

## Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

**Minutes of meeting held in Ditchling and Telscombe Rooms at Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB on 27 January 2022 at 2.30 pm.**

**Present:**

Councillor Joe Miller (Chair).

Councillors Liz Boorman (Deputy-Chair), Robert Banks, Nancy Bikson, Christine Brett, Roy Clay, Christine Robinson and Richard Turner.

**Officers in attendance:**

Philip Brown (Property Lawyer), Lee Banner (Transformation Programme Manager), Jane Goodall (Strategy and Partnership Lead, Quality Environment), Oliver Jones (Strategy and Partnership Lead), Ola Owolabi (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance)), Leigh Palmer (Head of Planning First), Peter Sharp (Head of Regeneration) and Seanne Sweeney (Strategy and Commissioning Lead for Community and Partnerships).

**Also in attendance:** Detective Justin Ingham (Sussex Police).

**46 Minutes of the previous meeting dated 30 November 2021**

The minutes from the last meeting held on 30 November 2021 were submitted and the Chair authorised to sign them as a correct record.

**47 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Linington and Councillor Saunders.

Note: Apologies were also received from Councillor Ross and Councillor Clay for their late arrival:

Councillor Clay joined the meeting from Item 7(b) Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Partnership Annual Report for Cabinet.

Councillor Ross joined the meeting from Item 7(j) Asset Management Report to Cabinet.

**48 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Boorman declared her membership of the Working Group for Grants programme and confirmed this was a personal and non-prejudicial.

**49 Urgent Items**

There were none.

**50 Written Questions from Councillors**

There were none received.

**51 Updates and Reports from the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme**

**52 Update on the Planning Service**

Leigh Palmer, Head of Planning, presented the report, which advised on the operations and functions of the Planning Service, and the Committee considered the recommendations.

During the course of the discussion and in response to queries from Members, Officers clarified that:

- A mystery shopping exercise was planned for early February and the findings would be reported back to the Committee.
- There had been some IT problems around issuing the weekly Planning Application Listings and this was being addressed.
- The listings did not include applications that did not require consultation. The Head of Planning would liaise directly with Members regarding the constitution of the weekly list of applications received.
- The team would investigate the Committee's reports that Ward Councillor names were sometimes missed off application notices.
- The team reported that it was currently just above the national average for the performance indicator and anticipated being able to report improvement by end of next quarter, which would be enhanced after bringing in the Planning Advisory Service.
- The expected publication date for the Issues and Options document for public consultation (part of the preparations for the next Local Plan) was end of January.
- Lewes District Council (LDC) had quarterly, Director-level, liaison meetings with the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). The issue of LDC taking back control of the applications currently managed by the SDNPA was under constant review. A new enhanced legal agreement had been signed to continue the service for another two years, commencing October 2022, with a 12- month notice period break clause.

**Resolved (unanimously):** To note the report.

**53 Requested reports due for consideration by the Cabinet on 3 February 2022**

It was confirmed by Members that, as part of the call-over process, the following reports would be included in discussion by the Committee:

- 7(b) Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Partnership Annual Report
- 7(h) Community Grants Programme

- 7(i) Levelling Up Fund
- 7(j) Asset Management
- 7(k) Litter Reduction Strategy 2022-27

**Resolved (unanimously)**

That the officer recommendations in the following Cabinet reports be supported in full:

- 7(b) A Coastal Concordat for England
- 7(c) Recovery and Reset
- 7(d) General Fund Revenue Budget 2022/23, Capital Programme
- 7(e) Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators 2022/23, Capital 7(f) Strategy & Investment Strategy
- 7(g) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget 2022/23
- 7(h) Fees and Charges

**54 A Coastal Concordat for England**

This report was not requested for inclusion in discussion by the Committee (see minute 53). Members had previously resolved to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report in full.

**55 Eastbourne & Lewes Community safety partnership annual report**

Oliver Jones, Strategy Lead, presented the report regarding the performance of the Eastbourne and Lewes Community Safety Partnership (CSP) 2020/21, with Detective Justin Ingham of Sussex Police.

Detective Ingham briefly outlined the 5 priority areas of focus agreed for the Partnership, providing a brief update and summary of the trends for each.

