

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION
8TH FEBRUARY 2021**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Seaton)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Hamilton)
Councillors Bolton, Hadji-Nikolaou, Brookes,
Grimley and Ranson

Councillor Bailey (Cabinet Lead Member for
Planning) and Poland (Cabinet Lead Member for
Public Housing)

Head of Planning and Regeneration
Head of Landlord Services
Democratic Services Manager, Democratic
Services Officer (NC) and Democratic Services
Officer (SW)

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

116. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 11th January 2021 were approved.

117. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

The following disclosure was made:

Councillor Grimley declared a personal interest in respect of item 10a (Planning Fee Income – Revenue Impact) as his work required making regular planning applications.

118. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

119. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions were submitted.

120. AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE

There were no Audit Committee updates for the Commission.

121. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF ANY SPECIFIC FINANCIAL MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED BY CABINET**

There were no items of this nature on the Cabinet agenda for the Commission to consider.

122. **CABINET ITEMS FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The following item was identified for pre-decision scrutiny from the Cabinet agenda for the 11th February 2021.

123. **EXEMPT - FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DELIVERY OF PLANNED WORKS, VOIDS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS**

An exempt Cabinet report of the Head of Landlord Services was circulated to Members and was considered under item 13 of the agenda.

124. **SCRUTINY COMMISSION PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - CABINET RESPONSE**

A report of the Cabinet was considered setting out its responses to the recommendations of the Commission on pre-decision scrutiny items (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet's responses to the Commission's recommendations be noted.

Reason

The Commission was satisfied that it added value where appropriate and welcomed the Cabinet's consideration of the Commission's views and recommendations as part of its decision making process.

125. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

A report of the Head of Strategic Support to enable the Commission to review items from the paused Scrutiny Work Programme. This includes items for discussion highlighted by members of the Directorate-based Scrutiny Committees (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item.

It was highlighted that in reference to action (3), this would mean that the Directorate-based Scrutiny Committees currently scheduled for 9th March 2021, 16th March 2021 and 23rd March 2021 would not take place.

The Commission added the following item to their Work Programme:

- i. Performance Information - Quarter 3 Report (Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme) – 8th March 2021 or 6th April 2021.

RESOLVED

1. That the Commission reviewed the Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes.
2. That the Commission reviewed the items previously selected from Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes.
3. That the Scrutiny Committees continue to be paused, until after the Scrutiny Commission has reviewed the revised scrutiny structure, at its meeting on 8th March 2021. As a result, the Scrutiny Committee meetings scheduled to take place on 9th March 2021, 16th March 2021 and 23rd March 2021 would not take place.
4. That the Performance Information – Quarter 3 Report item selected from the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be added to the agenda of the Scrutiny Commission for its meeting on either 8th March 2021 or 6th April 2021.

Reasons

- 1-4. To ensure timely and effective scrutiny of the matter/subject.
3. To ensure that the revised scrutiny structure is reviewed prior to the reinstatement of scrutiny committees.

126. PLANNING FEE INCOME - REVENUE IMPACT

A report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration to address concerns of the Corporate Service Scrutiny Panel that planning fee income is underperforming against budget and to explain the costs of the 2018 service restructure was selected from the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme (item 10a on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Planning and the Head of Planning and Regeneration assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The Council had no control over planning fee income as the rate was set by regulation. Similarly, there was no control over the planning applications submitted to it and when. Planning applications income was not linear and was economy dependent.
- ii. The Council had delivered a full planning service throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. There had been a decrease in applications at the start of the pandemic but there had since been a significant increase in house holder applications.
- iii. Following the loss of the five-year land supply there had been an increase in larger applications across the Borough.

RESOLVED that the Commission noted the report.

Reason

To ensure that the Commission considered the matters contained within the report.

127. SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support to enable the Commission to review its own work programme, including considering the list of forthcoming Executive Key Decisions in order to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny (item 11 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item.

The Commission added the following items to its Work Programme:

- i. Recovery Cell Updates (Community/Economic) – 8th March 2021 or 6th April 2021.
- ii. Pre-decision scrutiny – ICT Strategy 2021-24 – To improve the ICT Strategy 2021-24 – 8th March 2021.

RESOLVED

1. That forthcoming Executive Key Decisions or decisions to be taken in private by the Executive, set out in Appendix 2 to the report, and scheduled scrutiny of those matters, be noted.
2. That the Commission's current work programme be noted.
3. That the work programme be updated in accordance with the items highlighted.

Reasons

- 1&3. To ensure effective and timely scrutiny, either to provide Cabinet with advice prior to it taking a decision or to ensure that the Council and external public service providers and partners were operating effectively for the benefit of the Borough.
2. To ensure effective and timely scrutiny.

128. EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED that members of the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest of disclosing the information.

At this point in the meeting the live streaming was switched off.

129. FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DELIVERY OF PLANNED WORKS, VOIDS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS

An exempt Cabinet report of the Head of Landlord Services was considered for pre-decision scrutiny (exempt item 8a on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Public Housing and the Head of Landlord Services attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item. A summary of the Commission's discussion on this matter is provided in the exempt minute (Scrutiny Commission Minute 129E. 2020/21).

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 22nd February 2021 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.