

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 11 March 2019 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

C A Cheshire (Chair)

T G Belben (Vice-Chair)

M L Ayling, R G Burgess, D Crow, F Guidera, I T Irvine, R A Lanzer, S Malik,
A Pendlington, M W Pickett, K Sudan and L Willcock

Also in Attendance:

Councillor P C Smith and M A Stone

Officers Present:

Ian Duke	Deputy Chief Executive
Heather Girling	Democratic Services Officer
Clem Smith	Head of Economy and Planning

1. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

The following disclosures were made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor F Guidera	Employment & Skills Programme 2019-2024 (Minute 4)	Personal Interest – Recent employment with company who has contract with the Work and Health Programme
Councillor P C Smith	Employment & Skills Programme 2019-2024 (Minute 4)	Personal Interest – A Local Authority Director of the Manor Royal Business Improvement District
Councillor D Crow	Social Mobility Scrutiny Panel Final Report (Minute 5)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Social Mobility Scrutiny Panel Final Report (Minute 5)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on [4 February 2019](#) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to it being noted (with particular reference to item 5 - 2019/20 Budget and Council Tax) where there was a lack of commentary by the Commission and in this instance 'no resolution' undertaken to support the budget. Whilst custom and practice for the council (and other authorities), it was noted to consider for future items.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

4. Employment & Skills Programme 2019-2024

The Commission considered report [PES/313](#) with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development and the Head of Economy and Planning. The report provided a progress update since the original publication of the Employment & Skills Plan 2016-21 and sought approval of the draft, revised Employment & Skills Programme 2019-2024.

During the discussion, the following points were expressed:

- Confirmation was provided regarding Employ Crawley, which operates differently from a private sector agency providing customers ensures customers can access one to one support from a single point of contact, advice about finding work and how to secure jobs, direct from employers. It was noted that customers have individual needs and Employ Crawley assists with providing access to unique workshops and courses.
- Support for the Town Centre Skills Academy Status designated by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) for a range of regeneration schemes coming forward across the town centre. The benefits of the partnership arrangements between the council, construction providers and Crawley College were recognised, together with the advantages of Employ Crawley being able to refer residents to the construction opportunities.
- Support for the consolidation of training provision for professional services at Crawley College which would strength relationships between the college and town centre employers.
- It was felt it would be beneficial to bring educational establishments and businesses together as this may assist in combatting some silo working.
- Acknowledgement that there was a limited budget available to deliver the programme and this was a long term challenge. It was paramount to deliver essential and achievable projects with existing funds.
- There was strong support for both the successful STEMfest programme and the Big Bang fair.
- It was noted it would be imperative that each aspect of the programme should be measured to gauge its progress including successes and failures.
- Full support for the scheme however it was suggested that it would be beneficial for the Commission to receive an annual progress report.

RESOLVED

That the Commission agreed to fully support the recommendations to the Cabinet.

5. Social Mobility Scrutiny Panel Final Report

The Commission considered report [OSC/276](#) of the Chair of the Social Mobility Scrutiny Panel, Councillor K Sudan.

The Social Mobility Scrutiny Panel was established to “investigate the state of social mobility within the borough and practical steps which can be taken to ensure that a child’s outcomes are no longer capped “by those of their parents”. Its purpose was to analyse, review and understand a local (and national where appropriate) perspective on the extent of the problem, together with the main challenges in delivering greater social mobility and finally recommend practical steps that can be taken by Crawley Borough Council, and other relevant organisations, to improve the “life chances” of those growing up in the town. The review focused on where the Council could add value and influence.

Councillors made the following comments:

- Whilst there was support for the report and appreciation of the Panel’s work, it was felt there were certain inconsistencies regarding some of the recommendations in terms of adding value or how these could be measured. To clarify, further information was provided in relation to alternative provision education for pupils up to age 16 who do not attend mainstream school, together the Fair Access and Exclusions Team that provide support. There was a view that investing into an extended service post 16 in the interim would prevent intervention from other services and funding commitments in the future.
- Acknowledgement that a response should be made to the Social Mobility Commission on how the social mobility index could be improved. It was recognised that data can be collected and analysed in multiple ways. Many people succeed in life through different ventures (without going to university for example). (Note - [‘How to overcome local skills gaps and meet local skills needs in Crawley’](#) may provide one suitable reference).
- It was noted that organisations that are Social Mobility Employers through Social Mobility Foundation act as benchmarks for others.
- Support for improved careers advice, especially combined with the Junior Citizen Scheme. It was noted that recruitment agencies use screening processes with a reliance on only the qualified candidates moving on to the next round.
- Recognition that it was about ensuring all individuals were aware of the choices available to them, whilst having the option to fulfil their objectives and “life chances” if they so wished.
- Strong support that “success” was individually determined, and not necessarily linked to monetary value, educational attainment, occupation, living conditions or being socially mobile. In some cases, ‘success’ could simply be linked to “being content”.

RESOLVED

That the Commission agreed to support the recommendations to the Cabinet.

6. Cabinet Member Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development

The Commission noted the update given by Councillor Peter Smith and questioned him on a variety of issues relating to his [portfolio](#).

The following topics were discussed:

- With reference made to the Three Bridges corridor and improvement scheme, it was confirmed that the Eastern Access point still remained within the programme and that work was still progressing. It was anticipated that a report would be produced for Cabinet in June.
- Regarding Conservation Areas there were currently 11 conservation areas within the town designated because they were areas of special architectural or historic interest. Councillor Smith was keen to see the preservation of heritage.
- Support for encouraging the promotion of cycling. The Crawley Growth Programme has assisted in improving some cycle routes but it was acknowledged that alternative options were required to transform additional routes within the town.
- Discussions took place around the potential for a Town Centre BID and the improvements and benefits this could bring for businesses, employees and the area.
- Whilst the position has resulted in successfully being able to bring the Crawley Growth Programme together, the function also brought with it interesting challenges.

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission thanked Councillor Peter Smith for attending and for the informative discussion that had ensued.

7. Chair's Update on the Relocation of Crawley's Crown Post Office

At the Full Council meeting on 12 December 2018, the Council considered a notice of motion on the closure of Crawley's Crown Post Office. As part of this, it called upon the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the issue. The Chair has since invited representatives to attend a meeting of the Commission to provide an opportunity to gain an understanding of the impact of the changes.

The Chair updated the Commission that following this representatives from Post Office Ltd have agreed to attend a meeting of the OSC in June. This later attendance will allow a better reflection on the relocation and allow the Commission Members the opportunity to scrutinise in sufficient detail.

Whilst some Members felt delegates from WHSmith should be invited to attend the meeting of the Commission to convey their experience, other Members felt that the consultation and decision notice was coordinated by Post Office Ltd and consequently the information could be communicated by those already invited representatives.

The Chair called for a vote on whether to invite WHSmith to attend the meeting of the Commission. With the vote being 6 for the proposal, 6 against the proposal and 1 abstention, the Chair used their casting vote, which was against for the proposal.

The proposal (to invite WHSmith to attend the meeting of the Commission) was therefore lost.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the update provided by the Chair and acknowledged that Post Office Ltd representatives would be attending a meeting of the Commission in June.

8. Forward Plan - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

24 June 2019

Treasury Management Outturn 2018-2019

Three Bridges Improvement Scheme Final Design

Energy Services Company (ESCo) Set Up & Governance – District Heat Network

23 September 2019

Budget Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25

25 November 2019

Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2019/2020

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.17 pm

C A Cheshire
Chair