

Minutes

Name of meeting	CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date and Time	TUESDAY 9 JANUARY 2024 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs J Robertson (Chairman), P Spink (Vice-Chairman), M Beston, R Downer, J Lever, K Love, C Mosdell, C Quirk and S Redrup
Co-opted	Simon Cooke (IWALC)
Also Present	Cllrs J Bacon, P Fuller, J Jones-Evans and K Lucioni, G Brodie, C Jarman, I Ward Rob Gillespie (Island Roads), Keith Herbert and Adam Wilds (Southern Water) Sharon Betts, James Brewer, Wendy Perera, Colin Rowland, Claire Shand, Megan Tuckwell and Melanie White
Also Present (Virtual)	Cllr P Jordan Christopher Potter
Apologies	Cllr W Drew

56 Apologies and Changes in Membership (If Any)

Cllr Michael Beston was in attendance as a substitute for Cllr Warren Drew.

The chairman confirmed that he had been given notice of the Regulation 10 general exception notice regarding the approval of the Fees and Charges – Inflationary Rise Garden Waste Subscriptions.

57 Minutes

RESOLVED:

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

58 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received at this stage.

59 Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum

No public questions were received.

60 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 of the committee in January 2023 to receive a copy of the review of leisure centres once it had been completed. Concerns were raised regarding the time taken to reach this stage. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the report was being finalised and would be available to share with the committee in due course.

Reference was made to the request of the committee in February 2023 to receive a copy of the signed heads of agreement in relation to the proposed disposal of Kingston Marine Park. Concerns were raised regarding the time taken to reach this stage. The Cabinet Member confirmed that work was still underway, and this would be circulated to the committee once complete.

An update was sought with regards to the request of the committee in September 2023 to receive a copy of the refreshed Corporate Plan when available. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Leader had liaised with portfolio holders in respect of this and would be available to the committee in due course.

Reference was made to the request of the committee in September 2023 to receive a copy of the report setting out the findings and recommendations following the independent review of the Floating Bridge. It was confirmed that this work was underway and would be aligned with a report on the future options, both of which would be presented to the committee when available.

RESOLVED:

THAT the progress report be noted.

61 Committee's Workplan:

61a Forward Plan

61b Committee's Work Programme

Consideration was given to the committee's work programme and 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 that of one of the policy and scrutiny committees.

It was suggested that the committee reviews at its next meeting the report on the LEP Integration of Functions into Upper Tier Local Authorities, due for decision by the Cabinet in February 2024.

Comments were made with regards to cross-Solent ferry operators, and it was agreed that the chairman would contact committee members to scope this potential agenda item for a report to be presented to the committee in May 2024.

RESOLVED:

THAT the committee's work programme, and the forward plan, be noted.

62 Flood Response

The committee received a presentation which provided detail on how the council responds to flooding in its role as the Lead Local Flood Authority, and how the council works with partner agencies with a joint approach to flood prevention and risk management. Representatives of Southern Water, Island Roads, and the Environment Agency were in attendance. It was advised that the Isle of Wight Local Flood Risk Management Strategy would be reviewed in light of the flood events in October-November 2023, and the development of this would involve public consultation and evidence gathering. It was anticipated that this would be completed within the next six months.

Questions were raised regarding the criteria for the allocation of the Community Recovery Grant for residents affected by flooding. It was requested that the committee receives further detail on how many applications had been made, how many had been successful, and details on any complaints and how they had been resolved.

Concerns were raised regarding any overlap between recently flooded areas, and those areas identified within the draft Island Planning Strategy for future development. It was assured that part of the Section 19 report work would investigate whether flooding had occurred in areas with new developments, and if so why and where that had happened.

Discussion took place regarding the actions being taken to improve communication with residents, and to strengthen relationships amongst the different agencies (including the fire and rescue service, town and parish councils, the voluntary sector, and landowners).

It was agreed that this matter would be reconsidered by the committee in six months to allow time for the Flood Risk Management Strategy and Section 19 flood reports to be completed.

RESOLVED:

THAT the presentation and update be received and noted.

63 Budget Proposals 2024-25

The committee received a statement from the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer on the updated budget position since last reported to the committee in November 2023 (Appendix 1), following the announcement of the provisional local government financial settlement. The committee expressed disappointment that the relevant Cabinet Member was not in attendance, and no comments or questions were raised at this stage.

Cllr Chris Jarman submitted a written question to the committee regarding the development of alternative budget proposals (MQ 01-24). Discussion took place regarding the council's constitution, and the ability for 'opposition groups' to develop and submit full alternative budget proposals, which require access to confidential information, data, and officer resources. Following discussion, it was:

RESOLVED:

THAT the three statutory officers be requested to provide a written response to the written question (MQ-01/24), to be reported back to the questioner and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee within seven days.

64 Pre-Decision Scrutiny - Future Governance

The committee received the report from the Future Governance Working Group regarding the potential for the Isle of Wight Council to move to a Committee system of governance from May 2024. The chairman advised that the report was not on the agenda for Full Council in 17 January 2024 as originally anticipated. As a result of this, it was agreed that scrutinisation of the report would be deferred to the next meeting of the committee in February 2024. It was requested that the Chairman of the Council be asked to provide a full written explanation as to why the report was removed from the Full Council agenda. Following discussion, it was:

RESOLVED:

THAT the Chairman of the Council be asked to provide a full written explanation as to why the decision was taken to remove the Future Governance Working Group report from the agenda for the Full Council on 16 January 2024, no later than midday on Friday 12 January 2024.

65 Confidentiality

The committee received the report on councillor's access to information as it related to confidentiality in terms of the council's decision-making processes, in order to understand in greater detail what information can and cannot be disclosed. Discussion took place regarding confidential information and the exclusion of the public and press. It was suggested that future decision reports with a private element should be supplemented with a note from the Monitoring Officer, outlining the category of exemption, the application of a 'public interest' balance, and the duration of that exemption status.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report be received and noted.

66 Members' Question Time

Cllr Chris Jarman submitted a written question (MQ 01-24) which was dealt with under minute item 63.

Cllr Julie Jones-Evans asked an oral question with regards to Cabinet Member attendance at meetings of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. The chairman emphasised the expectation of Cabinet Members to attend meetings, particularly where there is an agenda item with relevance to their portfolio.

CHAIRMAN