

Cabinet
Wednesday 27 November 2024

Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission
at its meeting on Monday 25 November 2024
OSC/328

1. Cabinet Agenda Item – Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel Final Report

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report [OSC/325](#) of the Chair of the Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Panel. 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 acknowledgement 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.

2. Cabinet Agenda Item – Tenancy Strategy

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report [SHAP/091](#) of the Head of Strategic Housing and associated [appendix](#). 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.

3. Cabinet Agenda Item – Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report [SHAP/092](#) of the Head of Strategic Housing and associated appendix [A](#) and [B](#). 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.

4. Cabinet Agenda Item – Updated Climate Emergency Action Plan and Climate Emergency Declaration

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report [PES/473](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning. 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.

5. Cabinet Agenda Item – 2024-2025 Budget Monitoring Quarter 2

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report [FIN/672](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. 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 Chagosian 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.

6. Cabinet Agenda Item – Budget Strategy 2025/26-2027/28

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report [FIN/673](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. 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.

7. Cabinet Agenda Item – Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024-2025

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report [FIN/674](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. 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.

8. Cabinet Agenda Item – 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)

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report HPS/045 of the Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services. 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.

**Councillor Ayling
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission
25 November 2024**