

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 24 April 2023 at Council Chamber, Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 8EF

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on 22 June 2023.

**Elected Members:**

- \* Steve Bax
- \* Nick Darby (Chairman)
- \* Will Forster (Vice-Chair)
- \* David Harmer
- \* Edward Hawkins
- \* Bob Hughes (Vice-Chair)
- Robert King
- \* Steve McCormick
- \* Lance Spencer
- \* Lesley Steeds
- \* Hazel Watson
- \* Jeremy Webster

*(\* = present at the meeting)*

**9/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Robert King.

**10/23 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 2 FEBRUARY 2023 [Item 2]**

The minutes of the Resources and Performance Select Committee held on 2 February 2023 were formally agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

**11/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

None received.

**12/23 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

None received.

**13/23 DIGITAL INCLUSION [Item 6]**

**Witnesses:**

David Lewis, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources  
Leigh Whitehouse, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources  
Marie Snelling, Executive Director of Customer and Communities  
Sarah E.M Bogunovic, Assistant Director, Registrations, Coroner's Service & Customer Strategy  
Jo Blount, Portfolio Lead, Digital, Data, Technology & Culture  
Helen Dobson, Managing Director, Citizens Online

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman asked for the greatest challenges to digital inclusion. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities said ensuring it was embedded as an organisational wide priority and forming an accurate picture despite a range of data, insight and intelligence information being available. The Assistant Director, Registrations, Coroner's Service & Customer Strategy noted the possibility that for those at risk of digital exclusion, the divide would grow due to the impact of cost of living pressures, and noted the importance of providing other channels to ensure services were accessible.
2. The Chairman questioned how people already digitally excluded would be included in plans to encourage more people to access more services online. The Assistant Director confirmed that the move to digital would not result in a closure of other contact channels, but would help free up those channels e.g., the telephone, for people who needed to contact the council in other ways. The Chairman asked if any residents had been excluded as a result of efficiencies, particularly with regards to highways reporting via the contact centre. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities explained that whilst residents were encouraged to report issues online, a telephony service remained, and issues could also be reported through their local Member.
3. A Member asked for slides presented at the beginning of the discussion to be circulated to Committee Members, queried the deliverables, targets and expected timescale, and questioned if the programme was aligned to the Data Strategy Transformation provided to the Committee in December 2022 as this was not evident in the papers. The Portfolio Lead, Digital, Data, Technology & Culture said that deliverables would be determined by engagement with all stakeholders, benchmarking and the sharing of best practice with other local authorities. Citizens Online Managing Director added that recommendations arising from this information would result in an action plan to acknowledge the short term gains and longer term work for the Council to take forward. The Member expressed concerns at the lack of structure to the work being undertaken, with no information provided about the budget, resources, what would be delivered, how it would be delivered and by when. The Portfolio Lead, Digital, Data, Technology & Culture said recommendations would be available at

the end of the four-month piece of work, which had started in early March 2023. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities said that the piece of research work undertaken in 2018 had been responded to and included a range of deliverables, some of which had been outlined in the current paper. It was being revisited to refresh the approach post pandemic and presented early to Committee to enable Members to help shape the work. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources challenged the premise of a timeline since work would evolve and adapt with technological advancements and as such was continual. It was agreed the presentation would be circulated. **Action – Managing Director, Citizens Online**

4. A Member asked how the Council compared to local authorities held up as examples of best practice and what approach they had taken. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources said that work to be done to identify good and best practice in other local authorities and commercial organisations would form part of the programme going forward. The Assistant Director confirmed the Council intended to join the Local Government Association (LGA) Digital Inclusion Best Practice Network, a coordinated stakeholder group of approximately 35 local authority digital leads. The Member queried the roadmap and timetable to achieve expectations. Citizens Online Managing Director confirmed that best practice helped inform the research work, which would result in recommendations and an action plan.
5. A Member queried the budget for the programme including current and planned future spending. The Portfolio Lead confirmed the budget for the four-month piece of research was £24,900; this did not include the recruitment of digital champions as these were not paid roles but trained volunteers who help people develop their digital skills and confidence. The Member queried their effectiveness of digital champions, said it was unlikely that IT training outside of the charity sector had been delivered to disadvantaged groups, and suggested it would be more beneficial to provide charities with small amounts of funding to increase delivery. Citizens Online Managing Director summarised the five-year research programme conducted to determine the range of work undertaken by digital champions and said as the biggest touchpoint for Surrey residents in need, the Council had the ability to provide a great deal of support to people in the county. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities recognised the important role that other groups and organisations in Surrey had in supporting digital inclusion and explained the partnership work undertaken to date across the county to provide digital support and services such as the Surrey Coalition for Disabled People led Tech to Community Connect Service, and the Action for Carers provision of digital devices and digital literacy training to support those at risk of digital exclusion.

