

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 25 November 2019 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

T Rana (Chair)

M L Ayling, R G Burgess, G S Jhans, R A Lanzer, T McAleney and K Sudan

Also in Attendance:

Councillor R D Burrett, I T Irvine and P C Smith

Officers Present:

Tony Baldock	Environmental Health and Licensing Manager
Elizabeth Brigden	Planning Policy Manager
Ian Duke	Deputy Chief Executive
Hannah Edwards	Performance, Policy and Project Officer
Heather Girling	Democratic Services Officer
Nikki Hargrave	Housing Options Manager (Strategic Housing)
Karen Hayes	Head of Corporate Finance
Nick Hobbs	Housing Needs Manager
Sallie Lappage	Forward Planning Manager
Paul Windust	Chief Accountant

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor T G Belben, D Crow, R S Fiveash and A Pendlington

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	Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy 2019- 2024 (Minute 7)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC

Councillor T McAleney	Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy 2019- 2024 (Minute 7)	Personal Interest – Employee of Open House (Potentially Prejudicial in some cases dependent on (any financial) discussion). Aspects not discussed so Councillor McAleney did not need to leave the room.
Councillor K Sudan	Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy 2019- 2024 (Minute 7)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 4 November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

4. Budget Strategy 2020/21 - 2024/25

The Commission considered report [FIN/483](#) with the Head of Corporate Finance and Chief Accountant. The report set out the projected financial position for 2020/21 to 2024/25 for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, capital programme and the underlying assumptions.

The report would be considered by Cabinet and then Full Council in December. During the introduction it was acknowledged that the local government finance system had become increasing complex and that any further increase in council tax would assist in minimising the budget gap. There was recognition that there was a need to ensure an effective use of capital. The current strategy incorporated bids for capital based on expenditure required to maintain the Council's assets in addition to spend to save projects or spend to earn investment, together with the need to undertake environmental obligations and disability facility grants and projects that could deliver social value. It should be noted that the majority of Members expressed their support for the recommendations with two opting to abstain.

Recommendations

That the majority of the Commission Members agreed to support the recommendations.

5. Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2019/2020

The Commission considered report [FIN/484](#) with the Head of Corporate Finance and Chief Accountant which provided an update on the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for the first two quarters of 2019/2020. The Council prioritises its investments as being security of capital, liquidity and yield.

Throughout the discussion there was recognition that during the first half of 2019 the council had achieved a return on investment of 1%. An explanation was also sought on the source and reference for the amendment to the Ethical Investment Policy together with its criteria.

Recommendations

That the Commission agreed to support the recommendations.

6. Review of the Statement of Licensing Policy Gambling Act 2005 (2020 - 2022)

The Commission considered report [HCS/18](#) of the Head of Community Services. The report documented the proposed amendments to the Council's revised Statement of Licensing Policy Gambling Act 2005 (2020-2022), which had been generated from responses following a 12 week public consultation exercise that concluded on 20th September 2019.

Throughout the introduction with the Environmental Health Manager, it was recognised that proposed revised Review of Statement of Licensing Policy Gambling Act 2005 did not take into account licences for operators or machines (such as fixed odds betting terminals) as these were the responsibility of the Gambling Commission. The Council was responsible for the issuing of licences for premises only. There was also acknowledgement that there had been a lack of feedback from the public consultation with responses received only from the Gambling Commission and the Director of Public Health.

Recommendations

That the Commission agreed to support the recommendations.

7. Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy 2019 - 2024

The Commission considered report [SHAP/76](#) of the Head of Strategic Housing. The report sought approval for the updated Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024.

Throughout the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Housing Options Manager and the Housing Performance, Policy and Project Officer, Councillors made the following comments:

- Acknowledgement that there has been an impact on homelessness as a consequence of the lack of increase in local housing allowance and the growing gap between this and the cost of private tenancies.
- Recognition that Crawley has a buoyant housing market and the availability of property changes weekly.
- Confirmation that the action plan and strategy would be kept under constant review.
- Acknowledgement that the Private Sector Housing team regularly worked with the National Landlord Association to facilitate forums.
- Explanation sought and obtained on the exceptions within the strategy. The report and legislation documented the areas covered within the strategy.
- Confirmation that the proximity to Gatwick airport resulted in minimal impact in the rise of homeless numbers and work continued with Gatwick partners.
- Explanation of the costs associated with nightly paid temporary accommodation and that in some instances these were due to specific circumstances (out of hours or safety reasons).
- Acknowledgement that unfortunately there was currently a cohort of individuals within the town who were refusing to engage in current services. There was a multi-agency approach involving looking at commissioning substance misuse

outreach teams, triage services with mental health assistance, carrying out risk assessment and where appropriate taking enforcement action as a last resort to motivate and encourage.

Recommendations

That the Commission agreed to support the recommendations.

8. Tenancy Strategy 2019 - 2024

The Commission considered report [SHAP/77](#) of the Head of Strategic Housing. The report sought approval for the updated Tenancy Strategy 2019 – 2024.

During the introduction with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Housing Needs Manager and the Housing Performance, Policy and Project Officer, it was confirmed that the Tenancy Strategy was issued to other registered providers in the town and set out key areas that they were asked to take into account when formulating their own tenancy policies.

Recommendations

That the Commission agreed to support the recommendations.

9. Submission Crawley Local Plan 2020 - 2035

The Commission considered report [PES/336](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning. The report sought to recommend to Full Council the approval of the submission draft Local Plan for public consultation (a statutory six-week period of public consultation), approval of the submission draft Local Plan for Submission to the Secretary of State for Examination by an independent Planning Inspector (subject to minor amendments deemed necessary following consultation for the purposes of clarity) and Full Council approval of the publication and submission of the supporting documents for the Local Plan.

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

- Recognition that whilst there had previously been an explicit requirement by government policy to safeguard land, national policy for aviation had evolved.
- Explanation was provided regarding the previously safeguarded land at Gatwick. Under Policy SD3 land is designated for the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP) and this would commence within 3 months of the adoption of the Local Plan. The AAP would assess the needs for future growth and operational needs of the airport alongside other development needs arising in the borough.
- Consideration would be given to the character of the rural area and the importance of maintaining a visual break between the edge of Crawley and the airport.
- Whilst housing development needs would be considered, it was noted these would be within a small area due to noise constraints from the existing runway.

Recommendations:

That the Commission agreed to support the recommendations.

10. Cabinet Member Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing

The Commission noted the update given by Councillor Irvine and questioned him on a variety of issues relating to his portfolio.

The following topics were discussed:

- The nature of the portfolio, including the variety of the role.
- There was recognition that the housing service was well run and had successful policies in place. In order to further assess it was suggested that a voluntary review could take place. It was paramount to ensure that the council adhered to policy, strategy and its responsibilities.
- It was confirmed that tenants provided regular feedback regarding new accommodation.
- The Tenant and Leaseholder Action Panel meets regularly to look at how Crawley Homes works and makes sure its services are of the highest standard and residents are at the heart of its work.
- The duty to co-operate within the Localism Act may assist the need in addressing affordable housing need, yet it was noted some of these developments may be close to Crawley's boundaries.

RESOLVED

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

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

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

13 January 2020

- Three Bridges Improvement Scheme Final Design

3 February 2020

- 2020/2021 Budget and Council Tax
- Treasury Management Strategy 2020-21
- Crawley Arts and Culture Proposition
- Irrecoverable Debts 2019/20 (over £50,000) – provisional referral

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.58 pm

T Rana (Chair)