The Chair invited comment and questions from Members and the Committee considered the recommendations. During the following discussion, Officers and Police clarified that:

- Incidents of off-road biking activity could be reported to the local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) or preferably online as this would automatically help create a working map of incidents. If there was any crime or immediate danger, the public should call 999/101.
- Operation Blitz had a dedicated telephone line to report youth anti-social behaviour on Friday and Saturday evenings: 07989 188960. However, 999 or 101 should be used in an emergency.
- The use of e-scooters was currently illegal unless on private land, and Sussex Police would be taking part in a national day of action in February to highlight the issue. Incidents should be reported to the local PCSO.
- Addressing speeding and anti-social driving was a further area of focus. The Wealden, Eastbourne and Lewes Safer Roads Partnerships was the

key organisation for co-ordination of local community speed-watches and promoting road safety, supported by local police where resources allowed. PCSOs could potentially attend community events or Councillor meetings to discuss issues / hotspots of local concern.

- Town and Parish Councils had been invited to bid for CSP funds and that Officers were working with Councillor Denis (Cabinet Member for Communities and Customers) and the Council's Communications Team to reach out to communities for ideas for spending the remainder of the budget.

**Resolved (unanimously):** To support the officer recommendations to Cabinet in full.

## **56 Recovery and Reset**

This report was not requested for inclusion in discussion by the Committee (see minute 53). Members had previously resolved to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report in full.

### **56a General Fund Revenue Budget 2022/23, Capital Programme**

This report was not requested for inclusion in discussion by the Committee (see minute 53). Members had previously resolved to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report in full.

### **56b Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators 2022/23, Capital Strategy & Investment Strategy**

This report was not requested for inclusion in discussion by the Committee (see minute 53). Members had previously resolved to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report in full.

## **57 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget 2022/23**

This report was not requested for inclusion in discussion by the Committee (see minute 53). Members had previously resolved to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report in full.

## **58 Fees and Charges**

This report was not requested for inclusion in discussion by the Committee (see minute 53). Members had previously resolved to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report in full.

## **59 Community Grants Programme**

The Committee considered the report and Seanne Sweeney, Community Services Lead, clarified Member queries, namely that:

- The recommendations had been reached by a Councillor cross-party group.
- Each Councillor had scored all individual applications using a set formula. The scores were collated and averaged by Officers and reviewed by the cross-party group.
- From the forty -plus applications received, 14 organisations had been recommended for grants.

**Resolved (unanimously):** To support the recommendation to Cabinet in full, that is, to agree the proposed funding allocations set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

## 60 Levelling Up Fund

Peter Sharp, Head of Regeneration, presented the report, which provided an update on the successful bid for Levelling Up Funding for Newhaven and readiness to commence a programme of works.

The Chair invited comments from Members and the Committee considered the report and its recommendations.

Highlights from the discussion included:

- Lewes District Council was expecting to receive details of the grant agreement from Central Government by the end of January. It was noted that this would contribute to a tight delivery timeframe.
- The Committee congratulated the team on the successful bid, and related some positive feedback already received from residents, including from local fishermen regarding the plans for a commercial fish market and processing unit.

**Resolved (one abstention):** To support the recommendations in the report subject to the Cabinet considering the following additional recommendation:

‘That the Cabinet writes to Central Government, Officers, and Residents to thank them for their support in achieving a successful bid for the Levelling Up fund’.

## 60a Asset Management

Mark Langridge Kemp, Head of Property - Delivery and Compliance, presented the report regarding a proposal for rationalisation of office space and for future customer contact facilities.

The Committee considered the report and its recommendations.

Following comments and questions from Members, Officers clarified that:

- Charleston’s lease of Southover House would be for up to 5 years and Charleston required use of the whole building. If Charleston offered to

purchase Southover House in the future, a separate proposal would be brought to Cabinet and this Committee for consideration.

- The Heads of Terms of the lease arrangement had not yet been agreed. It was likely that the Council would retain responsibility for aspects of external building maintenance, that there would be an initial rent free period, as Charleston would have internal works to complete, and that a rent would become payable once Charleston had grown its business.
- Savings to Lewes District Council on overheads and utilities would likely offset the basic rental costs at County Hall.
- The rental value of Southover House had not been market-tested, although a valuation had been carried out for disposal.
- A lease with County Hall would be for 5 years and would be for the same number of bookable desk spaces as at Southover House (30) plus fixed desks (5) a small meeting room and kitchen. It would include a break clause of no longer than 6 months notice. Extra costs would be incurred for hiring additional meeting room space including for Committee meetings, but no costings were currently available for this or the cost of the move in and out of County Hall.
- Staff contracts had now changed to allow for hybrid working, and most staff were now working from home regularly, depending on service needs.
- A lease with County Hall would not be finalised until the lease of Southover House had been agreed.

