

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Thursday, 8th February, 2024 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr K. Dibble (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr Jessica Auton
Cllr Jules Crossley
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr Sophie Porter

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr D.E. Clifford and Cllr S. Trussler.

Cllr Peter Cullum attended the meetings as Standing Deputy.

26. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on 2nd January, 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

27. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

The Committee welcomed Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive and Sophie Rogers, Climate Change Officer, who were in attendance to provide an update on the Climate Change Action Plan and to report on the latest carbon footprint data. Cllr Martin Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder responsible for Climate Change, was also in attendance.

The Committee reviewed the progress made on the twelve actions within the Action Plan. The Actions were as follows:

- Action 1 – **Transition electricity across the Council’s sites to 100% renewable tariffs** – It was noted that the contracts needed to be reprocured by October 2024, and work to identify options for the Council had commenced in January 2024.
- Action 2 – **Switch the Council’s car fleet to electric vehicle alternatives and investigate options for other Council vehicles** – It was noted that the Place Protection Officer (PPO) vehicles, of which there were two, were both hybrid, however the Committee were advised that the majority of the patrols

were now carried out on foot. Further work was required on scoping the best alternatives for the larger Council vehicles used by the Maintenance Team

- **Action 3 – Achieve 5% annual reduction in overall travel from employee-owned vehicles for business purposes and refresh the Council’s Workplace Travel Plan** – It was noted that work was underway to refresh the Workplace Travel Plan in 2024, the Plan would include signposting to relevant resources. It was advised that the reduction did not include the commuting of staff from home to the workplace but the staff travel plan would include a reference to staff commuting.
- **Action 4 – Consider opportunities arising from a relocation of the Council’s offices to reduce gas consumption and/or increase renewable energy generation onsite** – It was advised that the proposed new council offices within the Leisure and Cultural Hub, would be the first Net Zero Carbon building in the Borough and was being designed to achieve PassivHaus certification, which would significantly reduce operational carbon by at least 70%.
- **Action 5 – To continue to engage young people on climate change through the schools’ programme** – It was noted that the Winchester Science Museums’ Wonderseekers outreach programme was now running in four local schools, for years 4 and 5 children. The Climate Trackers scheme was aimed at raising climate awareness, whilst developing an interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). For 2024 the scheme would continue to be funded through the climate change allocation fund with the aim of seeking other funding sources going forward to ensure sustainability and possible expansion. It was suggested that the programme could be extended to all levels of school aged young people and funding could be sought from businesses with a STEM link.
- **Action 6 – To use the Council’s communications channels to promote opportunities for residents and local businesses to reduce their own carbon footprint and improve energy efficiency** – It was noted that a number of schemes for both residents and businesses had been shared during 2023/24.
- **Action 7 – To hold an Eco Fair to allow residents to find out more about climate change and opportunities to reduce their carbon footprint** – It was noted that an Eco Fair had been held in the Southwood Country Park Visitors Centre in September 2023, and the aim was to make this an annual event.
- **Action 8 – To work with Hampshire County Council (HCC) to improve access to EV charging facilities across Rushmoor** – It was advised that the Council continued to work with HCC on EV infrastructure, and it was noted that HCC were currently applying for Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding. The Council would continue to support this work. In response to a query, it was noted that the Jet garage on the Farnborough Road were looking to install EV charging points to include a

substation to boost charging times, this could benefit the EV points at the Meads car park. In addition, the Committee noted that an upgrade to the National Grid was due in 2025.

- **Action 9 – To refresh the Council’s procurement strategy to ensure that the goods and services that the Council buys support the aims of the Council being carbon neutral by 2030** – It was reported that work was underway to refresh the strategy and consideration would be given to the reforms arising from the Procurement Act during this process.
- **Action 10 – To review the processes for the Council’s capital programme so that environmental impacts are incorporated into business case development and whole life cycle carbon assessments are undertaken** – The Committee noted that this was now being implemented with environmental impacts embedded into the development of the Leisure and Cultural Hub. A specialist piece of work on the carbon footprint of the Crematorium refurbishments had also been commissioned. The approach would be reviewed during 2024.
- **Action 11 – to develop the Council’s offsetting approach with the view of ensuring that any offsetting has a local impact** – It was advised that this project would be actioned nearer to 2030 when offsetting may be required and to take account of the latest opportunities and best practice.
- **Action 12 – To review, update and publish the Council’s carbon footprint on an annual basis and to publish an annual report detailing what has been achieved in relation to the Action Plan** – It was noted that the report would be published in Spring 2024 and include the updated carbon footprint calculations.

The Committee reviewed the latest carbon footprint data and noted that the Council’s footprint had reduced since the previous year. A number of key actions had been taken, within the council offices, to reduce the footprint, these included the replacement of the ceiling lights to energy efficient LED lighting, the reduction in the number of and replacement of printers and the introduction of food waste bins.

The Committee discussed the report and were advised that the Policy and Project Advisory Board (PPAB) would be looking at the Climate Change Action Plan at its March meeting, the main purpose of which would be to refresh the documents.

In response to a query, regarding the climate change reserve allocation and the option to allow community groups/organisations to draw on the fund for projects, it was noted that as a reserve fund, it had a limited life span and the Council were looking to external funding to ensure current and future projects were sustainable. Alternative funding streams were available to groups to apply for funding.

