

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
Performance and Finance Scrutiny
Committee held at Council Chamber,
Surrey Heath House, Knoll Road,
Camberley, GU15 3HD on 6 March
2024**

- + Cllr Shaun Garrett (Chair)
- + Cllr Liz Noble (Vice Chair)

- Cllr Nirmal Kang
- + Cllr Sarbie Kang
- + Cllr Lewis Mears
- + Cllr David O'Mahoney
- Cllr Jonathan Quin
- + Cllr Bob Raikes
- + Cllr Victoria Wheeler
- + Cllr David Whitcroft
- + Cllr Richard Wilson

+ Present

- Apologies for absence presented

Substitutes: Cllr Julie Hoad (In place of Cllr Nirmal Kang) and Cllr Murray Rowlands (In place of Cllr Jonathan Quin)

Members in Attendance: Cllr Cliff Betton, Cllr Lisa Finan-Cooke, Cllr Morgan Rise

Officers in Attendance: Sarah Beck, Jo Chauhan, Gavin Chinniah, Cameron Dent, Kelly Goldsmith, Sally Kipping, Clive Jinman, Sue McCubbin, Gavin McIntosh, Damian Roberts, Eddie Scott, Nick Steevens, Joe Whitfield and Vicky Worsfold

32/PF Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2024 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

33/PF Public Question Time

The Chair of the Committee answered questions on behalf of the Committee in-line with Part 4, Section E of the Council's Constitution. In line with the Constitution, the questions and answers were published as part of a supplement to the meeting's agenda pack.

34/PF Executive Portfolio Update: Inclusion and Housing

The Committee considered a report which outlined the progress made in the Inclusion & Housing Portfolio over the last 12 months. The report drew out several key updates from throughout the Portfolio:

Corporate Safeguarding - The policy, updated in February 2023 and approved in June 2023, had undergone an annual review. Training in safeguarding adults & children, domestic abuse, and counter-terrorism was

now mandated for staff, with safeguarding champions available across the council.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)- Managed by the Home Solutions Team, DFGs offered capital grants up to £30,000 for property adaptations for disabled individuals. The programme's funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for 2023/24 was £884,021, with an additional in-year award and carry-forward, and totalled £1,128,023. There had been a trend towards a full spending allocation spending, attributed to increased work volume.

Homelessness & Emergency Accommodation- A significant increase in homelessness cases was reported, with 979 cases from households whose situation was likely to lead to homelessness in 2023, up by 147 from the previous year. The Council managed emergency accommodations through Accent and utilised B&Bs when necessary. The homelessness prevention grant (HPG) supported staffing, projects, and interventions.

Equalities & Diversity- The Achieving Equity Strategy was refreshed in January 2024 and focussed on removing barriers and improving access to services for all residents. An action plan was in development to deliver equality objectives.

Family Support & Refugee Assistance- The Family Support Programme continued under an Service Level Agreement between Surrey Heath Borough Council and Surrey County Council until March 2025. The report highlighted successful support for vulnerable families and the integration of UK Resettlement Scheme families. Concerns about the future funding of the Family Support Programme beyond March 2025 were noted.

Grants- The report detailed various discretionary grant schemes administered by the Council, including Community Fund Grant, Ward Councillor Community Fund, and others developed in response to changing needs.

Housing- This section covered the Home Solutions Team's work on disrepair in private rented sector homes, the management of HMOs, and public health funerals. It also discusses the housing register & allocation of social housing, and highlighted the demand for and allocation of social housing within the borough.

Voluntary Sector & Community Partnerships- The report mentioned quarterly networking events for community and voluntary partners, challenged in volunteer engagement post-pandemic, and community engagement events focused on cost of living and health.

The Committee acknowledged the Armed Forces Covenant and the requirement to act with due diligence when providing support to homeless military veterans. It was advised that only 1 out of the current 8 rough sleepers were Armed Forces Veterans, who had been offered accommodation through a support service for

veteran personnel. It was noted that Housing Officers always ensured they asked as to new customers' veteran's status.

It was remarked by members of the Committee that the Council's Housing Register was somewhat large for a relatively small borough and questioned the capacity of social housing provision within the borough, with particular focus on 4 bedroom homes where there was a significant lack of homes. The Committee were advised that as a result of the shortage of 4 bedroom properties, some of the families with a four bedroom-need had been allocated larger 3 bedroom properties with multiple reception rooms.

