

Report to Council

Date of meeting: 24 February 2022

Chairman: Councillor M Sartin

Democratic Services Officer: V Messenger (01992 564243)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee progress report for meetings between November 2021 to January 2022, be noted.**

Report:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 18 November 2021

1. The Chairman, Councillor M Sartin, advised members the call-in of Housing Services Portfolio Holder Decision PFH-004-2021/22 by Councillor C C Pond and four other councillors had led to an informal meeting being held on 1 November 2021 that had been productive. A follow-up meeting on 6 December 2021 was not required as alternative tree planting sites were agreed.

2. The Committee reviewed the FY21/22 quarter 2 Corporate Performance Reporting but only for projects at red or amber status (exceptions). The KPI data now showed comparisons to the previous quarter. Performance project officers were relooking at the KPI data in its entirety to understand the processes behind them and would share any information on this at a future meeting. Members queried the Waltham Abbey Community and Cultural Hub, Green Infrastructure Strategy, number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation for 6 weeks+, the new waste collection leaflet, the rent arrears KPI, if there would be a KPI for electric vehicle charging points, the percentage of workforce by ethnicity and staff sickness absence.

3. Members received a short presentation as I Braddick (HGGT Lead) introduced the report outlining the reasons and ambitions crucial to the endorsement of the HGGT Transport Strategy. It had been developed to meet the ambitions for sustainable movement set out within the HGGT vision, against the backdrop of the challenges of future travel demand linked to planned growth as set out in the Council's emerging Local Plan. The Council had declared a climate emergency in 2019. With transport now the largest contributor to UK greenhouse gas emissions, the HGGT transport strategy supported the highest commitment across the Garden Town Authorities to become carbon-neutral by 2030. Key to this was making it easier to choose to travel sustainably, by providing reliable and high quality sustainable and active travel routes, and by creating connected communities and safe, enjoyable streets that offered local facilities and travel options for everyday activities. Members scrutinised the transport strategy, as I Braddick and N Polaine (HGGT Director) answered their questions, and it will be going before Cabinet on 25 January 2022.

4. Members had the opportunity to review the Executive's current programme of Key Decisions of 1 November 2021 when it was noted that the Local Plan Inspector has still to reply to the Council and the new trees policy has yet to go to Cabinet.

5. The select committee chairmen also updated the Committee on recent business transacted at meetings and the current status of their respective work programmes. It was agreed that the next joint meeting should discuss the alignment of the select committees' Terms of Reference with the Council's corporate aims, as detailed in the Cabinet's forward plan.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 7 December 2021

6. The Committee undertook external scrutiny of the Princess Alexandra Hospital Trust (PAHT) as the Senior Executive team – Lance McCarthy (Chief Executive), Stephanie Lawton (Chief Operating Officer), Michael Meredith (Director of Strategy) and Jill Hogan (Communications (New Hospital)) – had accepted an invitation to attend this meeting. A joint presentation was received from L McCarthy on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) report, dated 17 November 2021, and M Meredith, who provided a progress update on the new hospital development to be sited in Sheering, close to the new M11 junction (7a) being constructed.

7. Presented by M Meredith, the new hospital development was one of eight, national ‘pathfinder projects’ in the Government’s new hospital programme. Extensive engagement had been carried out with staff, patient groups, stakeholders and through workshops. The Design brief was completed. PAHT had high ambitions on the strategies produced on net zero carbon, communications and engagement, procurement, facilities management, digital, and modern methods of construction. The PAHT answered many detailed questions on the new hospital development. It was in the final stages of completing the land purchase so that planning and works preparation could be progressed. Further engagement on its website would be undertaken with the public and community groups on the final designs as well as briefing councillors in the district and finalising the transport strategy.

8. The CQC report was presented by L McCarthy. The CQC inspection had been carried out in July and August 2021 and was based around five domains – were services safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led. The impact of Covid had been significant on everyone. There had been a 19% increase in demand for care on the emergency services between April 2020 and now, so there was enormous pressure on staff to care for patients and use of PPE equipment to keep people safe. There was a separate emergency department for Covid patients to reduce infections, so having two emergency footprints was an additional strain on services. The CQC report detailed 18 must do’s and 11 should do’s, but otherwise remained good on most services. The actions the PAHT must do were outlined in the presentation, which was attached to the minutes for information, and covered – themes of good practice, consistent themes for improvement, actions taken and work underway, and the next 12 months. Members’ questions covered a whole range of issues, and it was timely that they had had this opportunity to receive answers directly.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 27 January 2022

9. The Committee received a presentation from Dr Rob Gerlis (Chairman), Peter Wightman (Managing Director) and Ian Tompkins (Corporate Services Director) of the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group. The Health and Care Bill published July 2021, set out proposals to reform the delivery and organisation of health services in England. The Committee heard that Epping Forest District would become part of the Herts and West Essex Integrated Care System (ICS) along with other district and county authorities, all NHS Trusts in the area, the voluntary sector and Healthwatch. The ICS comprised two statutory parts – an Integrated Care Board responsible for strategic planning and allocation decisions; and the Integrated Care Partnership that brought together a wider set of system partners to develop a plan to address the broader health, public health and social care needs of the local population. During a detailed question and answer session, members asked about a range of health issues including: ICS’ recruitment strategy; health equity work as there had been low uptake of the Covid vaccination especially in Waltham Abbey; public transport issues in rural areas accessing medical services; substance abuse; greater use of community hubs and pharmacies to promote wider access to health services; how these changes might improve socioeconomic inequalities; how Section 106 monies were utilised; and what councillors could do to help.

10 The Committee considered the bespoke model of the HRA Business Plan which would enable the Council to provide a reasonable cashflow projection over the next 30 years. It was based on evidential data from the Council’s current systems and projections for economic assumptions in the social housing sector. The Stronger Communities Select Committee had also

recently scrutinised it from a different perspective, but it would go before Cabinet in February 2022. D Fenton (HRA Project Director) and A Marshall-Smith (the Councils' retained consultant) answered several questions to explain about the cap on borrowing, the success of its Council housebuilding schemes, and that progress updates would continue to go Stronger Communities Select Committee for scrutiny.

10. The Committee also had the opportunity to review quarter 3 of the Corporate Performance Report for 2021/22 when members commented about the Green Infrastructure Strategy in relation to the Roding Valley Recreation Ground. The following items were regularly reviewed including the Executive's current programme of Key Decisions of 1 November 2021 and 4 January 2022 and the Committee's own scrutiny work programme. The select committee chairmen also updated the Committee on recent business transacted at meetings within their respective work programmes.