6. A Member said local Members had not been approached to share their local knowledge regarding digitally excluded residents. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources agreed that borough and county level Members had an important contribution to make and recognised the need for joined-up working.
7. A Member queried the take-up of the Surrey Adult Learning digital skills course and asked what equivalent provision was available in East Surrey. The Assistant Director committed to provide the Committee with this information at a future date. **Action - The Assistant Director, Registrations, Coroner's Service & Customer Strategy.**
8. A Member relayed that residents who had telephoned the contact centre to pay for parking permits had been advised they required an email address to pay and asked if this was considered digitally inclusive. The Assistant Director said that every reasonable adjustment required was made for residents who telephone the contact centre and committed to investigate the feedback and report back to the Committee. **Action - The Assistant Director, Registrations, Coroner's Service & Customer Strategy**
9. A Member was concerned that the national closure of the analogue telephone system would adversely affect residents already digitally excluded. The Portfolio Lead committed to connect with the Council's lead on this work to ensure joined-up working. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources noted this was a national issue that was not unique to Surrey. The Member stressed that attention to this was fundamental to the work around digital inclusion. **Action - The Portfolio Lead, Digital, Data, Technology & Culture**
10. A Member was concerned at the cost implication and impact to residents of local infrastructure works. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities agreed to pass on these concerns to the Economy and Growth team who had been undertaking work in this area. **Action - The Executive Director of Customer and Communities**
11. A Member asked if all libraries in Surrey provided free internet access, how many had digital welfare officers and how the work of these officers was accessed and promoted. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities confirmed that all libraries had free internet access and PCs with trained staff available to assist and would come back to the Committee with further information regarding digital welfare officers and digital buddies. **Action – The Executive Director of Customer and Communities**
12. A Member asked if digital welfare and community link officers worked together. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities

committed to provide further information regarding these roles and explained that although community link officers did not undertake any digital literacy skills work with residents, they would actively promote the services available. **Action – The Executive Director of Customer and Communities**

13. A Member questioned the given number of 200,000 digitally excluded residents, when taking into consideration households with one person able to access services digitally and provide support for the others. The Assistant Director said the figure was the current best estimate and summarised the targeted work to encourage residents to seek support from family members, friends or people they trust to access digital services on their behalf. This had resulted in a rise of the online uptake of blue badge applications from 15 per cent to 80 per cent over approximately seven years.
14. A Member noted that the poor mobile signal in the county would be an issue going forward. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources agreed the current signal was poor in some areas and highlighted the balance required with regard to local opposition to new masts and the need for improved signals, adding that the situation would be exacerbated by the rollout of 5G.
15. A Member asked what were the plans for rural areas with no libraries and limited public transport. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities agreed that rural areas required wider community outreach to ensure that digital skills literacy education could happen in the right place, not just in libraries.
16. The Chairman requested that details and notes of the discussion at the imminent workshop be provided to the Committee as soon as possible. **Action - Managing Director, Citizens Online**
17. The Chairman suggested frequent feedback as deemed appropriate by officers and requested the prioritisation of work with stakeholders to include Surrey Heartlands, the LGA, the charity sector, rural areas and Members, and suggested the Committee may wish to consider setting up a task group.

### **Resolved:**

The Resources and Performance Select Committee recommends:

1. That the Cabinet commits to ensuring an alternative form of contact to online is made available while action is undertaken to support digital inclusion in the county, so that Council services remain accessible for people who are digitally excluded. Also, that care is taken to ensure alternative methods of contact are fit for purpose and do not unintentionally exclude people, for

example, not requiring an email address to make a payment by telephone.

2. That the Resources Directorate and Member Services provide and publicise face-to-face digital skills training to Members at all levels, including Cabinet.
3. That the Select Committee nominates representatives to participate as key stakeholders in the work being undertaken by Citizens Online and to engage with this work on an ongoing basis as it develops.
4. That the Service ensures that Citizens Online involves the voluntary sector, health partners and borough and district councils in its research work in Surrey and in the development of an action plan.
5. That the Service ensures that Citizens Online shares the findings from its online survey once complete and the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources brings their final report with recommendations to a meeting of the Resources and Performance Select Committee.
6. That the Committee considers the formation of a Task Group on digital inclusion at the beginning of the municipal year.

