

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 25 November 2024 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

M L Ayling (Chair)

H Hellier (Vice-Chair)

O Adeniyi, I Ashraf, N Hilton, G S Jhans, K Khan, R A Lanzer, S Pritchard, D Ramsay and J Russell

Also in Attendance:

Councillors I T Irvine and M G Jones

Officers Present:

Paul Baker	Partnership Services Manager
Vicki Basley	Chief Accountant
Helen Davies	Housing Options Manager
Ian Duke	Chief Executive
Hannah Edwards	Performance, Policy and Project Officer
Heather Girling	Democratic Services Officer
Nick Hobbs	Housing Needs Manager
Carolin Martlew	Head of Corporate Finance
Philip Morris	Sustainability Manager
Nigel Sheehan	Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services
Clem Smith	Head of Economy and Planning

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor I Khan

Procedural Motion to suspend a particular Procedure Rule - to suspend the Vote to Extend the Meeting and Guillotine

The Chair, Councillor Ayling put forward a Procedural Motion in accordance with the General Committee Procedure Rules, to suspend a particular General Committee Procedure Rule, namely the suspend the Vote to Extend the Meeting and Guillotine due to the majority of the reports being policy framework documents and also reports which both the Chair and Vice Chair in discussion believed the Commission should give due consideration to. This was seconded by the Vice Chair Councillor Hellier. The Chair then called for a vote which fell as there were 4 votes

in favour, and 6 votes against and 0 abstentions (Councillor Adeniyi was not in attendance for the item).

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	Tenancy Strategy 2025 to 2029 (Minute 4)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Homelessness Strategy 2025 to 2029 (Minute 5)	Personal Interest – Member of Citizens Advice West Sussex (North East South)
Councillor R A Lanzer	Tenancy Homelessness 2025 to 2029 (Minute 5)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	2024-2025 Budget Monitoring Quarter 2 (Minute 6)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Budget Strategy 2025/26-2027/2028 (Minute 7)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel Final Report (Minute 10)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Waste and Recycling: Changes to Collection Regime and Extension of Waste and Recycling Contract (Minute 13)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 4 November 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

4. Tenancy Strategy 2025 to 2029

The Commission considered report [SHAP/091](#) and associated [Appendix A](#) of the Head of Strategic Housing. The report sought approval of the new Tenancy Strategy for 2025-2029.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Housing Needs Manager and Performance, Policy and Projects Officer, the following comments were made:

- Acknowledgement that the Council had a statutory obligation to have a Tenancy Strategy.

- Recognition that the strategy incorporated the recommendations from the Housing Associations Scrutiny Panel which was conducted in 2024 and it was noted that Housing Associations were regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The Council had no regulatory powers over the activities of Housing Associations operating within Crawley.
- Clarification sought and provided on affordable rent and local housing allowance levels.
- Acknowledgement that the strategy was a five year document which was dependent on various criteria.
- It was recommended that Cabinet be requested to amend Section 3 of the Tenancy Strategy (Council Approach) to provide further clarity upon timescales ‘households may wait “*many years*” for an offer of suitable housing’. (Suggested amendments in bold to provide further information): ‘households may wait ***several years*** for an offer of ***social housing (dependent on their priority and the availability of properties they are eligible for)***’.

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 and requested Cabinet consider the proposed amendment noted above.

5. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 to 2029

The Commission considered report [SHAP/092](#) and associated appendices [A](#) and [B](#) of the Head of Strategic Housing. The report sought approval of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2025-2029.

During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Housing Options Manager and Performance, Policy and Projects Officer, the following comments were made:

- While the previous strategy did include homelessness prevention as one of its priorities, for the new strategy it was confirmed there was a need to strengthen the focus and to up-stream work to develop more early intervention strategies in order to prevent crisis and increase the resilience of residents in the borough.
- It was noted that the funding for the Rough Sleeping Multi-Disciplinary Team would not be known until the end of the year at the earliest.
- Confirmation sought and obtained regarding the Renters’ Rights Bill, which could potentially bring changes such as ‘no fault’ evictions and have an impact on homelessness. However it was noted details were still forthcoming.
- Acknowledgement that in terms of housing supply, the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2023-2040 identified housing need and identification of the council’s approach to development within the town, this was anticipated to be higher than registered provider delivery, which had generally decreased across the sector.

