

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel (to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Monday, 23 January 2023

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs S M Bayford (Chairman)

Councillor N J Walker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: F Birkett, M R Daniells, D J Hamilton, Miss T G Harper and Mrs K Mandry

**Also
Present:**



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies of absence.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel held on 22 September 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairman's announcements made at this meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTION

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2023-24

The Panel considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer on the Capital Strategy 2023/24 and the overall capital programme for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27.

Members noted that it is difficult to predict the future spend for the Council with the current national financial crisis but found the report and Capital Strategy 2023/24 document extremely useful in understanding the financial pressures on the Council.

RESOLVED that the Panel recommends that the Executive endorse the Capital Strategy 2023/24 at its meeting on 6 February 2023.

7. FEES AND CHARGES 2023-24

The Panel considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer on the proposed Fees and Charges for 2023-24.

Councillor Hamilton enquired as to whether Fareham's fees and charges are comparable with those of other authorities. The Finance Manager explained to the Panel fees and charges vary from each authority and that it would be difficult to undertake a comparison of these figures as each authority deals with their fees and charges differently and at different times of the year.

The Chairman asked as to whether the Council keeps their fees and charges the same as Gosport where we have shared services. The Finance Manager confirmed that in respect of the Building Control Partnership these are the same, however for other areas such as the Environmental Health partnership,

its not possible to do this due to the different ways in which each authority works.

Councillor Birkett enquired as to whether raising certain charges higher than they are set at (such as Fly tipping) could be used as a deterrent from these issues occurring. The Finance Manager explained that there are certain statutory fines, such as fly tipping, that cannot be increased. He explained that the Council is able to try and recover costs of these cases through prosecutions.

RESOLVED that the Panel agree that they have no comments to pass onto the Executive in respect of this report, at its meeting on 6 February 2023.

8. FINANCE STRATEGY, REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2023-24

The Panel considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer on the Finance Strategy, Revenue Budget and Council 2023-24.

Members discussed the 5-year financial forecast and the predicted funding shortfall and were keen to ensure that there would be public engagement with looking at options to secure the budget going forward. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer addressed the Panel and confirmed that there would need to be a significant piece of work undertaken to look at where savings could be made, and part of this work would indeed involve public consultation.

RESOLVED that the Executive notes the Panels comments above when they consider this item at their meeting on 6th February 2023.

9. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2023-24

The Panel considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer on the Housing Revenue Account for 2023/24.

Councillor Walker enquired as to whether Council tenants are coping with the continuing increase in charges. The Finance Manager confirmed that there has been a slight increase in rent arrears recently, and the Council has increased the bad debt provision to help assist manage this. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer confirmed that although there are early signs of an increase in arrears, nothing serious is being flagged at present.

The Chairman enquired as to what support the Council offers for tenants who are struggling. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer confirmed that the Neighbourhood Officers are giving support to the tenants in their area along with the help and support of the Fareham Housing Welfare Support Officer.

Members also enquired as to whether the number of evictions has increased over the past year. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer confirmed that there has not been any increase in evictions, and whilst some tenants are struggling financially the Neighbourhood Officers are working closely with these tenants to ensure that they do not get to the point of evictions.

RESOLVED that the Executive notes the Panels comments above when they consider this item at their meeting on 6th February 2023.

10. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

The Panel considered the Executive items of business which falls under the remit of the Policy and Resources Portfolio, including Executive Member decisions and Officer delegated decisions, that have taken place since the last meeting of the Panel on 22 September 2022.

(1) Finance Monitoring 2022 - 23

There were no comments received.

(2) Treasury Management & Capital Monitoring 2022 - 23

There were no comments received.

(3) Updated Equalities Objectives 2022 - 26

There were no comments received.

(4) Annual Review of the Corporate Strategy 2017-2023 & Local Service Agreements 2021-22

There were no comments received.

(5) Relocation of Corporate Cabin, Solent Airport

There were no comments received.

(6) Fees and Charges

There were no comments received.

(7) Finance Strategy, Revenue Budget & Council Tax 2023-24

There were no comments received.

11. SCRUTINY PRIORITIES

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer addressed the Panel on this item and reminded members of upcoming items for future meetings.

Members were given the opportunity to put forward suggestions for any additional item of business that they would like to scrutinise. The Chairman requested that an item on the Town Centre Regeneration be brought to a meeting on the Panel in the next municipal year. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer confirmed that this will be brought to the Panel over the next 12 months.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 6.44 pm).