

Cabinet
Wednesday 27 November 2019

Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission
at its meeting on Monday 25 November 2019
OSC/284

1. Cabinet Agenda Item 7 – Budget Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report FIN/483 with the Head of Corporate Finance and Chief Accountant. 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 increasingly 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.

2. Cabinet Agenda Item 8 – Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2019/2020

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report FIN/484 with the Head of Corporate Finance and Chief Accountant. 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.

3. Cabinet Agenda Item 9 – Review of Statement of Licensing Policy Gambling Act 2005 (2020 – 2022)

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report HCS/18 with the Environmental Health Manager. Throughout the introduction 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.

4. Cabinet Agenda Item 10 – Homelessness Strategy 2019-2024

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report SHAP/76 with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Housing Options Manager and the Housing Performance, Policy and Project Officer. Throughout the discussion on the report, 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.

5. Cabinet Agenda Item 11 – Tenancy Strategy 2019-2024

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report SHAP/77 with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Housing Needs Manager and the Housing Performance, Policy and Project Officer. During the introduction 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.

6. Cabinet Agenda Item 12 – Submission Crawley Local Plan 2020-2035

The Commission considered report PES/336, with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Forward Planning Manager and the Planning Policy Manager. Throughout the discussion on the report, 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.

Councillor Rana
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission
25 November 2019