

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting held in Remote Meeting (via Teams) on 15 September 2020 at 3.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Joe Miller (Chair).

Councillors Liz Boorman (Deputy-Chair), Robert Banks, Nancy Bikson, Roy Burman, Stephen Gauntlett, Isabelle Linington, Milly Manley, Christine Robinson, Adrian Ross and Steve Saunders.

Officers in attendance:

Millie McDevitt (Performance and Programmes Lead), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Mark Langridge Kemp (Head of Property, Delivery and Compliance), Catherine Knight (Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services), Leigh Palmer (Interim Head of Planning), Peter Sharp (Head of Regeneration) and Ola Owolabi (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance)).

Also in attendance: Councillor Emily O'Brien

9 Minutes of the previous meeting

Councillor Linington referred to minute 6f and asked for it to be recorded that whilst the Committee noted the reduction in air traffic as a result of the Pandemic, not all Members supported the reduction as there was a direct impact on Gatwick Airport as a local employer.

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2020 were submitted and approved, subject to the amendment above, and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

10 Apologies for absence

There were none.

11 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

12 Urgent Items

There were none.

13 Written Questions from Councillors

There were none.

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

14a Portfolio Progress and Performance Report 2020-21 - Quarter 1 (1 April - 30 June)

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

The status of amber for Neighbourhood Planning was a result of delays with the Chailey neighbourhood Plan. Updates were being received from the relevant project officer.

All food parcels designated for Lewes district had been distributed.

It was agreed that the Seaford Health Hub scheme would be reported back as part of the performance report without a red, amber, green (RAG) rating.

The Committee was advised that updates would be provided on the following points:

- Recycling rates in the district
- Reported incidents of fly-tipping in the district
- Car Parking issues in Newhaven Town Centre.

The ability for those residents in villages and parishes in the North of the District who are no longer able to use household waste and recycling sites in West Sussex, to continue recycling household waste was raised as an issue for the Cabinet Member with responsibility for recycling and waste to confirm.

The Committee asked that its thanks be passed on to the teams in the Council for maintaining services to residents throughout the Pandemic.

RESOLVED to note the update.

14b Review of the Development Management area of the Planning Service.

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

- The Architects Advisory Panel was currently zero cost to the Council and

was used by architects to obtain continued professional development.

- The focus on smaller geographical areas included the South Downs National Park and Lewes District. It was felt that dedicated teams with a local connection and the ability to service those areas would prove beneficial and this had been the case.
- There were currently three vacancies in the Planning team with one semi-senior position with the South Downs National Park Authority and this equated to approximately 20 percent of the number of full time employees. The interviews for the posts would take place in early November. It was expected that there would be occasional delays between a post being vacated and then filled. As a result of Covid, the majority of the Planning team was working from home. This had been a significant change in ways of working for the Service and it had learnt how best to modify and adapt to the new environment.
- An enforcement officer post was currently being advertised. The incumbent officer was reporting live applications to the line-manager and where appropriate these would be handed on to the officer filling the post.
- As a key, front-facing service, it was important that Planning provided the quality of service deserved by residents in the District. The report captured a number of initiatives and it was expected that upon delivery of those initiatives, the level of service would improve. The Council's executive was satisfied that resources in the Planning team were sufficient to deliver on the initiatives.
- The Neighbourhood First team supported both the enforcement and application processes in the Planning team. The number of dedicated enforcement officers had been reduced, however, with the support of Neighbourhood First, the work was being carried out. Discussion with the Chair of the Planning Committee was ongoing to look at the number of applications dealt with at each meeting.
- A briefing session would be provided at the end of September on the Government's 'Planning for the Future' White Paper'. It was a consultation document and the impact of the final legislation was not yet known. The Government was still focused on the importance of local planning and the development of neighbourhood plans. It was noted that the impact of staffing and performance as a result of the proposed legislation would be a consideration in the response.
- The inclusion of performance indicators to reflect planning enforcement would be considered.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted; and
- 2) That progress on the action points in the report be reported back to the

Committee at a future meeting.

