

Cabinet
Wednesday 24 June 2020

Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission
at its meeting on Monday 22 June 2020
OSC/287

1. Cabinet Agenda Item 7 – Treasury Management Outturn 2019-2020

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report FIN/502 of the Head of Corporate Finance.

During the discussion, the following points were expressed:

- Acknowledgement that all funds were managed internally.
- Clarification offered on the maturity structure together with number of detailed holdings.
- Confirmation provided that the major repairs reserve reduction had been spent throughout the year on capital spend mostly on new council dwellings.
- In terms of income generation and creative investments, it was acknowledged that investments were restricted as the Council was governed by CIFPA and the Government. The Treasury Strategy prioritises investments accordingly whilst providing an appropriate balance between security, liquidity, yield and ethical considerations.
- Explanations were sought and obtained on the details provided within appendices.
- Recognition that investment properties were evaluated annually and the parades were classed as non-operational properties, along with others with a similar description within the portfolio.

RESOLVED

That Commission notes the report and requests that the views expressed during the debate, are fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

2. Cabinet Agenda Item 8 – Financial Outturn 2019/20 Budget Monitoring – Quarter 4

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report FIN/500 of the Head of Corporate Finance.

During the discussion with the Head of Corporate Finance and Chief Accountant, Councillors made the following comments:

- Acknowledgement that the report documented the financial viability of the council, particularly as a result of Covid19.
- Recognition that the flood programme had been reprioritised, allowing for Tilgate Lake bank erosion works to commence ahead of schedule.
- Confirmation that the under/over spend and slippage on the HRA improvement works had been listed as a whole programme of works as opposed to being broken down on individual projects. It was commented that further breakdown would be beneficial.
- Explanation sought and obtained on the reserves for expenditure in Tilgate Park and Nature Centre as part of the 5 year investment plan.
- Acknowledgement that revenue implications needed to be taken into account for new properties to avoid overspend.
- Clarification sought and obtained on the details provided within appendices.
- General support for the report. However, it was queried whether the S106 money in 8.15 referred to the Ewhurst playing fields in Ifield (as documented in December 2013 Cabinet report) or Ewhurst Road Play Area as set out in recommendation in 2.2b (which is in West Green). It was requested Cabinet clarify the arrangement for the S106 funding given the inconsistencies.

RESOLVED

That Commission notes the report and requests that the views expressed during the debate, are fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet but requested Cabinet clarify the arrangements for the S106 funding.

Note from Head of Corporate Finance – it has subsequently been confirmed the site is Ewhurst Playing Fields play area, Ifield.

3. Cabinet Agenda Item 9 – Forward Programme of Key Procurements

Comments and Recommendations

During the discussion with the Head of Corporate Finance and Procurement Manager, Councillors made the following comments:

- Recognition that the Council's procurement is governed by the EU Public Procurement Directives and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Council's Procurement Code. Confirmation that when the UK leaves the EU, advertising may change but the EU Public Procurement Directives were enshrined in UK law.
- Acknowledgement that the process would promote greater transparency and awareness of key procurement projects. Internal stakeholders would input into the process at an earlier stage and the organisations could manage resources more effectively.
- Confirmation was provided regarding the delegation process.
- Recognition that after the award of contracts there was involvement and consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member as posed in recommendation 2.2c. It was felt that this engagement should also be included in recommendation 2.2b at the award of contract stage so as to further enhance the greater transparency and involvement. It was subsequently recommended that Recommendation 2.2b be amended to include consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member. Following an unanimous vote, it was agreed that the Cabinet be requested to consider this addition and Recommendation 2.2b would now read:

Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member, the relevant Head of Service, and Head of Legal, Democracy and HR to approve the award of the contract following an appropriate procurement process.

RESOLVED

That Commission notes the report and requests that the views expressed during the debate, are fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet and requests Cabinet to consider the proposed amendment to Recommendation '2.2b' above.

4. Cabinet Agenda Item 10 – EV Charging Infrastructure Network

Comments and Recommendations

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability, Head of Economy and Planning and the Sustainability Manager, the following comments were made:

- Reduced emissions were welcomed but it was noted that the vehicle batteries had a finite lifetime and could not be recycled. However there were second uses for batteries like energy storage. There was a discussion about hydrogen vehicles as an alternative to EVs. It was noted that there were a small number of hydrogen vehicles on the market but they were still very expensive and the re-filling infrastructure was not yet widespread and was technically challenging.
- It was noted that throughout the programme of work the additional pressure on the existing power infrastructure should be considered.
- Recognition that the list of sites was not definitive or confirmed and was also in addition to those proposed by WSCC. There was currently an option to recommend sites on the WSCC website

- Whilst supportive of the report there was concern raised surrounding the number of spaces and potential concentration of the sites, which may overwhelm some areas. Consultation with ward Members would be welcomed in order gain an understanding of the local area during any feasibility studies.
- Clarification was provided on fast and rapid charge points together with further information on the main types of charging infrastructure.
- It was noted that the procurement would be managed by WSCC and further discussion took place surrounding the Real Living Wage.
- Acknowledgement that the issue of parking remained throughout the town and enforcement could take place through the usual channels for penalty use of EV charging points.

RESOLVED

That Commission notes the report and requests that the views expressed during the debate, are fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

5. Cabinet Agenda Item 11 – Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Comments and Recommendations

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability, Head of Economy and Planning and the Sustainability Manager, the following comments were made:

- Officers were commended on a detailed and interesting report.
- Recognition that Crawley's cycling and walking numbers were below the county average, mainly due to safety, busy roads and connectivity.
- It was noted there was a need to instil public confidence in cycling and walking through separate space for cycling lanes, bike security and encouraging active travel.
- Acknowledgement that five sets of cycle counters were in place to evaluate cycle trips. Whilst not monitoring speed it was proposed that all newly developed cycle routes would include a plan for monitoring and evaluating their use and effectiveness.
- General support for the report, and to encourage access throughout the town however those who were not able to easily travel should not be at a disadvantage by the infrastructure established. There needed to be a balance.
- Concern was raised regarding some of the traffic management plans proposed within the appendices. It was noted these may have a detrimental effect on other users and it was therefore suggested that it would be beneficial that ward and county councillors were included in the consultation of any potential scheme.

RESOLVED

That Commission notes the report and requests that the views expressed during the debate, are fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

Councillor Rana
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission
22 June 2020