

PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday 6 June 2023

Present: Councillors Helen Taylor (Chair), Devon Davies (Vice-Chair), Carole Da Costa, Mandy Brar, Suzanne Cross, Jack Douglas, Genevieve Gosling, John Story and Gurch Singh

Also in attendance: Councillor Adam Bermange

Also in attendance virtually: Councillor George Shaw

Officers: Mark Beeley, Lin Ferguson and Katharine Willmette

Election of Chair

Councillor Douglas proposed that Councillor Taylor be elected Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/24 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor Cross.

Councillor Story proposed that Councillor Carole Da Costa be elected as Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/24 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor Carole Da Costa.

A named vote was taken on the first nomination which was for Councillor Taylor to be elected as Chair.

The result was 7 for and 2 against and therefore Councillor Taylor was elected as Chair, with a named vote not occurring on Councillor Story's nomination.

Election of Councillor Taylor as Chair of the Panel for municipal year 2023/24 (Motion)	
Councillor Helen Taylor	For
Councillor Devon Davies	For
Councillor Carole Da Costa	Against
Councillor Mandy Brar	For
Councillor Suzanne Cross	For
Councillor Jack Douglas	For
Councillor Genevieve Gosling	For
Councillor John Story	Against
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Carried	

AGREED: That Councillor Taylor be elected Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/24 municipal year.

Election of Vice Chair

Councillor Douglas proposed that Councillor Devon Davies be elected as Vice Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/24 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor Brar.

Councillor Carole Da Costa then proposed herself as Vice Chair. This was seconded by Councillor Story.

A named vote was taken on the first nomination which was for Councillor Devon Davies to be elected as Vice Chair.

The result was 7 for and 2 against, therefore Councillor Devon Davies was elected as Vice Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel. A named vote did not occur on Councillor Carole Da Costa's nomination.

Election of Councillor Davies as Vice-Chair of the Panel for municipal year 2023/24 (Motion)	
Councillor Helen Taylor	For
Councillor Devon Davies	For
Councillor Carole Da Costa	Against
Councillor Mandy Brar	For
Councillor Suzanne Cross	For
Councillor Jack Douglas	For
Councillor Genevieve Gosling	For
Councillor John Story	Against
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Carried	

AGREED: That Councillor Devon Davies be elected Vice Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/24 municipal year.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Shaw, with Councillor Gurch Singh attending as a substitute.

Apologies were also received from two Co-Optees of the Panel, Mark Jervis and Tony Wilson.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

Minutes

The Panel noted and agreed to the minutes of the meeting held on 17th April 2023.

Work Programme

Mark Beeley, Principal Democratic Services Officer – Overview and Scrutiny, explained that the work programme was a plan of items which would be considered by the Panel over the course of the municipal year. There were a few suggestions which had been carried forward from the previous year, there were also two task and finish groups which the Panel needed to decide a course of action on.

The domestic abuse task and finish group had been arranged following the adoption of the RBWM Domestic Abuse Strategy, with the group having an initial meeting to decide a way forward. However, two of the three Councillors on this group were now part of the Cabinet. There was also a proposed task and finish group on air pollution, following the topic being referred by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel. This would look to consider the monitoring of air pollution performance across the borough and whether targets in this area were being achieved. Mark Beeley added that Panel Members could bring forward items of interest by filling out a scoping document.

Councillor Carole Da Costa said that the domestic abuse group had agreed that it would look to continue its work following the election. The RBWM domestic abuse coordinator was part of

the group and they had gathered a significant amount of information which could be provided to members of the group. She was keen to continue the task and finish group.

Councillor Devon Davies and Councillor Brar confirmed that they would be interested in being part of the group.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to work with Councillors and officers to arrange a meeting of the domestic abuse task and finish group.

Councillor Story felt that air pollution performance should be monitored periodically by the Panel.

Councillor Carole Da Costa believed that the item was best considered as part of a task and finish group, depending on how many Panel Members were interested in being part of the group it could be worth opening it up to Councillors on either the Corporate or Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Cross said that she chaired a meeting on Bray Parish Council where air pollution had frequently come up as a key issue, she was keen to see this area scrutinised.

Councillor Cross and Councillor Douglas highlighted that they would like to be part of the group.

Councillor Carole Da Costa suggested that Councillor Wisdom Da Costa would also be interested.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to speak to Councillors on the Corporate and People Overview and Scrutiny Panels to see if there was interest in being part of the task and finish group on air pollution.

Councillor Brar asked if any work had taken place previously on this group.

Mark Beeley confirmed that no additional work had yet taken place, the scoping document had been drafted and agreed by the Panel.

Councillor Gurch Singh commented on the consultation currently ongoing about sound pollution from flights paths heading into Heathrow.

Councillor Story said that the main public health infrastructure change over the next few years was the creation of the Sunningdale Health Hub. Planning permission had been granted and the project was due to start construction soon. Councillor Story suggested that he would like to see the NHS invited to a Panel meeting to update on progress of the project. There had also been a press release from Frimley Park stating that a new hospital would be created in the borough, this was something that the Panel should have oversight over.

Councillor Brar said that both items could be considered together.