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. 2024-2025 Budget Monitoring - Quarter 2

The Commission considered report [FIN/672](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. The report set out a summary of the Council's actual revenue and capital spending for the quarters to September 2024 together with the main variations from the approved spending levels and impact on future budgets.

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

- Acknowledgement that slippage of the capital programme (mostly as a result of water neutrality) had resulted in higher balances from higher interest payments. It was noted that without the impact of the water neutrality situation the council would have been able to increase the council's housing supply and ease temporary accommodation pressures.
- It was noted that Chagossian funding had yet to be received and whilst claims had moved onto the DELTA platform last month the update was still outstanding, together with information about additional funding for 2025/26.
- Clarification sought and obtained on planning income along with the flexible housing support grant and the changes to Right to Buy.
- Additional information provided on the options considered with regards to Ashdown House which would balance income to be received and the works required.
- Confirmation was provided on the cost of repairs as these were prioritised within the service as it was important to undertake necessary maintenance to avoid properties falling into disrepair. However it was recognised that there was now a higher awareness of damp and mould throughout the industry.

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.

7. Budget Strategy 2025/26 – 2027/28

The Commission considered report [FIN/673](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. The report set out future financial projections along with the policy framework for improving financial efficiency and meeting the long term investment needs of the Town, as well as proposals for the annual budget process..

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

- Acknowledgement that some fees and charges may have to be increased by more than CPI to help close the budget gap and to ensure that services were operating more closely to a cost recovery basis where possible. It was noted that fees and charges would be applied proportionally as possible but were currently under review as part of the budget process.
- Recognition that as a result of the Employers National Insurance contributions increase, the overall impact was anticipated to cost the council in the region of £620k for direct staff. It was noted that compensation was not anticipated to be available for contracted services which would add to service cost pressures in the longer term.
- It was noted there was a proposed amendment in recommendation 2.2 ciii to specify the Council Tax Banding in report FIN/673. The revised wording was as follows (in bold):

2.2 ciii. The current budget deficit of £2.452m for 2025/26 (section 6.2 of report FIN/673) is based on a Council tax increase of 2.99% which is £6.94 **per band D dwelling**. Table 2 (section 6.6.10 of report FIN/673) highlights the budget gap modelling different assumptions.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, including the amendment to recommendation 2.2ciii, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

8. Treasury Management Mid Year Review 2024-2025

The Commission considered report [FIN/674](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. The report provided an update on the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2024-2025.

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

- It was noted it would be beneficial for the Detailed Holdings (Appendix 2) to feature descriptive column headings and it was commented these would feature in future reports.
- Further information was provided on the council's approach to treasury management and investment, in that investment opportunities were proactively sought, whilst still acting within the council's investment limits.
- Explanation sought and obtained on investments within other sectors together with the risks and implications.

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.

9. Updated Climate Emergency Action Plan and Climate Emergency Declaration

The Commission considered report [PES/473](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning. The report sought approval for an update to the climate emergency action plan and climate emergency declaration, to include consideration of a nature emergency declaration and application to join the UK100 network.

During the discussion with the Leader of the Council, the Head of Economy and Planning and the Sustainability Manager, the following comments were made:

- Recognition that the update to the climate emergency declaration would enable the Council to prioritise the reduction of those direct Scope 1 and 2 emissions over which the Council had more direct control. The update also recognised the overall need to bring borough-wide emissions to net zero as quickly as possible.
- Acknowledgement that the proposal to join UK100 network of local authorities aimed to build cross party consensus and commitment to action by advocating change to meet net zero, whilst benefiting from sharing knowledge and best practice, whilst shaping future policy. Collaboration and partnership working with others would be essential to deliver net zero, hold each other to account, and speak with a collective voice.

- It was noted that the scope 3 emissions target to be net zero had been moved back to 2045 as the guidance for inclusion in scope 3 emissions had changed and incorporated a different measure. Emissions from leased assets, (both commercial and Crawley Homes) were not included in the analysis of council emissions that formed the evidence base for the original declaration and these scope 3 emissions had increased dramatically. The improvements required would not be able to be reached within original timescales. It was also recognised that currently installed assets that had an embedded carbon footprint still had a life expectancy.
- Recognition that whilst it was key to reduce carbon footprint as quickly as possible, achieving the net zero position was a challenge and the most ambitious element of the declaration was borough-wide emissions, where the council could potentially influence to accelerate decarbonisation across the borough to reach net zero by 2045. It would be important to engage widely across the borough.
- Additional information was provided on the funding source for retrofitting costs and it was confirmed that the council would shortly be bidding for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 3.
- The proposal to include a Nature Emergency Declaration was welcomed, as the council had new statutory obligations to protect the natural environment and halt the loss of biodiversity.

