

## Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

**Minutes of meeting held in Room 209/210 Marine Workshops - Marine Workshops on 11 July 2023 at 2.30 pm.**

**Present:**

Councillors Janet Baah (Deputy-Chair), Ciarron Clarkson, Graham Clews, Ezra Cohen, Paul Davies, Nikki Fabry, Paul Keene, Imogen Makepeace and Paul Mellor.

**Officers in attendance:**

Philip Brown (Property Lawyer), Luke Dreeling (Performance Lead), Nathan Haffenden (Head of Development, Investment and Delivery), Steven Houchin (Interim Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance)), Mark Langridge Kemp (Head of Property and Asset Management), Rebecca Wynn (Regulatory Services Lead (Operational Lead - Emergency Planning)) and Nick Peeters (Committee Officer).

### **1 Appointment of a Deputy Chair**

Nominations were Sought for a Deputy Chair of the Committee.

Councillor Keene nominated Councillor Baah as Deputy Chair and was seconded by Councillor Ezra.

**Resolved** unanimously that Councillor Baah be appointed as Deputy Chair of the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee.

### **2 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 16 March 2023 were submitted and the Deputy Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

### **3 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brett and Stewart-Roberts.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

### **5 Urgent Items**

There were none.

### **6 Written Questions from Councillors**

None were received.

**6a Private Housing Financial Assistance Policy 2023-2025**

Rebecca Wynne, Regulatory Services Lead, presented the report which introduce an updated Financial Assistance Policy for Disabled Facilities Grants, Housing Renewal Grants and loans. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The mandatory element of the Grant was not available to Council tenants and the Council's stock did not have a budget to manage its own adaptations - legislation dictated that adaptations should be put in place through the Housing Revenue Account. However, through the discretionary element, assistance could be provided to residents in Council properties. The mandatory and the discretionary elements of the Grant were available to the private sector, as well as housing association tenants.
- With regards to the shared-equity loans, upon the sale of a property that had benefited from the loan, the Council would receive the full value of the loan back plus a percentage of any increase in value. The additional funds from the increase in value would be returned to the Disabled Facility Grant budget. There was a small risk attached to the Council if the property value lowered, however, the owners had to be in the property for a five-year period, which minimised the risk.
- The difference in percentage increase between the Home Relocation Grant and the Standard Discretionary Grant was a result of exponential increases in legal costs which required a higher increase in the Home Relocation Grant.

**Resolved** to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report, in full.

**6b Consideration of a Southern Water Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Panel**

Nick Peeters, Committee Officer, introduced the report asked the Committee to consider the establishment of a Panel that would work with Southern Water and other stakeholders in monitoring Southern Water's progress in dealing with waste-water discharge into the District's rivers and seas. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The issue of Southeast Water and its performance was raised. Members agreed that this was an area of scrutiny that should be dealt with separately and be added to the Committee's work programme.
- It was confirmed that Southern Water's performance had been raised at a meeting of Eastbourne Borough Council's Scrutiny Committee and that a similar process would be followed in terms of engaging with Southern

Water. Members considered that there could be opportunities for joined up working and this would be explored further. There was also potential for a broader joined up approach which could include other local councils including East Sussex County Council.

- There was no legal framework that would compel Southern Water to engage with the Council, however, it was considered prudent that Southern Water engage with local councils in light of historic performance issues. The Environment Agency and Ofwat provided the regulatory framework for the water industry and monitored performance. Members felt that although the option of a 'soft power' was available, the Council should be mindful that a collaborative, creative approach to engagement should be sought.
- Members considered that the frequency of the panel meetings should be determined in consultation with the Southern Water representatives.

**Resolved** to note the report and to appoint the following Members to a panel which will consider a draft terms of reference:

Councillors: Baah, Cohen, Clarkson, Fabry and Keene.

## **6c Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme**

Nick Peeters, Committee Officer, introduced the item which provided Members with an opportunity to request topics and issues which they wished to be considered for inclusion in the Work Programme. Members were advised that it was a role of the Committee to set its own Work Programme for the coming year. Members were advised that the Work Programme was an evolving document that would include reports due for consideration by the Cabinet and any issues that Members felt were important locally to their residents and also impacted District wide.

