

Runnymede Borough CouncilOverview and Scrutiny Select CommitteeWednesday, 10 July 2024 at 8.04 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors S Saise-Marshall (Chair), C Mann (Vice-Chair), A Berardi, R Davies, S Jenkins, E Kettle, K Lee and J Mavi.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors V Cunningham.

In attendance: Councillors I Mullens and P Snow.

1 **Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

There were no changes to committee membership.

2 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor V Cunningham.

4 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

5 **Annual Treasury Management Report 2023/24**

The Committee noted the annual treasury management report for 2023/24, which set out the regulations and economic background the Council were working under.

No new loans had been taken out to replace the £15.5m in loans that had matured during that time. Instead internal borrowing had been utilised, and the year end internal borrowing stood at £74.5m, whilst actual borrowing stood at £627.6m against a capital finance requirement of £705.2m.

The Council had achieved an interest rate of 4.99% on investments during the year, which compared favourably against benchmarks. The policy for investments had centred around managing counterparty risks.

Investment activity, along with net income activity, had been slightly lower than anticipated, primarily due to changes in interest rates.

6 **Overview and Scrutiny Function - Annual Report 2023/24 and Work Programme for 2024/25**

The committee endorsed the 2023/24 annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny function. Credit was paid to Cllr Gates for his role in arriving at the recommendations around Houses in Multiple Occupation that had recently been considered by Environment and Sustainability Committee.

Committee members were then invited to put forward suggestions for the Overview and

Scrutiny committee's work programme for 2024/25.

A suggestion for resident enquiry response times was suggested as one of the possible workstreams. Whilst it was acknowledged that there were a multitude of ways to contact the Council, the purpose of the suggested workstream was to ensure a consistent approach to customer care across the Council.

The proposal would involve corporate heads from Customer Services, Housing and Assets & Regeneration providing information on the handling of complaints from within their department, along with the design of a survey to residents to gather intelligence on their experience of contacting the Council.

During the debate the prospect of overlapping with existing work outside of the Committee was acknowledged, in particular the Customer First Strategy, which had recently been approved by Corporate Management Committee. A meeting between councillors and officers would be arranged to ensure that the Committee was working outside of those existing workstreams, whilst it was asked that the Committee receive updates on the ongoing Customer First strategy.

A further proposal was made around the organisation of sustainability workstreams within the Council. It was recognised that there were legitimate reasons why climate change work was distributed across a variety of units, however it was acknowledged that other local authorities had climate change within one unit and one corporate head, and it was considered that such a setup could be productive and avoid any potential miscommunications.

It was noted that such an approach could produce a silo mentality and Runnymede put sustainability at the heart of what it does across the Council, including utilisation of vehicles, housing stock and pest control methods. This was an approach that was encouraged to be embedded across the Council yet putting that activity in one place had the potential to make the rest of the organisation lose touch with those activities.

The Committee considered it worthwhile to review how arrangements were at other local authorities, but agreed that any change to line management structures went beyond the role of members and the committee and would not be appropriate.

During the debate it was agreed that the initial course of action for exploring the topic would be to undertake a survey of how other councils were organising and line managing their sustainability-related workstreams, as well as engaging Corporate Heads of Service and officers in understanding their engagement with sustainability practices.

It was resolved that

- i) The committee confirmed its support for the Overview and Scrutiny annual report for 2023/24 to be recommended to Full Council.**
- ii) Workstreams on 'resident enquiry response times' and 'organisation of sustainability workstreams within the Council' were agreed for the Overview and Scrutiny function for the 2024/25 municipal year.**

(The meeting ended at 9.01 pm.)

Chair