During the discussion a number of areas of concern were raised:

- Regarding arrangements for the customer-facing space - There was concern that there would be confusion for residents as a result of moving between different locations over a relatively short space of time. It was important that the reception space was sited centrally in Lewes, and was accessible, and included provision of a suitable mix of private spaces. In conclusion, there was general agreement that more work was needed to get clarity and costings for the customer facing space, which was a priority aspect of any proposal to vacate Southover House.
- Regarding a lack of financial information on various aspects of the proposal - including market valuations, moving costs, additional costs for meeting rooms on top of basic rent at County Hall and, predicted overhead costs at UTC. Without this information it was hard to properly evaluate and determine 'best value' of the proposal.
- Securing the Newhaven Site - That the old University Technical College (UTC) building, which was the proposed permanent office space solution for the Council, was as yet unsecured. Mark Langridge-Kemp confirmed that the Council would not dispose of Southover House until an alternative site had been fully agreed.
- Impact on Lewes Town Centre - That there was a potential negative impact on the town centre of extra visitors by car, as it was unclear how Charleston planned to realise its transport policy aspirations. Mark

Langridge-Kemp confirmed that a requirement for travel plan would be included in the negotiations with Charleston.

In conclusion, there was general agreement that the report had come too early and that there was not enough of the relevant information needed before an informed decision could be taken.

**Resolved (unanimously):** To not support the recommendations in the report at this time, for the following reasons:

- The Committee agreed its support in principle to vacating Southover House in recognition of its underuse, but that additional information was required before the decision could be made.
- It is recommended that a report be brought back to Policy and Performance Advisory Committee and Cabinet to include a full and detailed business case for:
  - A full and clear proposal for a suitable customer-facing space in central Lewes (to include a space for private meetings between residents, councillors and officers);
  - A rental market appraisal of Southover House, and Charleston rental agreement proposal details, to assess the best value of the proposal;
  - The costs to the Council of moving locations both to County Hall and to the former University Technical College, Newhaven; and
  - The additional costs associated with leasing space at County Hall (including for Committees and Officer/Councillor meetings) in addition to the basic rental cost.

#### **60b Litter Reduction Strategy 2022-27**

Jane Goodall, Environment Lead, answered questions from the Committee as it considered the recommendations of the report.

- It was confirmed and clarified that the team worked closely with a number of litter pick groups and these experiences had helped to inform the Strategy and that, whilst the Strategy would be finalised by Cabinet, the Action Plan element would be reviewed and revised on an on-going basis.
- There was discussion of some specific creative examples to encourage putting litter into bins.
- The CCTV equipment, used to monitor for fly-tipping activity, was mobile.
- Concern was raised that the Strategy document did not include specific mention of ways to help reduce the initial volumes of litter. Jane Goodall explained that the Strategy had a particular scope of purpose, focussing on areas where the Council had more direct control, and noted that measures to reduce packaging were part of a wider national policy programme.

**Resolved (unanimously):** To support the recommendations in the report, subject to the Cabinet considering the addition of a short section to the Litter Reduction Strategy for the Council ‘to consider ways to reduce the volume and impact of litter’.

**61 Forward Plan of Decisions**

**62 Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme**

The Chair invited suggestions from Members of the Committee for additional items to the work programme.

Members requested that the following item be included on the agenda at the next meeting on 17 March 2022:

- A Performance Report for Quarter 3

Members further requested the following items be included on the work programme for a future meeting (as appropriate):

- Any further or revised proposals regarding office space and customer facing space arrangements.
- A report to reflect on the additional powers coming out of the new Environmental Legislation and how these could impact the Council’s Litter Reduction Action Plan. As part of this item, Members requested that Officers investigate the possibility of inviting some anti-litter experts to present at a future meeting to help identify further activities in which the Council could engage.

**Resolved:** To note the Committee’s work programme and agree the items above be added to the work programme.

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm

Councillor Joe Miller (Chair)