

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 14th November 2017 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 9.46pm

Present: Councillors David Draper (Chairman), David Harper (Vice Chairman), Stephen Cooksey, Mary Huggins, Chris Hunt, Malcolm Ladell, Paul Potter and Patricia Wiltshire

Also present: Councillors Margaret Cooksey, Simon Edge, Metin Huseyin, Duncan Irvine, Paul Kennedy, Claire Malcolmson, Vivienne Michael, Corinna Osborne-Patterson and Clayton Wellman

29. Minutes

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17th October 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Ashton, Lynne Brooks and Sarah Seed

31. Disclosure of Interests

No interests were declared.

32. Presentation from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

David Munroe, the Police and Crime Commissioner attended the meeting to give Members an update on the work of the PCC. During the course of the presentation the following points were noted:-

- The PCC was appointed to hold Surrey Police to account on behalf of the Surrey Residents.
- There had been significant improvements in areas such as the 101 non-emergency helpline where waiting times had been reduced and service levels improved.
- Retention of staff was an issue that was prevalent in the Surrey Police force as staff joined and were trained up and then moved to either the MET or to areas of the country where it was less expensive to live. This resulted in a lack of experienced staff in Surrey.
- In Surrey there had been significant increases in recorded crimes from 48,000 in 2014 to 70,000 in 2017 (from years ending August). Rises included sexual offenses, violence without injury and burglary.

The Committee questioned why Police were no longer attending local Parish meetings. The PCC advised that this was no longer considered the best use of Police time, as resources were needed elsewhere. However, it was advised that Police could attend one off meetings to discuss specific issues.

Concern was expressed over the decreasing visibility of Police in the local community. The PCC explained that the direction of policing was changing due to the changing crimes such as cyber threats, but it was agreed that in some areas police had withdrawn too far.

The Committee discussed ways in which the Police collaborated with other Emergency Services. The PCC explained that they worked very closely with the Fire Service, especially on road traffic accidents. It was recognised that improvements needed to be made to make the Emergency Services more efficient when working together.

The Committee discussed a number of individual cases and the PCC invited Members to contact him directly after the meeting to discuss these in more detail.

The Committee thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner for the presentation and for answering Members' questions.

33. Future Mole Valley – setting a strategic direction for development

The Executive Member for Planning introduced the report by explaining that the consultation had concluded at the beginning of September after a duration of nine weeks. The team had attended 29

different events and meetings, including the Capel Flower show, the Leatherhead Duck Race and various drop in sessions at local village halls. Approximately 1400 individual responses had been received, of which approximately 500 were detailed responses. The more detailed responses gave feedback and opinion as opposed to simply completing the easy access questionnaire. These responses were summarised as part of the consultation document. Efforts had been made to engage the public by using social media as well as the more traditional means. It was hoped that these efforts would result in more interest from the public on the work of MVDC in future.

The Committee discussed the powers that MVDC had to control development and it was felt that these were limited in some areas. Article 4 directions were not considered to be an effective form of control due to the lengthy timescales after they were put in place before they could take effect. It was explained by the Executive Member that MVDC's hands were tied when it came to the timescales relating to Article 4 directions, but this did not mean that this was considered a redundant form of controlling development.

Concern was expressed over the strain on infrastructure in Mole Valley and whether there would be sufficient infrastructure put in place to support any proposed developments. The Executive Member explained that it was a recommendation on the report to identify the infrastructure required to support preferred development options.

Questions were asked about the data which was used for the consultation and the methodology behind it. It was explained that standardised methodology had been used and the figures used in the report were a prediction. This formed part of the necessary evidence that was needed to prove that MVDC had followed the prescribed process to create the Future Mole Valley Local Plan.

Concern was raised over how MVDC would ensure that affordable housing would be included in developments as there were limited controls for this. The Executive Member advised that MVDC would be cracking down on ensuring that the affordable housing contributions were met by developers on developments that included the required number of houses.

The Committee discussed the approach which had been taken in the consultation for the Greenfield Options. It was explained that there had not been a 'No' option for this section of the consultation as MVDC did not want to raise unrealistic expectations that housing need could be addressed in Mole Valley without releasing any Greenfield Land. There had been an option on the consultation for any additional comments to be given and some residents had used this to express their view that Greenfield Land should not be an option for development.

The Committee discussed the cross border demand for housing and it was felt that this element of the consultation should have been more clearly communicated to the public.

Resolved: That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be relayed to the Executive during its consideration of the report.

34. Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020 Review and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Executive Member for Communities, Services and Housing introduced the report by explaining that this was a report which came to Scrutiny on an annual basis since the Homelessness Strategy had been approved in 2014. The report outlined what needed to be done for implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, as well as outlining the main achievements from the last 12 months. The Housing team had received Silver Standard from the National Practitioner Support Service and were now only one challenge short of achieving Gold Standard. This challenge was to have no families staying in B&B accommodation for more than six weeks over a significant period of time. In spite of being one challenge short, MVDC was still considered to be a beacon of best practice for homelessness prevention. Members were encouraged to report any rough sleepers to the Housing team, especially during the cold winter months.

The Committee discussed the effects that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 would have on the Housing team and whether they would have enough resources to cope with the changes. The Officers advised that they were unsure what resources would be needed at this stage and they would not recruit further staff until they were more informed about the resources that would be required. It was explained that the Housing department were in discussion about advertising for a

Housing apprentice and this would provide them with additional resources which would help implementing the changes.

It was queried whether there was any intention to purchase any more emergency accommodation units, following the six that were purchased earlier in the year. The Committee were advised that there were plans to acquire further accommodation units in future.

Resolved: That the Scrutiny Committee note the progress made over the last 12 months to achieve the actions contained in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2015-2020 and the progress made to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

35. Housing Allocations Scheme Review and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Executive Member for Communities, Services and Housing introduced the report by explaining that amendments needed to be made to the Scheme in order for it to comply with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and these amendments were outlined in the report. As part of this review the opportunity had been taken to make other amendments to improve the scheme.

The Committee discussed the issue of properties being under occupied and the need there was for these houses to be freed up for families who required the space. Officers explained that it was not always easy to find incentives for tenants to downsize to smaller properties.

Resolved: That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be relayed to the Executive during its consideration of the report.

36. Local Development Scheme 2017-2019

The Executive Member for Planning introduced the report by explaining that the Local Development Scheme 2017-2019 was a timetable for the development and implementation of the Future Mole Valley Local Plan. A review of the Scheme had been required to bring it in line with the extension which had been made to the consultation. The team had taken this opportunity to review other elements of the Scheme which could be improved following their experiences so far and this included reviewing timescales so that they were a more realistic reflection of how long things were going to take.

The Committee raised concern over the preferred options consultation taking place during the main holiday period of the year. The Executive Member explained that the consultation was taking place at this time due to a request from the Planning Policy Working Group to extend the consultation from six weeks to eight weeks.

The Committee discussed the Community Infrastructure Levy and the effect that this may have on Developers delivering less affordable housing as part of the affordable housing contribution. It was explained that many policies were now out of date and this put a greater importance on the work of the Future Mole Valley Local Plan to ensure this did not continue to happen in future.

Resolved: That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be relayed to the Executive during its consideration of the report.

37. Interim Policy Statement in Employment Land

The Executive Member for Planning introduced the report by explaining that this would not be a formal planning policy, but would be a material consideration to which weight could be attached in the determination of planning applications involving the loss of business floor space. Concern had been raised about losing employment land in the District and MVDC not having enough control to prevent this happening. Due to Future Mole Valley Local Plan not being in place for some time, this would form an interim measure to exercise some control to protect employment land.

The Committee discussed the current use of office space in Mole Valley and it was suggested that much of the space was now outdated. It was explained to the Committee that this was an issue which was being considered as part of the Economic Development Strategy and would not be included in the Local Development Scheme.

Resolved: That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be relayed to the Executive during its consideration of the report.

38. Brownfield Land Register

The Executive Member for Planning introduced the report by explaining that it was a statutory requirement for MVDC to have a Brownfield Land Register in place. This was a register of potential sites and inclusion on this list was an indication that, in principle, MVDC would consider development on these sites.

The Committee did not have any comments to relay to the Executive relating to the Brownfield Land Register.

Resolved: That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be relayed to the Executive during its consideration of the report.

39. Report of the Asset Investment Panel

The Committee received a verbal report from a Member of the Asset Investment Panel on behalf of the Panel's Chairman who was unable to attend the meeting. It was agreed that the Committee would not consider the item and that it would go straight to Council without comment from the Scrutiny Committee. It was agreed that more time would be needed for the material to be properly reviewed by Members.

Resolved: That the Scrutiny Committee defer the Report of the Asset Investment Panel to Full Council for consideration.

(N.B. The Chairman invited members to vote on how they would wish to proceed. Vote on deferral: For = 6, Against = 1, Abstentions = 0)