

COUNCIL MEETING – 25TH JULY 2024

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In accordance with the Council's procedures for monitoring the overview and scrutiny process, this report reviews the work that has been undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2023/24. This report is re-presented following the cancellation of the Council Meeting on 25th April 2024.
- 1.2 The Committee's focus has been to keep a watching brief on the Council's activities and local facilities, along with service performance and providing comments and ideas. The aim has been to shape the Council's future policy and services. The Report covers the issues discussed, the processes followed, and the outcomes achieved during the year.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES AND WORK PLAN

- 2.1 The Committee was established as part of the review of the decision making structure which took effect from May, 2018. The Committee's breadth of activity includes all Council services and services provided by other organisations which impact on the Borough and its inhabitants.
- 2.2 The progress meeting (consisting of Cllrs. Gaynor Austin, Diane Bedford, Keith Dibble, Stephen Masterson, Stuart Trussler and, myself) has been used for discussion and consideration of processes and priorities. It also monitors the work plan and undertakes agenda planning.

3. COMMITTEE ISSUES

- 3.1 Over the year, the Committee has endeavoured to ensure that it has kept the Council's activities under review. However, some external scrutiny has been undertaken, in particular, around Public Transport links across the Borough, which resulted in a stakeholder meeting being held to discuss keys issues, in particular around connectivity and safety matters in Aldershot town centre. It has also been important to ensure that there is no duplication of work with the Policy and Project Advisory Board and this issue will continue to be monitored during the 2024/25 Municipal Year.
- 3.2 The main areas of focus in 2023/24 were:

Registered Providers – Through the Task and Finish Group (consisting of Cllrs. Diane Bedford, Keith Dibble, Sophie Porter, Stephen Masterson and myself) the Committee has continued the review of registered providers during the 2023/24 Municipal Year. The scrutiny of performance and activities has been limited to three registered providers (VIVID, A2 Dominion and Defence Estates) for 2023/24. In respect of a meeting with Defence Estates, a number of issues have prevented a meeting taking place, but officers continue to correspond with representatives from Defence Estates to secure a date. The 2023/24 annual report will be considered by the Committee at its first meeting of the Municipal Year (13th June, 2024) at which the recommendations will be considered and endorsement requested to continue with the review programme in 2024/25.

Council Tax Support Scheme – A Task and Finish Group (consisting of Cllrs. Diane Bedford, Christine Guinness, Stephen Masterson, Mike Roberts, Stuart Trussler and myself) has carried out a review of the Council Tax Support Scheme. Following an in-depth review of the current scheme, resulting in a recommendation to allow 100% of a person's council tax liability to be used to calculate their Council Tax Support award, a report was submitted to the Cabinet and the Council at their respective meetings in February 2024, where the recommendations of the Group were agreed.

Farnborough Airport Task and Finish Group – A Group (consisting of Cllr Diane Bedford, Gaynor Austin, Jess Auton, Jules Crossley, Mara Makunura and Calum Stewart) has commenced work on reviewing the environmental and economic impacts of the Airport on the Borough. Key lines of enquiry have been determined and a presentation has been received on work being undertaken with partners on the jet zero cluster. The next step is to meet with representatives from the Airport to take the work forward. Progress has not been made this year as originally envisaged partly due to the complexities that arise from the airport having submitted a major revision to their planning permission during the same period.

Cabinet Champions – The Committee received a presentation from the two Cabinet Champions at its meetings in March 2024 where each Champion reported on their work and activities during the year, the Committee noted the achievements and activities of each Champion and endorsed the recommendations and next steps for priorities in 2024/25. The work of the Champions would continue to be reviewed during 2024/25.

Corporate Customer Services Indicators – Following an initial meeting in the previous Municipal Year, the Committee have continued to receive progress reports on the Customer Services Unit during 2023/24. Feedback has been provided on the evolving working arrangements of the Customer Services Unit at two of its meetings. A watching brief will be maintained on the work of the service and reports provided as necessary.

Community Safety and Policing – At the meeting in September 2023, the Committee heard from Police representatives and the Safer North Hampshire team on current issues across the Borough. During the discussion, the

Committee addressed issues raised in the Notice of Motion on Youth Crime Prevention which had been referred to the Committee for scrutiny. The Committee were made aware of a number of local initiatives which addressed this issue. A watching brief on community safety and policing matters will be maintained during 2024/25.

Stagecoach - At the meeting in July, representatives from Stagecoach addressed the Committee on a number of matters, including service levels, performance and challenges, impacts of recent changes and funding impacts. The meeting resulted in a separate stakeholder meeting involving local transport providers, Hampshire County Council representatives and the Police, to further discuss matters of safety and connectivity around the Aldershot town centre, where a number of concerns have been raised. The meeting was productive and had highlighted a number of quick wins and longer term initiatives that would address the concerns.

Support for the Local armed Forces Community and British Gurkha Veterans – A special meeting was held in September to carry out an assessment of ongoing issues and support needs of our local Armed Forces Community, including welfare concerns raised in a Notice of Motion on British Gurkha Veterans – Welfare Issues. A number of recommendations were made to the Cabinet at its meeting on 17 October, 2023, which the Cabinet approved.

Call-in – Lawn Tennis Association – In November, 2023, the Committee received a call-in on a Cabinet decision relating to investment in public tennis courts in parks. Following a discussion around the provision of free tennis within the Borough, the Committee voted on the call-in and it was declared that the decision would not be referred back to the Cabinet for review.

Asset Management Strategy – In January 2024, the Committee received a presentation detailing progress on the Asset Management Strategy and future delivery, and a review of the portfolio and principles of disposal, in light of the budget. A watching briefing will be maintained on the progress of the strategy and the principles for disposals during 2024/25.

Climate Change Action Plan – In November 2023 and February 2024, the Committee considered matters relating to Climate Change. In February, a review of the Climate Change Action Plan was undertaken and recommendations/comments made for consideration by the Policy and Project Advisory Board at its meeting in March 2024 when a refresh of the Action Plan would be completed.

Public Health – Representatives from Hampshire County Council's Public Health Service attended the meeting in March 2024 to give a presentation on the recently published Public Health Report. Consideration would be given to holding a work shop to better understand the Public Health data and impacts locally.

3.3 Other items considered during the year included performance monitoring and Arts and Culture, which would be picked up again during 2024/25.

3.4 When appropriate, Cabinet Members have been in attendance at meetings to support items and answer the Committee's questions. Cabinet Members who have attended include, Cllr Maurice Sheehan (Deputy Leader and Environment & Neighbourhood Portfolio Holder), Cllr Martin Tennant (Deputy Leader and Major Projects & Property Portfolio Holder), Cllr Sue Carter (Community Portfolio Holder) and Cllr Ade Adeola (Digital First and Corporate Portfolio Holder).

4. **CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 The Committee has worked well during the year and carried out a range of activities, which have a significant impact on the Borough and the Council. The work of the Committee will be reviewed at the start of the 2024/25 Municipal Year to ensure that the Work Plan is realistic, and the focus is on issues where it can make a difference.

4.2 Finally, and importantly, I feel that the Committee has worked effectively together during the year, in particular cross-party co-operation and the depth of scrutiny achieved. All Members have contributed at meetings, and I would like to express my thanks for their support and especially the two Vice-Chairman. In addition, I am also grateful for the support given by the officers to the Committee and myself as Chairman.

5. **RECOMMENDATION**

6.1 The Council is asked to note and endorse the Committee's work.

CLLR. M. SMITH
CHAIRMAN - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (2023/24)