The Committee noted the matters relating to the future of the Family Support Service and a potential transfer in service delivery to Surrey County Council. Whilst there were no developments to report on the future of the service, it was affirmed that the Council was ensuring that its Family Support Service staff had strong transferrable skills and had an advantage against other borough and district's Family Support Programme services, if they found themselves to be competitors which each other in the employment market. Moreover, it was reaffirmed that the Council actively supported its staff throughout the organisation, via training provision, and most recently the Council's 'Rising Stars', scheme which allowed successful applicants to broaden their horizons within the Council and gain skills from outside their specialism.

There was discussion as to the ongoing scrutiny of Housing Associations and 3rd Sector Support provision. It was reiterated that it was important to have Surrey Heath-specific statistics in relation to social housing complaints, including feedback on complaints, turnaround times and content. The Committee was advised that the Portfolio Holder had discussed Accent Housing's attendance at the June meeting of the External Partnerships Select Committee and the strong desire to be provided with Surrey Heath-specific statistics. Moreover, it was reemphasised that there was a wish amongst Members to have further evidence of the performance of Voluntary Support North Surrey in relation to the placement of volunteers at local charitable organisations, and the output of the recent volunteering promotion campaign.

It was agreed for the Portfolio Holder to revert with further detail on a number of points which included questions relating to a breakdown of the sum of the DFGs provided within the past year, the percentage of homeless households placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, indicative cost per head for the Council per rough sleeper and total number of rough sleepers helped through the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI); and how many residents attended the Hong Kongers British National Overseas event during July 2023.

The Committee thanked Councillor Lisa Finan-Cooke and Officers for the lengthy and detailed report.

35/PF Executive Portfolio Update: Net Zero, Wellbeing and Environment

The Committee considered a report which provided a comprehensive update on the activities and achievements within the Net-Zero, Wellbeing & Environment portfolio over the past 12 months, along with insights into future projects.

The report highlighted the following key highlights and areas of focus:

Air Quality: The Environmental Control team monitored air quality, issued permits to businesses and conducted borough-wide air quality assessments. Recent deployments of a portable air quality monitor had taken place in various locations, including schools and residential areas near major roads.

Climate Change: Notable achievements included the securing of funding for solar panels at a leisure centre, delivery of electric vehicle (EV) chargers, completion of lighting efficiency works, and completed development of climate change training. The Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) had seen the completion of 14 actions. Updates to the action plan reflected progress and the addition of new actions aimed at acceleration of climate change work.

Corporate Enforcement: The team handled statutory enforcement functions which included planning enforcement, abandoned vehicles, environmental crime, and more significant increase in referrals and actions taken across several categories, such as dog-on-dog attack reports and there had been significant progress made to the team's internal reporting processes. Fly tipping incidents had increased by 23%, but evidence had been difficult to collect and increased use of CCTV provision was being used.

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity: Post-COVID-19, the Council focused on resilience against various disruptions, which included power loss and industrial action. Training exercises and plan updates ensured preparedness for civil emergencies.

Environmental Health including Health & Safety: continued efforts in food safety, workplace safety, air quality monitoring, and statutory nuisance investigation were highlighted.

Health & Wellbeing: Projects such as the "Whole Systems Approach" to Healthy Weight and physical activity promotion via the Active Lives Survey and community activities underscored the Council's commitment to promotion of healthier communities. A pilot scheme was also highlighted in relation to the promotion of healthy eating in conjunction with Surrey County Council.

Licensing and Recycling & Refuse: The Licensing Team continued to oversee a broad range of licenses, and worked closely with businesses and agencies to promote safety and compliance. Joint Waste Solutions continued to deliver the refuse and street care services on behalf of the 4 partner authorities as well as the delivery of the work of the Surrey Environment Partnership on behalf of all 11 boroughs and districts. Surrey Heath now maintained a 5 year average of over 60% of waste being recycled.

On consideration of the report, the Committee had various questions in relation to flooding. Whilst the Council was not normally the lead flood authority for surface water or highway flooding, the Council continuously aimed to facilitate dialogue between itself, Applied Resilience, Surrey County Council and the Environment Agency to progress sticking points, and maintain oversight. Moreover, Members had notable concerns in respect of the flooding and sewage discharge issues which were taking place in respect of the River Bourne. It was acknowledged by the Portfolio Holder that the issue had fast become a public health and environmental problem; and that joint advocacy on the issue would be part of the Ward-Environmental audits as detailed in the Annual Plan.

It was drawn out by Members, that the number of unauthorised encampments was higher than in previous years. The location of encampments was different from previous years, and it was noted that some Wards had an especially high amount in a short amount of time.

The Bin Replacement Programme was ongoing and Parish Councils and Accent had recently been invited to take part in the programme, to make use of the Council's procurement process and the programme's economies of scale.

