



Minutes

Name of meeting	CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date and Time	TUESDAY 7 MARCH 2023 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs R Quigley (Chairman), C Quirk (Vice-Chairman), W Drew, R Downer, J Lever, M Lilley and J Robertson
Also Present	Cllrs C Jarman and J Jones-Evans Christopher Ashman, Sharon Betts, Wendy Perera, Christopher Potter, Paul Thistlewood, Megan Tuckwell and Melanie White
Also Present (Virtual)	Claire Shand
Apologies	Cllrs J Medland and P Spink, Cameron Palin

68 Apologies and Changes in Membership (If Any)

Cllr Rodney Downer was in attendance as a substitute for Cllr David Adams. Apologies were received from Cllr John Medland, Cllr Peter Spink, and Cameron Palin.

69 Minutes

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2023 be confirmed as a true record.

70 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received at this stage.

71 Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum

No public questions were received.

72 Progress Update

The chairman presented the report which provided an overview of the progress against actions and outcomes from previous meetings. An update was sought with regards to the request to the Cabinet by members of the committee to view the confidential Cowes Floating Bridge settlement. It was confirmed that the request had been received and was being considered with a response expected in due course.

With regards to the scoping of a future agenda item on reducing child poverty, and it was advised that ONS data would be provided to support this.

RESOLVED:

THAT the progress report be noted.

73 Committee's Workplan:

73a Forward Plan

The committee were invited to identify any item contained within the published forward plan that would benefit from early consideration within the committee's own workplan or one of the policy and scrutiny committees. No items were identified at this stage. The chairman advised that he had been consulted on executive decision by the Leader, under Regulation 11 special urgency provisions, to grant delegated authority to the Director of Corporate Services regarding the two alternative energy schemes as set by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

RESOLVED:

THAT the council's forward plan be noted.

73b Committee's Work Programme 2022-25

Consideration was given to the committee's work programme for 2022-25. The committee were satisfied that the future agenda item relating to Fees and Charges had been dealt with through the budget-setting process and therefore it would be removed from the workplan. It was confirmed that the Community Safety Partnership's annual report had been slipped from November 2022 and was rescheduled for May 2023. Comments were made regarding school place planning and admissions numbers, and it was agreed that the matter would be referred to the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services, Education and Skills.

RESOLVED:

THAT the committee's work programme be noted.

74 Scrutiny Annual Report

Consideration was given to the report which provided an overview of the work of Scrutiny for 2022-23 and invited the committee to identify any matters that required further action to improve the delivery of the overview and scrutiny function. No comments or questions were raised, and the report was noted.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report be noted.

75 The Council's Policy Framework

Consideration was given to the report which provided information around the council's policy framework. Questions were raised regarding the progress with the Harassment and Bullying Policy (due for finalisation in early 2023) and whether this had any potential impact on staff sickness absences. Comments were made in relation to the various policies due to be finalised in early 2023 and the committee sought confirmation on timescales. In relation to Income and Charging (due for renewal in 2018) and it was advised that an explanatory note could be provided to clarify the reason for delays. Discussion took place with regards to the Councillor Code of Conduct, the Constitution, and the DBS Policy; and it was suggested that the review of the Constitution be considered by the committee. The Monitoring Officer outlined the process for reviewing these documents including timescales and councillor consultation.

RESOLVED:

- i) THAT the report, and the list of policies required to be approved/adopted by the Full Council, be noted.
- ii) THAT refreshed policies be brought to the relevant scrutiny committee for comment prior to sign off.
- iii) THAT the committee noted the internal audit report on the Annual Governance Framework (which highlighted the risk of not having up-to-date policies and strategies) and was satisfied that the concerns of the internal auditors were being addressed. The committee agreed to review progress on a regular basis.

76 Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes and Empty Properties

Consideration was given to the report to Cabinet on 9 March 2023 which advised on the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) bill which would provide legislation to enable councils to apply premiums to second homes and empty properties. It was advised that the report was a declaration of intent and, should the bill become law, a further report would be presented to the Full Council. Questions were raised regarding future implementation and enforcement, and concerns were expressed around timescales and prematurity of the report. The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance, Transformational Change and Corporate Resources advised that further to the publication of the report, a revised recommendation would be put to Cabinet, as follows;

That Cabinet recommends to Full Council that Full Council declares its intention to implement and approve the following additional council tax premiums, to be applied from 1 April 2024, or as soon as possible thereafter, subject to the legislation being in place:

- i) A 100% premium for second homes;*
- ii) A 100% premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for a period between 1 and 5 years - this will change the current policy of charging a 100% premium where a property is empty and unfurnished for a period between 2 and 5 years.*

Following discussion, the committee agreed to endorse the revised recommendation to the Cabinet, subject to the removal of the percentage figure.

RESOLVED:

THAT the revised recommendation to the Cabinet be endorsed, subject to the removal of the percentage figure.

77 Members' Question Time

Cllr Quirk asked an oral question in relation to the accessibility of consultation documents in libraries.

CHAIRMAN