

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Reconvened meeting from the 25 January 2021)

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 26 January 2021 at 6.30 pm (Online virtual meeting).

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Wingfield (Chair)
Councillor Victor Chamberlain (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Humaira Ali
Councillor Peter Babudu
Councillor Gavin Edwards
Councillor Sarah King
Councillor Jason Ochere
Councillor Victoria Olisa
Councillor Jane Salmon
Councillor Leanne Werner
Martin Brecknell (Co-opted Member)

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Richard Livingstone
Councillor Rebecca Lury, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

OFFICER SUPPORT: Norman Coombe, Head of Corporate Team, Legal Services
Everton Roberts, Head of Overview and Scrutiny (Acting)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jack Buck.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were no late items.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. POLICY AND RESOURCES STRATEGY 2021-22

The policy and resources strategy 2021-22 was on the agenda for information.

5. FORMULATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

The overview and scrutiny committee heard further from Councillor Rebecca Lury, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and Duncan Whitfield, Strategic Director of Finance and Governance.

The committee discussed the evidence gathered from the preceding days scrutiny meeting, had regard to comments and advice from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and Strategic Director of Finance and Governance and formulated their recommendations to cabinet.

RESOLVED:

1. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) notes that there are a number of budget lines in which spending is required to increase, sometimes significantly. Some growth areas, but not all, reflect growing demand such as temporary accommodation, leisure and housing solutions. In the context of the pandemic, this is understandable, and cabinet is right to respond. However, OSC recommends that Cabinet puts in place a process for all of these growth areas, including consultation with service users, which will develop council policy to ensure spending in future budgets is sustainable, and guarantees the overall financial position of the council remains robust.
2. OSC notes that many other service areas, also experiencing unprecedented demand, are not seeing budget growth in the same way. OSC recommends that the good budget management in some service areas forms part of the review to help ensure budget spend best reflects the needs of residents rather than different standards of service performance and transformation.
3. OSC welcomes the reassurances given by cabinet that the provision of youth employment services and the reorganisation of employment support can be adequately funded via Section 106 in the year ahead, and is reassured that the cabinet recognises the importance of these in light of the impact of the pandemic on young residents of the borough. OSC notes that the Council is developing new technology to track planning fees, and Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy income. However OSC recognises that these incomes will be impacted by the Covid-19 recession and wants to receive regular updates on the collection and use of this funding to ensure services that are dependent on it remain fully funded and will accommodate for a spike in demand as a result of the recession in the years ahead.
4. OSC welcomes the decision to remove the saving to the Adventure Playgrounds budget but supports the work currently underway to investigate whether some of the playgrounds can provide open access whilst maintaining risky and adventurous play. OSC recommends that the current capital budget allocated to investment in Adventure Playgrounds is also looked at as part of this review so that the additional

capital investment that will be needed is agreed at the same time.

5. OSC recommends that officers be asked to review the proposed increase in Pest Control Services (Residential Services) and if no evidence base that officers defer the proposed increase until after the pandemic or remove proposed increase altogether due to impact on low income families.
6. Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the sizable budget savings relating to agency staff (items 105 and 133) and to decisions yet to be taken by the NHS (items 106 and 304), and we recognise the potential delivery challenges that these entail.
7. We therefore recommend robust monitoring arrangements for these and other significant savings. We request that the progress on this work is reported back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the municipal year.
8. OSC notes the line items relating to reviews on talking therapies, bringing exercise to outdoor spaces and mental health support focussed on young people. OSC notes that the Council will seek additional government funding for increased demand due to Covid and recognises evolving health needs post the crisis. OSC recommends that Cabinet review and potentially offer mental and physical health support towards the latter stages of the Covid crisis for Southwark Citizens. Examples include a wider campaign followed by offerings for physical classes in parks, subsidised talking therapies or group CBT. Additional resource may need to be considered from a public health perspective to reducing health inequalities e.g. finding additional long term funding for health ambassadors.

The meeting ended at 7.54pm

CHAIR:

DATED: