

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Thursday, 28th November, 2024 at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Halleh Koohestani (Chairman)
Cllr Nadia Martin (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr S. Trussler (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Leola Card
Cllr A.H. Crawford
Cllr P.J. Cullum
Cllr Thomas Day
Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr G.B. Lyon
Cllr Bill O'Donovan

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr M.J. Tennant

Cllr Jacqui Vosper attended the meeting virtually as Standing Deputy.

19. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on 24th October, 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

20. LEADERS PRIORITIES

The Committee welcomed Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council who was in attendance to present the proposals for a Council Delivery Plan and a programme of work to develop a new Council Vision and Plan.

The Leader set out the Council Delivery Plan Priorities, which had been approved by the Cabinet on 26 November, 2024. It was noted that the new administration were keen to put their stamp on the Council's activities and would be approaching this via a two-step process. This process allowed for the Delivery Plan to be developed between December 2024 and February 2025, this process would be followed but the development of the Council's Vision and Plan between February 2025 and December 2025.

The priorities, approved by the Cabinet, were as set out below;

- **Skills, Economy and Business** – the priority would aim to help promote access to skills development and training, enable working with businesses to attract and retain jobs and promote the development of our towns to meet the needs of businesses and residents.

- **Homes for All: Quality Living, Affordable Housing** – the priority was aimed at improving social housing performance, would allow for intervention to improve the quality of private sector rented accommodation, provide quality temporary accommodation, raise awareness of the allocation of social housing, help to progress a new Local Plan and enable the regeneration of Council owned brownfield land.
- **Community and Wellbeing: Active Lives, Healthier and Stronger Communities** – the priority was aimed at ensuring all residents had access to opportunities for physical exercise through a new leisure centre in Farnborough, enabled a programme of community and cultural activities, addressed health inequalities and allowed for partner working to improve access to mental health support.
- **Pride in Place: Clean, Safe and Vibrant Neighbourhoods** – the priority was aimed at providing cleaner streets through fly tipping initiatives, the work of the Cabinet Pride of Place Champion and initiatives with partners to address long term issues of anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- **Vision for the Future and Financial Sustainability** – the priority aimed to agree a collective vision for the Borough, create an outcome led plan to deliver the vision, implement processes and monitoring to ensure accountability, achieve financial sustainability and embed a culture of continuous improvement.

The Committee made a number of queries relating to the Plan, these included:

- **Homes for All** – it was noted that some guidance had now been received from central Government, which would help with the development of the new Local Plan. It was proposed that evidence gathering would commence in 2025.

In response to a question on population density, it was noted that homes were needed for residents already living in the Borough in overcrowded accommodation, the needs of the residents needed to be considered when developing the Local Plan.

In response to a query regarding the improvement of private sector rented housing, it was noted that a Private Registration Scheme was being assessed for its viability and work was underway to determine the best way forward.

Registered Providers – in response to a query regarding how the work of Registered Providers was monitored, it was noted that consideration was being given to a channel that would allow for more active engagement on a regular basis which would run alongside the current Registered Providers Task and Finish Group (RPT&F). However, it was important to ensure that the work of the new channel and the RPT&F did not crossover.

During a discussion regarding the use of brownfield sites for development to achieve the Local Plan requirement of 600 new homes per year, a list on brownfield sites for resident development was requested.

ACTION

What	Whom	By When
Follow up on the recommendations from the Committee following the annual review report of the Registered Providers Task and Finish Group in June 2024.	The Leader	January 2025
To provide a list of brownfield sites for residential development across the borough.	Planning Team – Katie Herrington	December 2024

- **Pride in Place** – it was expressed that, as drafted, the priority for Pride of Place seemed negative and more emphasis could be put on the positive activities which took place in the Borough and activities around community cohesion.

When questioned on the safety element of the priority, the Leader advised that work was underway to understand the issues around ASB, in particular in the town centres, and measures were being taken to tackle the causes.

In regard to the “walk your waste” initiative (formally Mega Skips), it was noted that the trial would be evaluated, once completed, to assess its performance.

It was asked if a budget had been allocated to support the role of the Pride of Place Champion. In response, it was advised that the role had been established to encourage community engagement and fundraising initiatives so would therefore cost very little financially.

In response to a query regarding concern over the look and feel of the Borough’s streets, it was noted that the SERCO contract was currently being considered and this process would include the longer term service requirements of the Council, part of which would incorporate the level of street cleansing.

- **Vision for the Future and Financial Sustainability -**

The Committee considered the residents survey and how it could be made simpler to enable translation to encourage wider engagement. It was noted that engagement had been made with schools and community groups to encourage response rates and officers had utilised the numbers of attendees at events, such as Victoria day, to gather responses from the wider community. In response to a query regarding how residents feedback was used to inform the Plan, the Committee were referred to para 3.3 of Report No. ACE2416, which set out the important issues identified by residents.

