

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting held remotely on 25 January 2021 at 3.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Joe Miller (Chair).

Councillors Liz Boorman (Deputy-Chair), Robert Banks, Nancy Bikson, Roy Burman, Roy Clay, Isabelle Linington, Christine Robinson and Adrian Ross.

Officers in attendance:

Millie McDevitt (Performance and Programmes Lead), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Philip Brown (Property Lawyer), Andrew Clarke (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Financial Planning)), Homira Javadi (Chief Finance Officer), Oliver Jones (Strategy and Partnership Lead), Ola Owolabi (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance)) and Kate Richardson (Strategy and Partnership Lead for Sustainability).

Also in attendance: Chief Inspector Di Lewis, Sussex Police

11 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2020 were submitted and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

12 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Milly Manley and Councillor Steve Saunders. Councillor Roy Clay was appointed as a substitute for Councillor Manley.

13 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

14 Urgent Items

There were none.

15 Written Questions from Councillors

There were none.

16 Updates and Reports from the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme:

The Chair, Councillor Miller, asked Members which Cabinet reports they

wished to be called over and included in discussion. The Committee requested that the following items be called over:

- 7(b). General Fund Revenue Budget 2021/22, Capital Programme
- 7(c). Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators 2021/22, Capital Strategy & Investment Strategy
- 7(e). Portfolio progress and performance report quarter 3 - 2020-2021
- 7(f). Climate change and sustainability strategy
- 7(g). Community safety partnership annual report
- 7(h). Voluntary Sector Report
- 7(i). Planning Technical Advice Notes

RESOLVED that the officer recommendations in the following reports be supported in full:

Item 7 (a) Recovery and Reset Programme

Item 7 (d) Annual Review of Fees and Charges

16a Update on the review of the Development Management area of the Planning Service

Leigh Palmer, Head of Planning Services, presented the report. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The time-period of six months referred to in recommendation 2 was a broad reporting cycle and that the report provided to Members was slightly within the six-month period. The establishment of the Planning First service would provide clearer reporting and management lines and a more identifiable process.
- The establishment of the Difficult Property Group brought together colleagues from other organisations who had relevant skillsets and expertise, and could support swifter resolutions to complex enforcement cases.
- The potential for Planning Committees being held on a four-weekly cycle was being scoped. The change of frequency would support the consultation process and provide stronger support of meetings by officers.
- The recruitment of junior staff was underway to partly address the vacancies within the Planning service.
- The government-set housing delivery target was approximately 780 dwellings per annum but was liable to change. The call-for-sites process concluded in the New Year and formed part of the Authority's Local Plan.

The results were currently being evaluated.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the updated information within the report be noted; and
- (2) that the progress on the action points in part 1 of the report be provided to the Committee within 6 months.

16b Tourism in the District Update

Philip Evans, Director of Tourism and Enterprise, presented the update. During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- Certain events, such as the Gin and Fizz festival, would be difficult to hold with current social-distancing measures. There was the option of a later date for the event. The arts event was still in the planning stage and looking broadly at all events, they could be moved to later dates if the current Covid restrictions remained in place.
- Sussex Modern was an organisation the Tourism and Leisure team had engaged with and one that would be supported in the future – discussion on Charleston had already taken place. Sussex Modern focused on art and landscape and would be included amongst a number of promotion brands that the Team would utilise.

RESOLVED to note the update.

16c Wave Leisure Partnership Support update

Philip Evans, Director of Tourism and Enterprise, presented the report. There was no discussion on the item.

RESOLVED to note the update.

16d Recovery and Reset Programme

This report was not requested for inclusion in discussion by the Committee (see minute 16) and the Committee had previously resolved to support the officer recommendations in the report in full.

RESOLVED to support the officer recommendations in the report in full.

16e General Fund Revenue Budget 2021/22, Capital Programme

Homira Javadi, Chief Finance Officer and Andrew Clarke, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, presented the report. During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- Setting the council tax was a Member decision and the proposals included

a £5.00 increase, and contributed to reducing the baseline and reducing the savings target.

- Part of the comprehensive spending review would have included a business rates review. However, the review had been delayed, which in light of the current environment and the impact of the Pandemic, would lead to a more accurate reflection of the business rates position and a more fit-for-purpose review, when restarted.
- The imbalance of business rate contributions between businesses that had benefited from the Pandemic (such as online and delivery companies) and high street retailers was noted, and would be fed back to the relevant areas of engagement and surveys carried out by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government.
- Until a national non-domestic rates calculation was undertaken, the full value of the projected business rates retention scheme was unknown. A reserve had been established for business rate equalisation to mitigate the potential volatility of business rates retention. The reset business rate value could be as low as the baseline figure included in the Budget.
- A number of members felt that a zero increase in council tax would alleviate some of the financial pressure experienced by residents. It was confirmed that a zero increase would equate to an additional reduction of approximately £180,000 in council tax revenue.
- A Member requested that the level of support provided by the Government to local authorities during the Pandemic be noted.
- Members noted the Housing Revenue Account report and appendices which had been circulated earlier in the day.