Members requested that the issue of air quality be included as an item on the Committee's Work Programme

**Resolved** to note the Committee's Work Programme and add include the following item in the updated version:

- Air Quality in Lewes District

## **7 Requested reports due for consideration by the Cabinet on 13 July 2023**

### **7a Portfolio progress and performance report quarter 4 - 2022-2023**

Luke Dreeling, Performance Lead, introduced the report which enabled members to consider specific aspects of the Council's progress and performance. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The quarterly measurements for air quality were difficult to assess on a quarterly basis which resulted in a Sustainability report being produced every six months, which would include air quality. Members requested that a case study in one specific area be looked at to determine whether current actions/mitigations were successful. Officers advised that this would be a specific action for the Air Quality Team and the request would be passed on.
- Further detail on the additional 2023/2024 performance indicator for 'Telephone calls graded as high quality under the call monitoring scheme' would be provided. The emphasis was on providing a high standard service and the additional indicator would provide qualitative data to support the target. It was anticipated that the implementation of the chatbot, Ellis, would free up staff to deal with more complex enquiries. Members felt that the Customer Contact team should receive acknowledgement when they provided a quality service.
- A number of the performance indicator targets were determined by National targets and external factors, and were not within the control of the Council.

**Resolved** to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report, in full.

## **7b Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge**

The Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge report provided Members with an opportunity to consider the Council's response to the LGA recommendations in the review.

Members expressed concerns that there were a number of recommendations from the LGA that had not been responded to by the Council. The following statement was provided by officers and read out at to Members:

'The report sets out details of a review carried out by the LGA and representatives of other councils. The Peer Challenge looked at both Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils. However, reports were provided separately to each council.

The Challenge took place in September 2022, but due to delays in receiving the full report, we were unable to present the findings until now. This report explains how the review was undertaken. The feedback and recommendations from the LGA are at appendix 1, and a summary of the Council's response to those recommendations is at appendix 2.

The report was very positive about the council, praising us for our effective service delivery, how we 'make things happen' and the clear direction of the political leadership. Officers have been, and will continue to, respond to the recommendations made in the report. The LGA peer team will return to undertake a short, virtual, follow up review soon – date to be agreed.'

**Resolved** to support the Officer recommendations in the Cabinet report, in full.

### 7c **Property and Assets update**

Mark Langridge-Kemp, Head of Property Asset and Management, presented the report which provided updates on a number of areas within the Council's Property and Asset portfolio. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The costs for the survey work at the Westgate Car Park were significant as the structure of the wall included flint, brick, double layer elements and historic features. There were also properties above the wall; all these elements necessitated the drilling of boreholes to assess the footings and the geology of the surrounding landscape. The impact on the properties on top of the wall was being monitored and discussions around responsibility for various elements were ongoing.
- The purchase by the Council of the West Beach Promenade from Newhaven Port and Properties Ltd was progressing. The Council was discussing heads of terms with the directors of the Port, including what space would be available for a restaurant and leisure facilities, as well as any additional space that would be available to maximise improvements. It was anticipated that the Port would want to retain access to the seawall and there were a number of legal elements that would require due diligence. Negotiations were at an early stage and there were funds within the Capital Programme which would be utilised for the purchase. The beach was not included within the negotiations as it was not for sale.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor space at the Marine Workshops would be a multi-use, community and business space. It was anticipated that additional kitchen and toilet space would be added. The space was being left broadly in its current configuration to facilitate an exhibition.
- Additional costs were experienced in phase 1 of the Marine Workshops development that necessitated additional funding for phase 2. The costs included work on firestopping and defective external facias. The Public Works Loan Board was still the preferred loan option for local councils. Prior to this step, a review of the Capital Outturn 2022/23 would be undertaken to identify if any unutilised capital spend could be reallocated.

**Resolved** to support the Officer recommendations in the Cabinet report.

### 8 **Exclusion of the public**

**Resolved** to enter into an exempt part of the meeting for items 8e Housing Development & Assets Update and 10 Housing Development & Assets Update – exempt appendix 2, as it was considered that public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

Exempt reason 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**8a Housing Development and Assets update (PART EXEMPT)**

Nathan Haffenden, Head of Development, Investment and Delivery, introduced the report which provided an update on the housing development and delivery programme.

**Resolved** to support the recommendations in the Cabinet report, in full.

**9 Housing Development and Assets Update - Exempt Appendix 2**

The exempt appendix was dealt with under item 8a on the agenda – Housing Development and Assets update.

**10 Forward Plan of Decisions**

The Deputy Chair, Councillor Baah, introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan of Decisions, which outlined decision due to be presented to the Cabinet at its future meetings.

**Resolved** to note the Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions.

The meeting ended at 4.35 pm

Councillor