

# Minutes

Name of meeting	<b>CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
Date and Time	<b>TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2024 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM</b>
Venue	<b>COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, ISLE OF WIGHT</b>
Present	Cllrs J Robertson (Chairman), P Spink (Vice-Chairman), R Downer, W Drew, J Lever, K Love, C Mosdell, C Quirk and S Redrup
Co-opted	Simon Cooke (IWALC)
Also Present	Cllrs I Stephens, D Andre and J Jones-Evans, C Jarman and N Stuart
	Sharon Betts, Wendy Perera, Colin Rowland, Claire Shand, Megan Tuckwell and Melanie White
Also Present (Virtual)	Cllrs K Lucioni and L Peacey-Wilcox
	Natasha Dix and Justin Thorne

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## **67 Apologies and Changes in Membership (If Any)**

No apologies or changes in membership had been received.

## **68 Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2024 be confirmed as a true record.

## **69 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were received at this stage.

## **70 Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum**

No public questions were received.

## **71 Progress Update**

The chairman introduced 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. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the report was being finalised and would be available to share with the committee once the final data from January and February 2024 had been included.

An update was sought with regards 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. The Cabinet Member confirmed that work was underway, both legal teams were actively engaged and were optimistic in moving forward.

Comments were made regarding the request of the committee in September 2023 to receive a copy of the refreshed Corporate Plan when available. The Deputy Leader advised that, following review, the priorities remained the same and it had therefore been determined that a refresh was not needed at this time.

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. The chairman confirmed that an additional meeting of the committee had been arranged (27 February 2024) to consider the matter, and the external consultants would be in attendance to present their report.

It was noted that the Cabinet's presentation of its budget proposals for 2024-25 (Budget and Council Tax Setting 2024-2025 and Future Years' Forecasts) had been deferred by one week pending final details on the governments financial settlement. The chairman advised that an additional meeting of the committee had been arranged (12 February 2024) to consider this.

RESOLVED:

THAT the progress report and updates be noted.

## **72 Committee's Workplan:**

### **72a Forward Plan**

### **72b 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.

Discussion took place regarding the decision taken on 25 January 2024 to Increase Parking Tariffs and Permit Prices, and Changes to Parking Provision at Union St, Newport, and questions were raised around the Leader's decision to delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Community Services (and why this decision was not made by a Cabinet Member). It was noted that a call-in of this decision had been submitted and subsequently rejected on the basis that no representations had been received in the specified timeframe. Concerns were raised around the constitution, and it was suggested that this matter be referred to the Audit and Governance Committee.

Comments were made with regards to the Islands demographics (a declining youth and working-age population and an increasing aging population) as it related to the Island's workforce, economy, and housing. It was agreed that the item would be scoped and presented to the committee in due course.

It was advised that a future agenda item on cross-Solent ferry operators was being scoped and would be presented to the committee in due course.

RESOLVED:

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

**73 Pre-Decision Scrutiny - Budget and Council Tax Setting 2024-2025 and Future Years' Forecasts**

This item was deferred to the meeting of the committee on 12 February 2024.

**74 Pre-Decision Scrutiny - LEP Integration of functions into Upper Tier Local Authorities**

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration, Culture and Leisure was in attendance to present the report which sought the Cabinet's approval for the council to work jointly with Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council to deal with the changes arising from the new integration of the Local Enterprise Partnership functions.

It was clarified that this report focused on the governance arrangements and a future report may be required to provide greater detail on disaggregation. It was suggested this report be presented to the committee when available.

Discussion took place regarding the distribution of funding and the committee urged the council to seek an agreement from Hampshire that funding for the Solent geographic area would be spent on the Solent geography, in line with the guidance published by the Government. Questions were raised around the process for the appointment to the board of directors and the committee sought assurance that the Isle of Wight would be fairly represented.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report to Cabinet be noted.

**75 Pre-Decision Scrutiny - Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes and Empty Properties**

Consideration was given to the report which sought the Cabinet's endorsement (and recommendation to the Full Council) for the council to adopt the powers enacted in legislation that enabled the council to apply a 100% council tax premium for second homes and empty properties. It was highlighted that if the council did not adopt this power before 1 April 2024, it would not be able to apply the empty property premium until 1 April 2025 and the second home premium until 1 April 2026 at the earliest.

Questions were raised regarding the number of second homes, lodgers and houses of multiple occupancy, and legal loopholes. It was confirmed that there were sufficient staffing resources available to manage this from April 2024. The committee noted that the introduction of the proposed second home premiums was unlikely to deter second home-owners and would generate additional income for the council.

It was suggested that the committee monitors the progress one year after the decisions had been implemented, by way of adding to the committees workplan an update on council premiums on empty properties (in April 2025) and second homes (April 2026).

Following discussion, it was:

RESOLVED:

THAT the recommendations to Cabinet be supported.

## **76 Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report**

Consideration was given to the report which provided a summary of progress against Corporate Plan activities for Quarter 3 of 2023-24 and detailed any issues which required attention (and the remedial action in place to deal with these).

Questions were raised regarding the data on the number (and value of) Disabled Facility Grants which had been approved, and whether this was likely to create budget pressures. The Chief Executive confirmed the funding was rolling across financial years and therefore no budget pressures were incurred.

Discussion took place regarding the statistics on the number of households in temporary accommodation, and questions were raised regarding those who are not on the housing register, the definition of 'temporary', and whether the banding system was being applied appropriately. The committee requested a one-off examination of the data set for temporary accommodation to be presented in the next quarterly report.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report be noted.

## **77 Members' Question Time**

Cllr Chris Jarman and Cllr Clare Mosdell submitted a written question in relation to the council's policy regarding coastal protection (specifically relating to A3055 Military Road) (MQ 04-24). Clarification was provided by the Strategic Director of Community Services, and it was agreed that this matter be referred to the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration, alongside the work already underway. The chairman confirmed that a written response would be provided.

Cllr Chris Jarman submitted a two written questions in relation to the use of external consultants in answering questions submitted to the committee (MQ 05-24 and MQ 06-24). Following discussion, it was agreed that Cllr Jarman should liaise with the Chief Executive directly, and a written response would be provided.

Cllr Chris Jarman submitted a written question in relation to the council's constitution, particularly with regards to the distinction between alternative budget proposals and budget amendments (MQ 07-24). Following discussion, the chairman confirmed that a written response would be provided.

Cllr Chris Jarman asked an oral question in relation to the deadline for members of the public to submit a written question to the next meeting of the committee on 12 February 2024. The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that a question must be submitted no later than two clear working days prior to the start of the meeting in order to guarantee a written response. The chairman noted the exceptional circumstances that had delayed the publication of the budget proposals, and on that basis, asked officers to extend the deadline for which a written reply would be supplied by 24 hours.

CHAIRMAN