**Actions:**

- i. The Managing Director, Citizens Online agreed to circulate the slides presented at the beginning of the discussion.
- ii. The Assistant Director, Registrations, Coroner's Service & Customer Strategy committed to provide the Committee with information regarding the take-up of the Surrey Adult Learning Digital Skills course and the equivalent provision available in East Surrey.
- iii. The Assistant Director, Registrations, Coroner's Service & Customer Strategy committed to investigate feedback from residents that an email address was required to pay for parking permits purchased through the contact centre.
- iv. The Portfolio Lead committed to feedback concerns to Council leads regarding the closure of the national analogue telephone system adversely affecting residents already digitally excluded.
- v. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities agreed to pass on Members concerns regarding cost implications and impact to residents as a result of infrastructure works to the Economy and Growth team.

- vi. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities agreed to come back to the Committee with further information regarding digital welfare officers and digital buddies.
- vii. The Executive Director of Customer and Communities committed to provide further information regarding the digital welfare and Community Link Officer roles.
- viii. The Managing Director, Citizens Online committed to provide the details and notes of the discussion of the imminent workshop to the Committee as soon as possible.

## **14/23 IT & DIGITAL UPDATE [Item 5]**

### **Witnesses:**

David Lewis, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources  
Leigh Whitehouse, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources  
Matt Scott, Chief Digital Information Officer, IT & Digital  
Jo Blount, Portfolio Lead – Digital, Data, Technology & Culture  
Lorraine Juniper, Head of Engagement and Innovation

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. A Member, referring to the performance monitoring report included in Annex 10, asked what had caused the spikes in work time lost due to IT problems in September and December 2022. The Chief Digital Information Officer, IT & Digital explained that the September spike was because of an increase in password resetting requests and additional support calls regarding devices at the beginning of the academic year. The December peak related to an isolated issue where an individual recorded disruption lasting 40 hours. The Chief Digital Information Officer added that peaks were monitored and built into the continuous improvement plan.
2. A Member asked if any system issues had been reported in relation to the recent renewal of parking permits as some residents had reported IT problems, such as addresses not appearing in the drop-down list. The Chief Digital Information Officer would report back to the Committee following further investigation of these issues. The Chairman questioned the testing and checking of such systems to ensure they work in advance. The Chief Digital Information Officer said that testing should be carried out in advance but could not currently comment on this issue as it had not been raised within the support channel. The Chairman requested further information to include an explanation of what went wrong and an overview of the testing that took place. **Action - The Chief Digital Information Officer, IT & Digital**

David Harmer left the meeting at 12:25pm

3. A Member, in reference to paragraph 31, was concerned that transform projects were not currently reported to Cabinet in the way that Run projects were and asked how Cabinet was monitoring such projects. The Chief Digital Information Officer explained that reporting of transform projects took place through the Transformation Assurance Board in addition to IT & Digital briefings to the Cabinet Member, who would disseminate updates to Cabinet Member colleagues. There had been recent focus on methods to enhance oversight to all projects and ensure all reports would transition through the new mechanism to ensure Cabinet engagement. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources confirmed that whilst not yet at an advanced stage, work had been taking place to ensure that each portfolio holder had visibility of all projects within their areas of responsibility.
4. The Chairman queried how the 'global average' customer satisfaction referenced in paragraph 29 was defined. The Chief Digital Information Officer said that a benchmarking exercise had taken place using the global average of a global benchmark software tool.
5. The Chairman queried the percentage of unsuccessfully blocked cyber-attacks. The Chief Digital Information Officer confirmed that to date, any attempts at cyber disruption had been successfully prevented. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources noted that cyber-attacks remained the highest risk on the risk matrix and everything possible was being done to protect the Council's systems. The Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources said that cyber-attacks were included in monthly performance Key Performance Indicator (KPI) headlines and included a list of unsuccessful attacks to drive awareness and staff behaviour. The Chairman sought reassurances that efficiencies would not be considered in this area. The Chief Digital Information Officer confirmed no efficiencies were planned and added that any investment requests had all been met.
6. A Member asked if the Council had access to people with knowledge around hacking. The Portfolio Lead, Digital, Data, Technology & Culture confirmed that this was covered by the penetration testing.
7. The Chairman, in relation to the workforce in this highly competitive sector, asked what non-monetary incentives were offered to staff. The Chief Digital Information Officer explained that the focus to be seen as an employer of choice was key and involved publicising the Council's innovation and continuing professional development offer to appeal to prospective applicants in addition to the Council wide discount schemes.



8. A Member asked what officers would do in an ideal world to attract candidates. The Chief Digital Information Officer said that although challenges existed with competitiveness around pay, interest in work was also a key factor in attracting candidates who were focused on developing their experience within innovative areas.
9. The Chairman asked if training was offered to districts and boroughs. The Chief Digital Information Officer explained that this area required sensitivity, with support and guidance available to districts and boroughs through an existing professional network.
10. A Member queried how finance, recruitment and other constraints impacted provision of the service. The Chief Digital Information Officer said whilst demands on the service were satisfied, a backlog existed and staff had multiple areas of focus which affected other areas of response. The Portfolio Lead added that a lack of capacity risked working in silos and could mean that required standards may not be met.
11. A Member questioned if available IT resources were adequately promoted. The Chief Digital Information Officer said that could be more awareness of resources and welcomed feedback from Members regarding the most effective ways to address this. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources suggested the Member Development Steering Group could feed into this work.