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.

10. Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel Final Report

The Commission considered report [OSC/325](#) of the Chair of the Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Russell. A Notice of Motion at Full Council in October 2023 proposed setting up a Scrutiny Panel to examine and seek to improve Crawley's household waste recycling rate, taking into account the differing challenges the Borough had in comparison to other areas. A Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel was subsequently established in February 2024 to look at how household waste recycling rates in Crawley could be improved. Alongside consideration of options to improve recycling performance, the National Waste and Resources Strategy, Simpler Recycling, was launched in October 2023 and amongst other proposals, confirmed that waste collection authorities will be obliged to move to a separate weekly food waste collection with effect from April 2026. Within this context, a focus for the panel was to consider the efficacy and impact of different collection regime options open to the Council in implementing the National Waste Strategy.

The Panel wished to consider how to maximise impact while recognising budget constraints and the demographic and social economic context which typically influences recycling behaviour and performance. Within this context, the Panel sought to “ find ways to understand impediments to recycling in the borough and also consider ways to inform residents/customers of proposed changes to waste collection and incentivise to maximise levels of recycling”.

During the discussion with the Chair of the Panel, Councillor Russell, and Lead Officers (Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services and the Partnership Services Manager) the Commission raised the following comments:

- It was recognised that recycling within blocks of flats presented a number of challenges. There was currently an audit being undertaken for each block of flats/communal area to determine the specifics, availability, options and opportunities as understanding the current environment was key. The Council worked in partnership with WSCC (as the waste disposal authority) to ensure regional communication, along with that on a local level.
- Whilst research had been undertaken on the use of ‘smart sacks’ in other areas for recycling material, these authorities did not have wheeled bins unlike Crawley. It was determined that providing a constant supply of bags would create more plastic waste, logistical delivery problems and increase supply costs.
- Clarification was sought and obtained with regards to nappy and sanitary product disposal in a hygienic way.
- Confirmation was provided as to measures for dealing with contamination within recycling bin.
- Further discussion took place on the proposed roll out of bins and it was acknowledged that any rollout to varying property type should be a phased approach. It was noted that ensuring bins that were not oversized would be important in encouraging residents to ‘reduce’ waste in preference to recycling.
- It was recognised that clear, strong communications regarding recycling and any proposed changes would be key in order to incentivise and encourage residents to increase recycling and minimise food waste and there were many different communication channels. It was acknowledged that as with any change it would take a while to adapt.
- The Commission amended recommendation 2.2b) to ‘recycling and waste’ in order to mirror the proposed changes in 2.2a, in which the website had been re-named ‘Recycling and Waste’, in order to place recycling at the forefront and thus refocus priorities.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, including the amended recommendation, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission’s Comment sheet.

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

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

- Housing Policies: (Compensation, Short-term Alternative Accommodation, Stock Condition, CCTV)

The Commission was also due to receive the following items at its meeting on 13 January 2025:

- Safer Crawley Partnership Review and Future Priorities
- Cabinet Member Discussion – Public Protection
- Crawley Town Centre Update Report

12. 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.

13. Waste and Recycling: Changes to Collection Regime and Extension of Waste and Recycling Contract

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 HPS/045 of the Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services. The report sought approval to analyse options of the waste and recycling service and to introduce the Simpler Recycling Policy mandated by Government determining waste stream to be collected and frequency of collection. The report further proposed options for the extension of the waste and recycling contract.

During the discussion with the Leader of the Council, Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services and the Partnership Services Manager, the following points were expressed:

- Recognition that the National Waste Strategy ‘Simpler Recycling’ mandated waste collection authorities to introduce separate weekly food waste collections to all households by March 2026.
- Acknowledgement that further statutory guidance confirmed that as part of the transfer to a weekly food waste collection, local authorities should provide a minimum fortnightly collection of residual waste (ie no less frequently than every two weeks).
- Support for clear and consistent communications campaign supporting the role out of the separate food waste collection and any subsequent changes in the collection regime to ensure success.
- It was noted that an all Members’ Seminar would be scheduled prior to the introduction of any revised collection arrangements, to enable Councillors to understand the rationale, logistics and roll out programme for the proposed service changes.

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.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.07 pm.

M L Ayling (Chair)