

Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held remotely on 25 March 2021 at 2.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor James MacCleary (Chair).
Councillors Zoe Nicholson (Vice-Chair), Matthew Bird, Julie Carr, Chris Collier, Johnny Denis, William Meyer, Emily O'Brien and Ruth O'Keeffe.

Officers in attendance:

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Ian Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning), Tim Whelan (Director of Service Delivery), Becky Cooke (Assistant Director for Human Resources and Transformation), Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services), Oliver Dixon (Head of Legal Services) and Kate Richardson (Strategy and Partnership Lead for Sustainability) and Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services).

Also in attendance:

Councillor Liz Boorman (Vice-Chair of Policy and Performance Advisory Committee)

49 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2021 were submitted and approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

50 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were reported from the Chair of Policy and Performance Advisory Committee, Councillor Joe Miller and Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Isabelle Linington.

51 Declarations of interest

None were declared.

52 Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning, seeking their approval of the draft Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery.

Thanks were conveyed to officers, the cross-party Local Plan Steering Group, town and parish councils in the Lewes district and all that had taken part in the consultation exercise.

Councillor O'Brien clarified that the Statement would only apply to the Lewes District Council Planning Authority area and would not apply to land within the South Downs National Park, including Lewes Town, where the South Downs National Park Authority was the local planning authority.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 15 March 2021, considered the report and were supportive of the recommendation in full. Councillor Boorman, Vice-Chair of PPAC, was in attendance to present PPAC's discussion.

Resolved (Key decision):

To approve the Draft Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Reason for decision:

To help provide a clear and consistent approach to the assessment of planning applications for housing development outside of the adopted planning boundaries.

53 Planning Enforcement Policy Document

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning, seeking their approval for the adoption and publication of the Council's Planning Enforcement Policy document and to use it for managing and processing planning enforcement related matters.

The Cabinet thanked the Planning Applications Committee for their consideration of the report, at their meeting on 10 March 2021.

Resolved (Key decision):

(1) To agree the publication and use of the Planning Enforcement Policy contained at Appendix 1 to the report.

(2) To provide delegated authority to the Director of Regeneration and Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure, to make minor or technical amendments to the Planning Enforcement Policy prior to their publication or as otherwise required following publication.

Reasons for decisions:

(1) To publicise the Council's expectations for the delivery of the planning enforcement function.

(2) To make minor amendments to address technical or drafting issues.

54 Investing in green energy initiatives

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning, seeking an allocation of revenue funding to enable a later decision to be made regarding development of, or financing of, proposed green energy initiatives; and to facilitate associated due diligence work.

Thanks were conveyed to OVESCO and officers for their work on the project.

The Policy and Performance Advisory Committee, at its meeting on 15 March 2021, made the following recommendation to Cabinet:

To support the recommendations in the report subject to the following amendment to recommendation (2) being considered by the Cabinet:

(2) Subject to (1) above, to delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer and Cabinet member for finance and assets, ***and in consultation with the Chair of the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee***, to provide up to £100,000 for development funding to take the solar farm proposal set out in section 2 and Appendix 1 of this report, to planning submission, subject to further due diligence being carried out.

The recommendation from the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), was presented by Councillor Boorman, Vice-Chair of PPAC and considered by Cabinet during their discussions. Councillor Nicholson responded that all necessary feasibility and due-diligence work would be undertaken for the project. A full business case would be presented at July's Cabinet meeting and PPAC would have an opportunity to review this, prior to determination at Cabinet. This negated the incorporation of PPAC's recommendation to the resolution below.

Resolved (Key decision):

(1) To delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive to initiate feasibility and due-diligence work as required for the project outlined in section 2 and exempt appendix 1 of this report, and for other potential green energy initiatives up to a value of £50,000 from revenue funds.

(2) Subject to (1) above, to delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer and Cabinet member for finance and assets, to provide up to £100,000 for development funding to take the solar farm proposal set out in section 2 and exempt appendix 1 of this report, to planning submission, subject to further due diligence being carried out.

(3) Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive to procure Local Partnerships to carry out due diligence work as required, including that of the development proposal referred to in recommendation (2) above.

Reasons for decisions:

Investigating the opportunities to develop and enable solar energy production directly supports the aims of the Council detailed within the Corporate Plan 2020-2024 to lead the community to net zero carbon and engage with the community energy sector.

Supporting community energy generation could enable community investment and assist with community wealth building objectives. Developing solar generation within the district will help meet goals and targets detailed within the Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy including the overarching net zero carbon by 2030 targets. Investing in operational solar farms is a potentially viable financial decision for the authority that could diversify the investment portfolio.

Notes: (1) The appendix remained exempt. (2) Exempt information reasons 3 - paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The meeting ended at 2.57 pm

Councillor James MacCleary (Chair)