The Leader advised on the differences between the new Plan and the existing Plan. The new Plan included a wider scope on the Skills, Economy and Business priority, a stronger line and crackdown on private landlords as part of the Homes for All priority and an increase in CCTV and a crackdown on ASB as part of the Pride in Place priority.

In response to a query regarding the cost of the new plan and whether it was coming in at cost neutral, it was advised that the plan was not yet fully costed, but outline costs had been identified and it was advised that there would be a small uplift in cost. The aim was to work with partners to facilitate some of the activity to reduce costs, to allow the Council to provide a low cost co-ordination role.

In response to a query regarding the reputation of the Council and how it would be protected, the Leader advised that the reputation would be protected by presenting a grounded plan that offered sustainability and acknowledged the current financial position.

With regard to the Environmental Impact Assessments that were agreed at the Council meeting on 7 November, 2024 it was asked if the cost of these would become a financial burden, it was noted that they would be appropriate to the level of investments being made.

In relation to the Climate Change Action Plan refresh, it was noted that the refresh of the Plan could incorporate viability assessments and potentially look at influencing the wider areas carbon footprint, not just the Council's. The Policy and Project Advisory Board had considered proposals for the refresh at its meeting on 19 November 2024.

- **Skills, Economy and Business** – in response to a query regarding the breadth of skills training to be encouraged, it was noted that a variety of skills would be encouraged from technical skills to creative arts.

It was noted that any further questions for the Leader of the Council on this matter should be shared with the administrator to be collated for response.

The Chairman thanked the Leader for his contribution.

21. **RISK REGISTER**

The Committee welcomed Roger Sanders, Risk, Performance and Procurement Service Manager and Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive who were in attendance, with the Leader of the Council, to provide a presentation on the Risk Management Policy and Risk Register.

The Committee noted a summary timeline, since 2018/19, on how the management of risk had developed. In 2024 the Council underwent a Corporate Peer Challenge, the outcomes of which included recommendations relating to governance and clarity of Members' roles and responsibilities. In the Autumn of 2024, officers undertook a review and update of the risk management policy, which took account of emerging

Delivery Plan priorities, feedback from the Corporate Peer Challenge and recommendations from an internal audit. Following engagement on the revised policy with the Committee and other Members, it was proposed that the Cabinet would consider it at its meeting in January 2025.

The two levels of risk registered were noted, these include a Corporate Risk Register and individual Service Risk Registers. Within the Corporate Risk Register sat the Strategic Risks, Standing Corporate Risks and escalated Service Risks. The Committee were apprised of the key risks, these included:

- Strategic Risks - including economic conditions, poor health outcomes and the financial sustainability of public sector bodies
- Standing Corporate Risks – including data breaches, insufficient funding to proceed with projects and financial sustainability
- Escalated Service Risks – including failure to provide temporary accommodation and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) absorption into Hampshire County Council (HCC)

The upcoming changes to the reviewed Policy were set out, these included, processes to map opportunities and threats, formalisation of the process for quarterly reporting, development of trend monitoring, development arrangements to identify risks that were an issue and development of a strategic level risk appetite in line with the Council Plan.

During discussions the Committee queried who was responsible for risk in the organisation, it was noted that the revised Policy would make this clearer. However, the Cabinet played a central role in the monitoring of risk and Portfolio Holders were tasked with discussing risk and mitigation regularly within their areas of responsibility.

In response to a query relating to identifying gaps in the Council's Risk Registers, it was noted that services had a responsibility to incorporate any new legislation within their Service Risk Registers as appropriate. More generally cross references were carried out against global reporting and horizon scanning.

With regard to the level of risk that was considered acceptable, it was advised that currently risk appetite was determined line by line within each service area, these are then considered by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and reported to Cabinet to agree the level of appetite. The development of a Strategic Risk Appetite would provide an overall view on risk going forward assisting the process.

A request was made for Member training on cyber security, this would be pulled together and provided on an ongoing basis. It was also noted that the Cabinet Office provide some useful information to elected Members.

In response to a query on how often risk was looked at by senior officers and Portfolio Holders, it was reported that the full Corporate Risk Register was reviewed by the ELT once a quarter and Portfolio Holders would meet with Executive Heads of Service and Service Managers to discuss risk on a monthly basis. Officers

considered risk routinely as part of business as usual. Any emerging risks would be identified and brought to the attention of the ELT as appropriate.

In the case of a risk presenting that could have a larger impact than would be considered possible, the Council would ensure that a reasonable worst case scenario was applied. In the case of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Council had flu pandemic plans in place that were adapted to meet the needs of the local authority.

The Committee ENDORSED the approach to the Risk Management Policy and the Risk Register.

The Chairman thanked Ms Barker and Mr Sanders for the presentation.

22. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee noted the current Work Plan and the items for the meeting on 12 December, which included the Citizens' Advice Service Level Agreement Annual Report.

The meeting closed at 8.57 pm.

CLLR HALLEH KOOHESTANI (CHAIRMAN)
