

**Cabinet**  
**Wednesday 24 July 2024**

**Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission**  
**at its meeting on Tuesday 23 July 2024**  
**OSC/322**

**1. Cabinet Agenda Item – Financial Outturn 2023-2024 (Quarter 4)**

**Comments and Recommendations**

The Commission considered report [FIN/658](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. During the discussion with the Leader of the Council, the Head of Corporate Finance and Chief Accountant, the following comments were made:

- Clarification was sought and obtained on the rising cost of repairs. High inflation, construction costs and an unprecedented demand were contributory factors. It was recognised that there was now a higher awareness of damp and mould throughout the industry. Prioritisation of repairs had taken place within the service, but it was important to undertake necessary maintenance to avoid properties falling into despair. Stock conditioning surveys were underway with the aim to move from responsive repairs to planned maintenance which should result in efficiencies.
- Confirmation provided on the funding available from the Better Care Fund.
- Clarification was sought and obtained with regards to the addition of the Senior Project Manager within the Built Environment Team, together with the demand for the delivery of capital projects.
- Acknowledgement that the homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures continued to rise and there were many contributing factors including the unaffordability of home ownership, shrinking private rented sector along with higher interest rates, Housing Benefit Subsidy (Local Housing Allowance had been frozen since 2011), the reduction of council and other social housing to meet demand. Temporary accommodation was expensive, and it was difficult to meet current levels of demand with existing stock required. There was also a shortage of temporary and nightly paid accommodation driving up prices. It was noted households in nightly paid rose from 206 in April 2023, to a peak of 280 in December 2023.

**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 – Treasury Management Outturn 2023 – 2024**

**Comments and Recommendations**

The Commission considered report [FIN/659](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. During the discussion with the Leader of the Council, Head of Corporate Finance and Chief Accountant, the following points were expressed:

- Noted that the authorised limit for external borrowing set by the Council was exceeded for a short period during Q4 of 2023/24 and was now back within the set limit. The Commission was informed that the reason for exceeding the limit was a dip in short term cash flow which was met through short term loans from other local authorities. Since the operational boundary was a management tool for in-year monitoring it was not deemed significant if the boundary was breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this was not counted as a compliance failure.
- Recognition that the Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit for 2024/25 had since been reviewed with the assistance of the Council's treasury advisors and subsequently increased.
- Confirmation sought and obtained on the detailed funding available within the Strategy, particularly the maturity and interest rates, which would be further updated in Q1.
- Recognition that non treasury investments/commercial properties (excluding town hall) had achieved a rate of return of 8.8%.

## **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 – Temporary Accommodation Acquisitions Programme**

Exempt Paragraph 3 –

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

#### **Comments and Recommendations**

The Commission considered report SHAP/090 of the Head of Strategic Housing. During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Housing Enabling and Development Manager, the following points were expressed:

- Recognition that it would allow officers to expand the temporary accommodation stock through acquisition opportunities and viable options, which had significant potential to contribute towards addressing Crawley's housing needs and assist in reducing the financial burden of using expensive nightly-paid accommodation, including out of borough placements.
- Clarification was sought and obtained on the financial elements and the various detailed options documented within the report.
- General overall support for the proposal, as it was noted that the range of opportunities being explored would assist in future development of the areas and amenity, whilst increasing the council's portfolio of temporary accommodation.

## **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**  
**23 July 2024**