

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 14 March 2022 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

T G Belben (Chair)

K Khan (Vice-Chair)

M L Ayling, R G Burgess, R A Lanzer, T Lunnon, S Mullins and A Nawaz

Also in Attendance:

Councillor R D Burrett and P C Smith

Officers Present:

Natalie Brahma-Pearl Chief Executive

Heather Girling Democratic Services Officer

Nigel Sheehan Head of Projects and Commercial Services

Clem Smith Head of Economy and Planning

Nigel Tidy Towns Fund Programme Officer

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor A Pendlington

Absent:

Councillor S Piggott

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	Town Centre Regeneration Programme Third Edition (Minute 5)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Town Centre Regeneration Programme Third Edition (Minute 5)	Personal Interest – Cabinet Member Crawley Growth Programme
Councillor R A Lanzer	Crawley Towns Fund Project Business Case (Minute 7)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC

Councillor R A Lanzer	Crawley Towns Fund Project Business Case (Minute 7)	Personal Interest – Cabinet Member Crawley Growth Programme
Councillor R A Lanzer	HASC (Minute 9)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	HASC (Minute 9)	Personal Interest – WSCC Cabinet Member for Public Health & Wellbeing

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 31 January 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

4. Proposed Changes to the Essential Car User Allowance Scheme

The Commission was informed that the report on the “Proposed Changes to the Essential Car User Allowance Scheme” would no longer be considered as an item for business at the meeting. Unfortunately, a collective agreement with the Unison union could not be reached and the report had been deferred.

5. Town Centre Regeneration Programme Third Edition

The Commission considered report [PES/397](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning. The Town Centre Regeneration Programme (TCRP) was first published in February 2016, updated in 2018 and significant progress has been made since then in terms of programme delivery. The report presented a summary of that progress and sought approval of a revised, updated version of the TCRP prior to public consultation.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development and the Head of Economy and Planning, Councillors made the following comments:

- Recognition that the Town Centre Regeneration Programme included a number of partner organisations whose contributions had been significant in delivering successful outcomes of the Crawley Growth Programme and Town Centre Regeneration Programme.
- Acknowledgement that Grade A office space was important for the town, not only to attract companies from the professional services business sector but also to facilitate individuals to meet and co-work, which had been lacking throughout the pandemic. The upgrading of existing commercial space would also assist in creating space for businesses and there had been improved relations with property owners to refurbish premises. Enforcement powers could be considered where properties were of a poor quality and owners were not willing to make necessary improvements.

- It was commented that there was significant town centre growth and this should be identified within the local plan to ensure the electorate representation was monitored.
- It was felt that it would be important to include the carbon reduction targets within the Climate Emergency 'Action to Zero' section of the Town Centre Regeneration Programme.
- Confirmation provided that the updated Town Centre Regeneration Programme would be subject to consultation and that minor modifications may follow if required.
- Concern was expressed that there were still challenges facing the town with the presence of some empty shops and it was questioned whether any town branding may assist, perhaps with a link to the City bid. It was clarified that footfall had nearly returned to 2019 levels and branding had been included in a consultation exercise in 2017 (report PES/252 OSC and Cabinet).
- Recognition that in order to provide quality sustainable residential accommodation that was supported by a rich mix of community facilities, it was important to review the demand of other provision within the area such as GP surgeries or dental practices.
- It was commented that if the town centre was to encompass facilities and amenities it would be important to improve public toilet provision, (especially given the closure of some during lockdown), whilst also maintaining those currently in operation.
- Acknowledgement that the Historic High Street had maintained a different culture to the rest of the shopping area, particularly Queens Square. The Historic High Street had seen regeneration development, particularly with regards to the environmental improvements but remained mainly an eating and drinking quarter.
- Support for the newly positioned bandstand within memorial gardens, however it was commented additional seating would be beneficial and attract further visitors during performances.
- Confirmation was provided on the current status of the market together with the requirements and constraints currently in existence for establishing an indoor market.
- Recognition that there was a need to create and improve economic conditions in order to attract people to move to or work in Crawley. It would be paramount to ensure the quality and availability of public amenity, good quality employment together with availability of commercial space.

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.

6. 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.

PART B BUSINESS - CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC

7. Crawley Towns Fund Project Business Cases

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 PES/399 of the Head of Economy and Planning. The report sought approval on the business cases for various Town Fund projects as set out in the Crawley Town Investment Plan Heads of Terms (confirmed by the government in July 2021).

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development and the Head of Economy and Planning, Councillors made the following comments:

- Acknowledgement that the substantial Towns Fund monies awarded to the Council to deliver the Town Investment Plan included a number of transformative regeneration schemes, including those with a specific focus in the town that would unlock jobs as there was a need for a range of skills and technology. The business cases enabled the Council and partners to deliver on opportunities, aspirations, future investment and boost economic activity within the town.
- Acknowledgement that Council approval of the projects would enable submission of summary versions of the business cases to the government for ratification by the deadline.
- Clarity sought and obtained on the project management, cost analysis, together with the timescales. Timely updates would feature in the quarterly monitoring budget reports.

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.

8. Metcalf Way Depot and Workshop - Redevelopment

Exempt Part B - By Virtue of 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/31 of the Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services. The report sought agreement for progressing the redevelopment of the depot and workshop at Metcalf Way, project analysis and feasibility, together with the finances required.

During the discussion with the Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services, Councillors made the following comments:

- Acknowledgement that the option proposed enabled the Council to deliver on opportunities, whilst protecting, consolidating, and enhancing the development of a key site.
- Recognition that the Metcalf Way Depot was currently under-utilised, and Neighbourhood Services intended to continue the move to a more dispersed model of smaller neighbourhood patch depots. The recommendations supported the move to more localised depots and facilitated redevelopment of the Metcalf Way site.

- There was overall support for the options which was poised to play a key and interesting role in delivering a long-term revenue stream and the future of a key site within the town.
- Confirmation that feasibility and cost analysis proposals would be carried out as part of the project and any preferred option.

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.

Re-Admission of the Public

The Chair declared the meeting reopen for consideration of business in public session.

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

An update was provided from the most recent HASC meeting. Key items of discussion included:

- Provision of access to dental services

Concern was expressed about the provision and this would be addressed at a future meeting of HASC.

- Changes to Neonatal Services in Western Sussex

At St Richards Hospital, Chichester about 9 babies each year were in need of some form of neonatal provision. Currently this was carried out at St Richards but the proposal was that they were transferred to a hospital in Portsmouth where better provision could be provided. Concern was expressed about existing staff retaining skills after the change of circumstances.

Concern was also raised that the report contained no reference to the rest of West Sussex but it was pointed out that the report was specifically focussing on St Richards and it was likely there would be scrutiny of issues affecting the population of wider West Sussex in the future.

- Quality Assurance Update in Adult Services

It was stressed that the safeguarding of people was based on individual circumstances. It was likely there will be an audit of adult services so that the best provision for individuals can be achieved.

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

The next scheduled meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission was currently set for Monday 4 July, where the reports below were referred:

1. Treasury Management Outturn 2021-2022
2. Financial Outturn 2021-2022 (Q4)

The Commission was reminded to individually refer an item if appropriate, upon the publication of a forthcoming decision notice.

Scrutiny Training would take place for the Commission on Thursday 9 June.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

T G Belben (Chair)