**Resolved:**

The Resources and Performance Select Committee recommends:

1. That, acknowledging that there is no resource surplus or unutilised capacity that can be used to respond to spikes in demand or the steady increase in demand, the Cabinet considers a business case from the IT Service to grow its capacity to meet increasing demand, placing paramount importance on cyber attack prevention.
2. That Cabinet has constant oversight when making efficiencies to ensure that doing so does not place the Council at greater risk of cyber attack.
3. That Cabinet monitors Transform projects through regular highlight reports outlining activities undertaken, activities planned, any issues and key risks.
4. That Cabinet Members continue to engage with the IT & Digital Service to align its work with the Council's key corporate priorities.

**Actions:**

- i. The Chairman requested further information and an explanation of the issues around the new renewal of parking permits system to include an overview of the testing that took place. Action - The Chief Digital Information Officer, IT & Digital

**15/23 PROCUREMENT MODERNISATION [Item 5]****Witnesses:**

David Lewis – Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources

Leigh Whitehouse, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources

Anne Epsom, Head of Policy and Improvement, Orbis Procurement

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman noted that the service's approach to environmentally sustainable procurement had been shortlisted for a Local Government Association (LGA) award and queried what had made Orbis stand out and if there was confidence that the service was now an example of best practice. The Head of Policy and Improvement, Orbis Procurement explained that whilst the judges had not provided feedback it was believed that the Council had stood out as a result of the collaborative effect of the three councils working together, the provision of a dedicated policy team, the baselining of supply chain emissions ahead of other local authorities and the level of engagement with stakeholders.
2. The Chairman asked if the weaknesses in four areas noted in paragraph 3 had been addressed and how was this measured. The Head of Policy and Improvement confirmed a number of weaknesses had been addressed. A focus on certain areas remained, particularly around the quality of data.
3. The Chairman requested examples of where the focus area of governance had, and had not, worked well in practice. The Head of Policy and Improvement said governance had been successful within portfolio reviews, which had received positive feedback and engagement. Steps had been taken to resolve issues around project banding methodology which had not been as successful; as a result work was underway to return to the more streamlined self-assessment banding.
4. The Chairman asked for an example of the lessons learned referenced in paragraph 7. The Head of Policy and Improvement noted the output of quality assurance reviews as an example which identified the quality of feedback and evaluation as an area for

consideration and the need for a platform providing equal access to all.

5. The Chairman, with regard to paragraph 25, questioned the benefit of training non-procurement staff in procurement. The Head of Policy and Improvement said training would help staff understand the potential for procurement.
6. A Member asked if the £4.2 million Orbis saving across the three councils had been what was anticipated and queried why, following this saving, some of the budget was transferred back to the Council after the 2021 review. The Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources confirmed that the Orbis targets had been set out in 2018 for delivery during the three years that followed. An overspill resulted from some outstanding targets that remained in the fourth year, an extension had been given to meet these targets and they had now been completed.
7. A Member queried the proportion of samples in the inaugural review undertaken in March 2023 noted in paragraph 12e, and asked what proportion of the projects were in sample and how many complied with organisational requirements and procurement regulations. The Head of Policy and Improvement explained that nine populations of potential projects were identified and taken through the first stage of the basic compliance QA process, followed by a thorough qualitative assessment of five of those projects.
8. A Member queried the process for receiving a quote that was obviously incorrect. The Head of Policy and Improvement said that respectful challenge between business partners and their services and engagement with senior stakeholders was effective in such circumstances.
9. A Member queried the timeline of the contract process, for example the time taken from the contract being awarded to being signed. The Head of Policy and Improvement, Orbis Procurement committed to bring this information back to the Committee. **Action - The Head of Policy and Improvement, Orbis Procurement**

**Resolved:**

The Resources and Performance Select Committee recommends:

1. That before approval of any part 2 procurement report, officers and the responsible Cabinet Member brief relevant Cabinet Members to continue to ensure all have a clear understanding of all financial implications.

**Actions:**

- i. The Head of Policy and Improvement, Orbis Procurement committed to bring back to the Committee information regarding timelines of the contract process.

**16/23 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 7]**

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Select Committee noted the Recommendation Tracker and the Forward Work Programme.

**17/23 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: 22 June 2023 [Item 8]**

The Committee noted its next meeting would be held on 22 June 2023.

Meeting ended at: 1.33pm

\_\_\_\_\_Chairman.