15 Requested reports due for consideration by the Cabinet on 24 September 2020:

15a Recovery and Reset Programme

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

- Digital Democracy was a programme that used new technology to support areas such as virtual meetings. The Council would continue to look at new ways of using technology to improve efficiency in the future.
- The Tactical Restart team comprised several heads of service across the organisation and was chaired by the Assistant Director of HR and Information.
- In terms of the public engaging digitally with Council services, it was recognised that there were individuals who would be unable to access the Council digitally and options would be provided that were not digital and provided the same level of access. The Council was looking at various options as an alternatives to physical drop-ins to Council Officers by users of Council services.
- Part of the remit of the Council's Joint Recovery and Reset Board would be to look at issues that impacted jointly across both authorities. However, the sovereignty of the authorities would be maintained and it was recognised that there were issues that would not be jointly discussed. The Board's relationship with the Joint Staff Advisory Committee was still being considered.
- All options were being considered when looking at the Council's assets and the key points were to bridge the gap in the budget and ensure that the Council, as an organisation, was fit-for-purpose and future proofed.
- The Recovery and Reset Programme was designed to fit in with the Council's corporate priorities and creating sustainable community wealth was a key component. The Programme was primarily designed to address financial challenges in line with the Council's policies. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies was undertaking research work for the Council and would report back to the Council with its findings in October.
- There would be regular Recovery and Reset Programme reports to the Cabinet and the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee would also have an opportunity to scrutinise the reports as part of its role.

- Existing powers of delegation in terms of decision making would be maintained, however, it was recognised that a number of decisions within the Programme would be time-critical and delegation to the Chief Executive of those decisions was necessary. The Recovery and Reset Programme would be a standing item on the Cabinet agendas.
- All areas of the Council's business would be looked at to ensure that best value was achieved and the Council was operating as efficiently as possible.

The Committee requested that the Programme reflect all aspects of community wealth across the District including Council services and local employment opportunities, retaining money within the local economy, and supporting residents who previously commuted out of the district by enabling local work-spaces and supporting facilities.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To support the recommendations in the report subject to the following amendment being considered

1a) that the report reflects consideration of the wider District within the Recovery and Reset Programme.

15b Wave Leisure partnership support

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

- It was noted that a proposed amendment to a motion at a previous Full Council, for additional funding for a Wave Leisure programme, had not been supported.
- It was requested that the Cabinet write to the Government to encourage support for Leisure Centres and for policy to be amended to allow the centres to operate.
- It was requested that part, or a proportion of the loan could be provided as a grant, in order to assist in a speedier recovery. It was confirmed that the recommendation was for a loan and for delegated authority to be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the lead members for Finance and Tourism.
- It was confirmed that the loan would be repaid over a ten year period and the interest involved had been included in the calculations. It was further confirmed that the funding to Wave Leisure had reduced to zero in the last year as part of a five-year agreement.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To support the officer recommendations in the report subject to the following amendments being considered by the Cabinet:
 - 1a) That the Cabinet write to the Government and ask that financial support be provided for leisure centres and that policy and legislation be considered that allows leisure centres to operate; and
 - 1b) That the Cabinet consider providing the £500,000 loan instead as an interest free loan or grant (or part grant) to Wave Leisure Trust.

15c UTC, Newhaven

Mark Langridge-Kemp, Head of Property, Delivery and Compliance and Peter Sharp, Head of Regeneration, presented the report. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- Discussions on the use of the UTC were taking place with a number of partners. Until proposals had been discussed and finalised with National Maritime (who may wish to use a large part of the building) it remained prudent to continue dialogue with the other stakeholders.
- The refurbishment costs were around the separation of services and how the air-handling would be controlled by different users. The equipment in the UTC was relatively new and could be reused if it was made available.
- National Maritime had the use of apprenticeships in the maritime sector as one of the key areas of its business model.
- The Brighton Aldridge Community Academy, who had previously utilised the UTC site, would be contacted to determine any level of interest, as requested.
- The remainder of the Railway Quay had been cleared and was being looked at for use as a sustainability hub. Government had offered project funding of £500,000 to Newhaven.

RESOLVED to support the recommendations in the report in full.

16 Cabinet Forward Plan of Decisions

The following items from the Forward Plan were requested for inclusion on the agenda for the Committee's next meeting on 3 November:

- Local council tax reduction scheme
- Wave Leisure Trust Annual Review 2019/2020

- North Street Quarter - update on delivery

RESOLVED to note the Cabinet Forward Plan of decisions.

17 Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme 2020/21

It was requested that the following items be added to the Committee's work programme:

- An update from the Planning Service.
- The Council's approach to development and sustainability on public sector sites in Newhaven.

RESOLVED to note the Committee's work programme

The meeting ended at 5.50 pm

Councillor Joe Miller (Chair)