

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 4 November 2024 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

M L Ayling (Chair)

O Adeniyi, I Ashraf, E Barrott, N Hilton, G S Jhans, I Khan, K Khan, R A Lanzer, D Ramsay and J Russell

Also in Attendance:

Councillors M G Jones, C J Mullins and T Rana

Officers Present:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Paul Baker | Partnership Services Manager |
| Siraj Choudhury | Head of Governance, People & Performance |
| Heather Girling | Democratic Services Officer |
| Simon Jones | Head of Digital and Transformation |
| Emma Nash | IT and Transformation Programme Manager |
| Chris Page | Deputy Chief Executive |
| Nigel Sheehan | Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services |

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor H Hellier

1. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

The following disclosures were made:

| Councillor | Item and Minute | Type and Nature of Disclosure |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Councillor R A Lanzer | Review of the Transformation Programme Plan (Minute 4) | Personal Interest – Member of WSCC |
| Councillor R A Lanzer | Review of the Transformation Programme Plan (Minute 4) | 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

No questions from the public were asked.

4. Review of the Transformation Programme Plan

Commission Members considered report [DCE/019](#) of the Deputy Chief Executive, along with associated [Appendix A](#). The Commission has within its function to review the Council's transformation programme, measures, and performance information (including budgetary information) together with service reviews.

The Transformation Plan had been revised a number of times since 2020. The Transformation Programme Plan v3 was revised in 2023 and presented to the OSC in October 2023. The Transformation Board has coordinated the workstreams, prioritised work, driven progress and monitored risk. Various projects within the Programme Plan have been reported back to the organisation through Portfolio Briefings, the Managers' Conference, Chief Executive Q&As and through internal Communications such as Outline and Team Brief. This third plan has an increased external focus, so residents have participated in surveys and focus groups to help inform the way forward for some items. The annual review report (Appendix A) provides a mechanism to record and recognise the progress made and sets out plans to deliver the remainder of the programme.

Transformation Plan (v3 – Appendix A) included the following workstreams:

- Our Services to Customers
- Supporting Our Communities
- Our People
- Our Assets
- Commercialisation - Profit, Income, Productivity, Efficiencies, Savings
- Service redesign.

Following the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Resources, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Digital and Transformation and IT & Transformation Programme Manager, the following queries were raised:

- Clarification sought and obtained on the 'MyCrawley' accounts and potential for density and household data to assist in account registration. It was commented that a relaunch of the portal and further promotional activity was planned later this year and this would potentially assist in increasing registration numbers.
- Clarification was sought on the 'supporting our communities' theme which provided further opportunities to work with partners, identify any risks/gaps to provide further support and provide services in a different way. There was a need to collate and understand the current data and lived experience of Crawley residents to enable understanding of needs, risks and impact. It was queried whether further information could be obtained as to the Household Support Fund 4 heat map, identifying the vulnerabilities within neighbourhoods and in order to further provide assistance.

- Query was sought on the Pension Credit support available and what influence the Council may have to make the form completion easier. Drop in sessions at the Town Hall were available on a Tuesday and Wednesday during October and November between 9.30am and 3pm where officers would be able to check eligibility and help residents submit an application. Further information was listed on the Council's [website](#).
- Further information was provided on 'Access Crawley', as a project which supported vulnerable individuals and families to navigate multiple Council Services, dealing with financial challenges or requiring further support. The case officers worked with residents to access the right benefits, support and advocate for them with individual services so that there is a co-ordinated approach and work continued exploring the wider strategic partnership working. It was noted that each case was different due to individuals' circumstances.
- Recognition that that Digital Exclusion group were working alongside the West Sussex Digital Inclusion, Access and Safety Partnership and this included other districts and borough councils. It was paramount to engage with the group, along with partners such as the voluntary sector and NHS. It was queried whether digital exclusion data could be obtained by neighbourhood to further direct the support to the right parts of the local community.
- Confirmation provided that the biennial digital survey that collects data on residents' access to and knowledge of online services, preference and barriers to use was still planned for Q3 2024. Relating to this it was commented that in some situations, online access (for example completing forms) would be more beneficial due to algorithms imbedded to ensure an efficient process.
- Query was sought and obtained on the Tilgate wi-fi project which was currently being reviewed together with a request to obtain further information on the Tilgate Business Plan when this was formalised and available to be published.
- Further information was provided on the funding position and potential impact on projects. It was confirmed that governance structures were in place to monitor projects and highlight any concerns or risks.
- Acknowledgement that the commercialisation stream included every part of the council's service delivery and all workstreams across the Transformation Plan. It was key this investigated efficiencies as well as savings and income.
- Query was sought and obtained on improving online access for Taxi licensing applications. It was noted that it was an active project and work was ongoing implement the online forms.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report, with the views expressed being acknowledged and documented by the officers.

5. Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Resources

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

Councillor Rana provided the Commission with a detailed overview of the portfolio. The following topics were then discussed:

- Further information was provided on the current Government consultation on "Enabling Remote Attendance at Local Authority Meetings". The consultation responses would be known nationally at the end of the 8 week period. However in terms of progressing any processes there would be a need to liaise with Councillors

potentially through a Members' Working Group as the IT, governance and constitutional work required should not be underestimated.

- It was acknowledged that Crawley Homes and Contact Centre staff offered assessments and support in terms of available services, including queries on pension credit. These were further supplemented by CAB advisors in the town hall on a weekly basis to offer advice.
- Unfortunately, there have been a number of more serious incidents in the town hall reception area involving abusive and violent behaviour towards staff. The Terms of Entry for the Town Hall has been reviewed and a SIA trained officer maintains a physical presence in the reception area. Other aspects had been reviewed and advice taken to ensure that whilst minor adjustments have been made, the customer experience should still be positive and residents are welcomed.
- It was noted that the Democratic Services and Elections Teams had been implementing new technologies in both areas and the work undertaken throughout, including elections and Councillor induction training was commended.

RESOLVED

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

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

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

1. 2024-2025 Budget Monitoring – Quarter 2 (All Budget Monitoring Quarterly Reports have been referred to OSC)
2. Budget Strategy 2025/26-2027/28 (Policy Framework Document)
3. Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024-2025 (Policy Framework Document)
4. Tenancy Strategy (2025 - 2029) (Policy Framework Document)
5. Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy (2025 - 2029) (Policy Framework Document)
6. Updated Climate Emergency Action Plan and Climate Emergency Declaration (OSC approved an annual updated on the Climate Change Emergency Action Plan)
7. Waste and Recycling Contract Scrutiny Panel Final Report (Scrutiny Panel final report to be reported to OSC)
8. Waste and Recycling: Changes to Collection Regime and Extension of Waste and Recycling Contract – Part B (Report referred to OSC)

7. 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.

8. **Crawley Leisure Contract: Contract Extension**

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 HPS/043 of the Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services. The report sought approval was sought to progress the options and preferred delivery model for the Crawley Leisure Facilities Management Contract.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Wellbeing, Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services and the Partnership Services Manager, the following points were expressed:

- It was acknowledged that K2 Crawley was nearly 20 years' old and there was a need to remain competitive and amongst the leading leisure centres in the region.
- Recognition that there had been a growth in competition within the town and the recommendations would assist in improving the health and fitness facilities.
- It was noted that there was also a need to improve the environmental impact of the building and the proposals supported ongoing work enhancing environmental sustainability.
- Queries were sought and obtained on membership and the range of options offered at the venue.
- It was acknowledged that improvements had been made post-pandemic but further work was required and the challenges were recognised, both for the maintaining the uniqueness of the venue but also any changes to be implemented.
- Recognition that the scheme would help maintain the Council's income and further detail was provided on funding along with the capital expenditure, income and revenue costs.

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.

9. **Hawth Theatre: Options Appraisal and Contract Extension**

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 HPS/044 of the Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services. The report sought approval of the preferred delivery model for the Hawth Theatre following an options appraisal and tender process.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Wellbeing, Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services and the Partnership Services Manager, the following points were expressed:

- It was acknowledged that as part of the options that had been considered, the proposal would ensure Hawth continued to provide valued local services while supporting the Council's wider budget requirements.
- It was noted that the extension would secure a significant saving on the 2025/26 revenue budget, whilst balancing the capacity and resourcing requirements for the

Council. The proposal was the only viable means of achieving this within the current contract period. Other options were not deemed advantageous and would be a significant resource undertaking and the proposed option was less impactful enabling resources to be applied to other priority projects.

- Recognition that the Hawth had significantly grown its community and participation programmes and the option proposed enabled these to continue. Whilst these programmes were welcomed it was queried whether this package could be developed further.

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 9.19 pm.

M L Ayling (Chair)