RESOLVED

To support the recommendations in the report subject to the following amendment being considered by the Cabinet:

- 1. Recommendation ii) in the Cabinet report be amended to read.... 'Zero increase in the Council Tax for Lewes District Council for 2021/22'.**

16f Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators 2021/22, Capital Strategy & Investment Strategy

Ola Owolabi, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, presented the report. During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- In terms of ethical investment, the level of risk and yield were considerations, however, the security of the investment was the key factor. The Treasury Management team was developing a checklist that

assessed investment opportunities.

- The affordability of the capital programme was measured through the prudential codes included in the report. The Finance team's strategy was to avoid reliance on borrowing to finance the Capital Programme and to look at external funding or capital receipts to reduce the revenue burden.

RESOLVED to support the officer recommendations in the report in full.

16g Annual Review of Fees and Charges

This report was not requested for inclusion in discussion by the Committee (see minute 16) and the Committee had previously resolved to support the officer recommendations in the report in full.

RESOLVED to support the officer recommendations in the report in full.

16h Portfolio progress and performance report quarter 3 - 2020-2021

Millie McDevitt, Organisational Effectiveness and Performance Lead, presented the report. During discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The fly-tipping target was reported on a quarterly basis towards a yearly target. The quarter 3 target would have been 50 in isolation giving it a green rating.

It was agreed that the following points would be considered and reported back on to the Committee after the meeting:

- Possible factors contributing to the reduction of household recycling rates.
- Consideration of the removal of the fly-tipping target and reporting of the performance indicator as 'for information only'.

RESOLVED to support the officer recommendations in the report in full.

16i Climate change and sustainability strategy

Kate Richardson, Strategy & Partnership Lead- Sustainability, presented the report. During discussion the following points were highlighted:

- In response to comments that the strategy document was too lengthy, it had been previously agreed by the Emergency Climate Change Panel, that a shorter, more concise document would be produced that would be more user-friendly and made available alongside a communications strategy. The final version of the Strategy would include links that provided signposting for residents.
- The communications strategy would be made available to the Emergency

Climate Change Panel in March. As the delivery phase was approaching, the capacity for reporting directly to the Policy and Performance advisory Committee would be reduced.

RESOLVED to support the officer recommendations in the report in full.

16j Community safety partnership annual report

Oliver Jones, Strategy and Performance Lead – Partnerships, presented the report. Chief Inspector Di Lewis, Sussex Police, was also in attendance to support the presentation. During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The level of detail necessary to clearly indicate the cause of the increase in incidents of racism was not currently available. Sussex police had a hate-crime coordinator who would be able to look further into the incidents.
- The incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) had previously decreased but had increased more recently – this was in part, attributed to the closing of schools and the congregating by young people in other areas. Incidents of breaching lockdown rules were not counted as ASB and were dealt with as a separate policing response.
- The Rural Crime team was a new initiative that had already provided positive results and linked with other teams as well as working independently.
- There was not currently a programme of vaccinations available for the Police teams.

RESOLVED to support the officer recommendations in the report in full.

16k Voluntary Sector Report

Jo Harper, Head of Business Planning and Performance, presented the report. During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The results of the consultation had been discussed with the lead Cabinet members and following consideration of a number of relevant issues, the option for grant allocations in 2021/2022 detailed in the report had been chosen and made as a recommendation to the Cabinet.
- The Cabinet member had opted for a selection process for bids to ensure that a transparent process was being followed.

The Committee felt there was another option for the grant allocations that the Cabinet should consider that included elements of the previously considered options.

RESOLVED To support the recommendations in the report subject to the

following amendment being considered by the Cabinet:

1. Recommendation (3) in the Cabinet report be amended to read'Agree to award a combination of core grants (without a bidding process) alongside competitive grants on a tri-annual basis to be implemented from 2021/22'.

16I Planning Technical Advice Notes

Mathew Hitchens, Interim Planning Policy Lead, presented the report. There was no discussion on the item, however the report and the recommendations were welcomed by the Committee.

RESOLVED to support the officer recommendations in the report in full.

17 Forward Plan of Decisions

The Chair, Councillor Miller, introduced the Forward Plan of Cabinet decisions. Members requested the following items for inclusion on the 15 March 2021, Policy and Performance Advisory Committee agenda:

- Wave Leisure Service Plan 2021/22
- Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule Review
- Update to the Local Validation List:- Information required to support/accompany planning applications
- Joint Biodiversity Strategy
- Asset Management Plan

RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions.

18 Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme

The Chair, Councillor Miller, presented the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme.

RESOLVED to note the Committee's work programme.

The meeting ended at 6.00 pm

Councillor Joe Miller (Chair)