In regard to the A331, it was noted that the 50mph speed limited introduced before the junction with the M3 had been successful in improving air quality. It was advised that consideration was currently being given to retaining the speed limit and extending it to other parts of the A331, in particular the junction with the A31.

ACTION:

What	By Whom	When
To request that PPAB consider the following, as part of the refresh process: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the option of pool cars for business use• provision of pool bicycles for staff use to travel to local meetings• consider a commitment to have no single use plastic at events and for use in Council owned buildings, in particular the Princes Hall	Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive	21st March, 2024
To provide more data on take up of schemes and activities in future reports.	Sophie Rogers, Climate Change Officer	Ongoing
To consider a refresh of the climate change page on the Council's website to make more user friendly (examples to consider included HCC and Bracknell Forest websites)	Sophie Rogers, Climate Change Officer	??

The Chairman thanked Cllr Tennant, Ms Barker and Ms Rogers for their presentation.

28. ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Committee welcomed Tim Mills, Executive Head of Property and Growth who was in attendance to give a presentation on the Asset Management Strategy future delivery and a review of the portfolio and principles for disposal in light of the current budget position. Cllr Martin Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder was also in attendance.

The Committee were apprised of the reasons for asset management planning and the purpose of the meeting, which had been to:

- update on progress since September 2022, when the Committee had last considered Asset Management,
- to consider the next steps in implementing the Asset Management Plan and portfolio review, and,
- to outline the proposed approach to the review.

Since September 2022, it was advised that a number of activities had taken place, these included:

- An audit on Asset Management and Health and Safety of Council Properties – both achieving “Substantial Assurance”.

- The purchase of The Meads, Farnborough, in June 2023 and procurement and mobilisation of new managing and letting agents for the site and the Union Yard, Aldershot, site.
- Forfeiting of the lease at No. 168 High Street, Guildford, and the agreement of a short term let whilst longer term interest was secured.
- Energy Performance Certification (EPC) Plus on a number of Council properties to inform investment going forward.
- Improvements at Princes Hall, Aldershot and the Aldershot Indoor Pools (part funding through a grant) based on a five year time horizon for savings. Lighting at Princes Hall would also be considered going forward.
- Ongoing discussions on rent and rent relief levels with community groups. It was advised that an increase in levels would be implemented.
- Planning submitted for the development of Frimley Business Park, Units 4.3 and 4.4.

The next steps were to:

- Deliver the letting of Union Yard over the next 12-18 months.
- Continue to seek letting opportunities for vacant properties, in particular the Wilko unit in The Meads, Farnborough and No. 168 High Street and Ashbourne House, Guildford.
- Review service charge costs at The Meads to increase sustainability and to maximise ancillary income.
- Plan repair and maintenance projects at sites such as The Meads and Aldershot Indoor Pools.
- Plan energy efficiency investment.
- Continue the rent and rent relief review in line with the Asset Management process and principles.
- Continue the review of the property portfolio to achieve £40 million from the disposal of land and property whilst maintaining a property income stream.

The Committee were advised of the principles for the review of the property portfolio, these included:

- ensuring that the retained portfolio provided an income return that enabled the Council to afford the related borrowing and wider financial requirements and provide an improved rate of return
- consideration of the impact on the Council's balances/reserves and need for provisions
- that the retained portfolio (post disposal) continued to allow the Council to meet its strategic objectives
- the Council retaining assets that could release value or allow for capital to be raised through long leasehold agreements
- the portfolio continuing to offer diversification to manage risk
- that properties with known significant capital expenditure in the short term/medium term be considered for disposal
- the ease of which significant capital could be realised through disposal without a lengthy sales process

The Committee discussed the presentation and raised a number of issues:

- Union Yard, Aldershot – it was advised that there was some serious interest in two of the retail units and considerable interest in the container units as part of the markers yard. An open day for the containers would be held in April, 2024 and a promotional video of the spaces was also being created.
- The Meads – it was advised that the Meads car park was not currently covering its costs and increased charges would be implemented in February, 2024. Residents using parking spaces would also have their charges gradually increased, to bring them in line with other similar facilities. Blocks 1 and 2 were realising a good income, however work was required to ensure that the other developed elements delivered the necessary income, and costs were reduced. Single lettings or vacancies could make a substantial difference.
- Disposal of Assets – it was important that each property was looked at as a whole when being considered for disposal. The ease of letting, sustainability of tenants and saleability of a site, where all things to consider as part of the review process.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Tennant and Mr Mills for their presentation.

29. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee noted the current work plan.

The Chairman reported that he had recently been in attendance at a meeting with County Councillor Rob Humby, Leader of Hampshire County Council and Cllr Gareth Lyon, Leader of Rushmoor Borough Council, at which the matter of the local County Councillors attending a future meeting of the Committee was addressed. It was noted that Cllr Humby would reconsider the response in his last letter.

An update would be sought regarding the schedule for the next meeting of the Farnborough Airport Task and Finish Group and reported to Members of the Group.

The meeting closed at 9.19 pm.

CLLR M.D. SMITH (CHAIRMAN)