Councillor Carole Da Costa added that the January meeting could be the best time for this, as the NHS would have a better idea of plans for a new hospital and also there would be more of an update to give. She suggested that the Panel should consider the contracts and performance of domiciliary care, there had been some issues in the past and the Panel should scrutinise how well it was being delivered.

Councillor Story felt that the new hospital could be considered in January but the Sunningdale Health Hub was of interest to a significant number of residents and an update should be requested for the next meeting of the Panel in September.

Councillor Cross was interested to explore artificial intelligence around people and the impact that this would have going forward.

Lin Ferguson, Executive Director of Children's Services and Education, said that AI was not currently used in children's services but this would be explored going forward.

Katharine Willmette, Interim ASC Consultant, said that some assisted technology was being used in Optalis so this could be a good starting point.

Councillor Devon Davies added that while there were some concerns around AI, there were also a number of benefits.

Councillor Singh said that if NHS Frimley were being invited to a meeting, it would be worth asking them about St Marks Hospital and the minor injuries walk in being reopened.

Councillor Brar agreed with this suggestion, it was a concern for residents.

Councillor Carole Da Costa said that hospitals had their own plans, the Panel could certainly ask the question but it was unlikely that St Marks minor injuries unit would be reopened as a result. It would be useful to know what accident emergency services would be provided, after hours services and the locations of where these essential services would be provided.

Councillor Douglas said that he had home educated his children and had noted in a presentation by the Executive Director of Children's Services and Education at a previous induction session, that the borough did not know exactly how many children were home educated. This was something that the Panel could look into and investigate what support could be provided to parents and children.

Councillor Brar suggested that the support provided by schools to children with special educational needs could also be considered.

Councillor Gurch Singh asked about co-optees on the Panel.

He was informed that there were currently three co-optees on the Panel, who could provide information and expertise on certain subjects.

Councillor Gurch Singh said that it could be worth Panel Members having a discussion with relevant Cabinet Members to understand what Cabinet would be considering, so that there would be an opportunity for items to be scrutinised before decisions were made.

Mark Beeley encouraged Panel Members to have a look at the Cabinet Forward Plan on a regular basis and flag any items which could be considered by scrutiny. Items could then be commented on and recommendations made for Cabinet to consider.

Councillor Carole Da Costa noted that some co-opted members had not attended many meetings of the Panel over the past couple of years. She felt that it could be worth seeing if all co-opted members were still interested and if they were not, the positions could be opened up to other interested individuals.

Mark Beeley said that he would check to see the term length of co-opted members and consider if any changes were needed.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to see if co-opted members were still interested in being part of the Panel and recruit new co-opted members if necessary.

Councillor Story felt that it was important that scrutiny was involved in the Cabinet process, he asked how this worked.

Mark Beeley explained that Panel Members were able to bring items of interest to the Panel for consideration. Officers would also bring items forward to gain input from scrutiny before taking reports before Cabinet.

Councillor Gurch Singh said that reports should be brought at a draft stage by officers so that scrutiny could have involvement earlier in the process. He said that Cabinet Members should be invited to the next meeting to understand the direction of travel.

Mark Beeley said that Cabinet Members could be invited by the Panel to attend meetings should they wish. It could be worth having an offline meeting between the Panel and the Cabinet Members to discuss priorities over the course of the municipal year.

Councillor Carole Da Costa said that the Panel could look to extend an open invitation to Cabinet Members to attend scrutiny meetings and be involved in the work of scrutiny, as had been the case previously. She proposed that the Panel should extend an open invitation to Cabinet Members. This was seconded by Councillor Devon Davies.

Councillor Gurch Singh disagreed, he said that scrutiny was meant to hold the Cabinet to account and did not think the best way to do this would be to have an open invitation to relevant Cabinet Members.

Councillor Devon Davies supported the proposal made by Councillor Carole Da Costa.

Councillor Brar said that Cabinet Members should be invited for items which they were bringing forward, this would allow the Panel to hear the context behind why certain decisions were planned to be made.

Councillor Douglas asked if Cabinet Members were able to attend scrutiny meetings without an invitation by the Panel.

Mark Beeley confirmed that any Councillor was able to attend scrutiny meetings, the proposal from Councillor Carole Da Costa was to allow Cabinet Members to have an active role in meetings and help assist in formulating the work programme.

The Chair asked if this was constitutionally possible.

Mark Beeley said that the power to allow Cabinet Members to speak would remain with the Chair, the invitation would allow Cabinet Members to be more involved in scrutiny and help to develop a better working relationship between scrutiny and the executive.

A named vote was taken on the motion to extend an open invitation to relevant Cabinet Members to attend future People Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings.

Proposal to extend an open invitation to relevant Cabinet Members to attend future meetings of the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Motion)	
Councillor Helen Taylor	For
Councillor Devon Davies	For
Councillor Carole Da Costa	For
Councillor Mandy Brar	For
Councillor Suzanne Cross	For
Councillor Jack Douglas	Against
Councillor Genevieve Gosling	For
Councillor John Story	For
Councillor Gurch Singh	Against
Carried	

The result of the vote was 7 for and 2 against, therefore the motion was passed by the Panel.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.05 pm

Chair.....

Date.....