

**Cabinet**  
**Wednesday 10 January 2024**

**Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission**  
**at its meeting on Monday 8 January 2024**  
**OSC/317**

**1. Cabinet Agenda Item 7 – Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy**

**Comments and Recommendations**

The Commission considered report [HCS/069](#) of the Head of Community Services.

During the discussion with the Leader of the Council and Head of Community Services the following comments were made:

- Recognition that the strategy had been created to deliver a coherent approach for the Council's tree planting, clearly outlining the standards, young tree maintenance and woodland sustainability. It identified a clear approach for selecting tree species, location and a process for providing tree planting on Council land across the town.
- Confirmation that the strategy only applied to Council trees planted on Council owned land and this was funded through section 106 funds. The strategy did not apply to private developments or any other land that was not owned by the Council
- Acknowledgement that the strategy assisted in fulfilling the Council's response to tackling the climate change emergency requirement whilst also delivering other tangible benefits that would assist officers in taking an agreed and consistent strategic approach for future planting of Council trees across the Borough.
- Confirmation was sought and obtained on whether there was a reference to strategic planning policies to complement the strategy, particularly in relation to land and trees not within the Council's ownership. It was mentioned that there were many Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and the Planning and Climate Change SPD did mention consideration of such matters.
- Information was provided on the planned maintenance for existing and future trees, from sapling to maturity. The Council's tree database held valuable information on the Council-owned tree stock including existing quality, variety and quantity of canopy coverage. The database would continue to be used to capture newly planted trees and their aftercare, producing a healthier more reliable tree stock in future as essential maintenance was planned and executed.
- Recognition that it was important to maintain the existing canopy cover, and where trees were removed if they were dead, dying or dangerous. trees could be planted on a 'like for like' basis. Where that was not possible, in managing biosecurity, those planted would have the maximum chance of survival.
- It was felt important for newly planted trees to be in keeping with the urban landscape and create an aesthetic environment. In response it was added that it was anticipated the efficient management of urban tree cover would assist in increasing amenity value.
- Recognition that there was currently sufficient funding through Section 106, however it was important to be aware of long-term funding opportunities. The Woodland Trust funding could be allocated to other organisations that may wish to plant trees within their land
- It was noted that some diseases (such as Ash Die Back) had a significant detrimental effect on the canopy cover, and it was important to maintain existing canopy cover whilst also maximising the chance of survival. It was suggested that there may be options whereby some trees (oaks) could potentially be left to regenerate naturally, resulting in increased tree canopy with little or no cost.
- Clarity was sought on the figures relating to the Council's canopy cover identified within the report.
- Acknowledgement that with diminishing land it was important to aim to maintain the current percentage of tree canopy cover, with an aspiration to increase if possible. It was commented that perhaps further detail was required with reference to the development and improvement of the urban tree cover, as it was important to recognise the extend and quality of the tree canopy coverage.

**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.

## **2. Cabinet Agenda Item 8 – Crawley Homes Staffing Growth**

*Exempt Paragraphs 1 & 3*

*Information Relating to an Individual; and  
Information relating to financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)*

### **Comments and Recommendations**

The Commission considered report CH/203 of the Head of Crawley Homes.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Head of Crawley Homes the following comments were made:

- Acknowledgement that the new structure for the repairs teams had been proposed to meet future challenges of legislation and improve future services. There was a need to take a holistic approach and build on the relationship with tenants
- It was noted that a changing approach was needed for planned maintenance and the proposed structure would ensure the teams had inbuilt resilience and could manage the increasing demands.
- Recognition that support had been proposed to assist the maintenance of the new Active H housing management system and service delivery.
- Acknowledgement that the changes would result in more capacity to build on service performance. Teams would be actively managed during the change process, when embedding new structures, to ensure performance is maintained.

### **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.

## **3. Cabinet Agenda Item 9 – Five Year Business Plan for Tilgate Park and Nature Centre**

*Exempt Paragraphs 3*

*Information relating to financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)*

### **Comments and Recommendations**

The Commission considered report HCS/068 of the Head of Community Services.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Wellbeing, the Head of Community Services and the Parks and Business Development Manager the following comments were made:

- Recognition that the Five-Year Business Plan would support the spend to save or spend to earn initiatives for the park to continue to be self-financing. The continuing development of the facilities and events would ensure regular visitors and income to the park throughout the year assisted the site to be self-financing and provided financial support for projects within the other parks and open spaces.
- Acknowledgement that a strategic approach to plan future opportunities and initiatives across the park allowed for inter-dependencies and prioritisation of projects. The ambitious ideas would allow the park to continue as a high-quality regional venue.
- Confirmation was sought and provided on the evaluation of the finances and analysis of income contained within the report.

### **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.

**Councillor Ayling  
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission  
8 January 2024**