2025.

End of June 2024 (Quarter 1) Performance and Resources Report – Focus for Scrutiny

The Quarterly Performance and Resources Report was the Council's reporting mechanism for corporate performance, finance, savings delivery, risk and workforce. It had been designed to reflect the priorities, outcomes and measures included in the Council Plan. The performance measures were split between green, amber and red, with a focus on those highlighted amber and red. In reviewing the Performance and Resources report, the Committee's role was to monitor performance, finance and risk at a strategic level for its portfolio areas. Its focus should be on key performance indicators that were identified as red or amber as well as any budget variations.

7. Forthcoming Decision List - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

1. New Hawth Contract – Part B
2. Crawley Leisure Management Contract Extension – Part B

The Commission will also be considering:

3. Transformation Plan Update
4. Cabinet Member Discussion – Resources

8. 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.

9. Tilgate Youth Centre Redevelopment - Approval of Scheme Budget and Authority to Appoint a Contractor

Exempt Paragraph 3

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

The Commission considered report CH/209 of the Head of Crawley Homes. Cabinet approval was sought for a scheme budget for the site's redevelopment, and authority to enter into a contract for the construction of 6no. dwellings.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Head of Crawley Homes and the Built Environment Team - Senior Project Manager, Councillors made the following comments:

- Noted that Full Council approval would also be sought for the appropriation of land from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account together with agreeing the proposed scheme budget.
- Recognition that the proposal for new affordable housing would assist in expanding the housing stock in the borough, which had potential to contribute towards addressing Crawley's housing needs
- Information was provided on the financial elements, unit mix, other options considered, and the detailed analysis documented within the report as concerns were raised with reference to specific costs.
- Acknowledgement that parking considerations were a challenge but consultation had previously taken place and the scheme was still subject to Planning permission.
- Recognition that the scheme was to be built to Passivhaus standards for energy efficiency, which would significantly benefit occupants.
- Noted that the scheme provided a strategic learning opportunity for a small scale development.

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.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.02 pm.

M L Ayling (Chair)