There was discussion as to the level of early success of the Council's Join-in programme which had been running since January 2024. 24 Pupils had successfully joined the scheme, 11 applications were in the process of being processed, whereas 4 had been rejected for being out of area. 24 pupils for the first 3 months compared to 64 pupils who represented the borough in the Surrey Youth Games. Despite this, it was highlighted that only 4 children out of the 126 pupil premium on the Old Dean had so far joined the scheme. It was acknowledged that further work in relation to accessibility and affordability of transport needed to be further examined, as well as further engagement with sports clubs.

The Committee thanked Councillor Morgan Rise and Officers for the detailed report.

36/PF Air Quality Monitoring Report

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on air pollution measurements in 2022 and the Council's work, which related to the Local Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), outlined new Council responsibilities under the Environment Act 2021 and the National Air Quality Strategy, and recommended the Committee endorsed revocation of the AQMA, which would be considered by the Council's Licensing Committee in June 2024.

Continued Air Quality Monitoring was conducted by the Council's Environmental Health Team via the placement of 53 diffusion tubes. Moreover, a real-time station in Camberley showed continued compliance with NO₂ and PM₁₀ objectives, despite slight increases in pollutants which could be attributed to the post-COVID return to normal traffic levels. Moreover, despite a return to normal traffic levels collaborative work with Rushmoor Borough Council and a temporary speed limit

had successfully reduced pollution levels to comply with national objectives on the A331.

An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) had been initially designated in 2002 due to pollutant levels exceeding air quality objectives near the M3 motorway. However, recent data supported its revocation due to sustained compliance with air quality objectives. Actions from the associated AQAP had largely been completed, with further efforts focused on promotion of low emission transport and installation of electric vehicle charging points.

The Committee supported the revocation of the AQMA but had various questions in relation to the ongoing monitoring of Air Quality throughout the Borough. It was acknowledged that the borough's PM 2.5 particulate levels were above the set out target for 2040, as well as the interim government target for 2028. Whilst, the Council were undertaking work to reduce concentrations, it was highlighted that the vast majority of the causes of PM 2.5 particulate matter were out of the Council's control. Moreover, it was also advised that the Council's Portable Air Pollution monitor did not have the correct accreditations in order for conclusions to be drawn in relation to pollution-induced mortality.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The report together with the 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report and the work that the Council has undertaken under its Local Air Quality Management statutory duties be noted;**
- (ii) The Licensing Committee be advised to revoke the current Air Quality Management Area (AQMA); and**
- (iii) The Licensing Committee be advised to agree to the development of an Air Quality Strategy for Surrey Heath.**

37/PF Q3 Revenue Monitoring report

The Scrutiny Committee considered a report which provided a high-level view as to the budget and financial performance for the third quarter of 2023/24 – accounting period ending 31 December 2023.

The Committee noted that the Council was currently showing a small underspend against profiled budgets to the end of Quarter 3 (31 December 2023). However, services had predicted a year-end forecast outturn of £126K underspend (positive variance).

It was advised that the high-level summary by service, which tracked budgetary movements from the budget set in February 2023, reflected various unbudgeted rental income from the Council's estate, as well as increased costs relating to electrical and health and safety works in respect of the Council's Car Parks.

RESOLVED that the spend against the approved revenue budget for the period 1 April to 31 December 2023 and the predicted forecast of full year outturn.

38/PF Q3 Capital Monitoring report

The Scrutiny Committee considered a report which provided a summary of the Council's progress against the 2023/24 capital programme and budget for the first 3 quarters of the financial year (FY), the period 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023.

The report detailed that at the end of Quarter 3 the total spend and commitments to spend were £4.105 million against an approved budget of £15.951 million, which amounted to 25.7%. There was a forecast underspend for the year of £7.641 million of which £7.484 million was proposed to be reprofiled into future years.

It was acknowledged by the Committee that the majority of projects which were to be reprofiled to later years related to Property and Economic Development initiatives, where it could be seen that of the £7.484 million reprofiled, £7.312 million related to four schemes.

Moreover, the Committee acknowledged that the report detailed figures against the targets in the previous Medium Term Financial Strategy, and the base-budget review figures, relating to the 2023/24 financial year, and not those which had been agreed in the lead-up to the setting of the 24/25 budget.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the spend against the approved capital programme for the period 1 April to 31 December 2023 be noted; and**
- (ii) the proposed reprofiling of budgets to future years be noted.**

39/PF Committee Work Programme (24/25)

The Committee noted that the Committee's Work Programme for the 24/25 Municipal Year was in development, and that any ideas for potential items should be emailed to the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Chair