

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting held in Ditchling & Telscombe Rooms - Southover House, Lewes on 3 June 2021 at 3.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Joe Miller (Chair).

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

Officers in attendance:

Philip Brown (Property Lawyer), Jane Goodall (Strategy and Partnership Lead, Quality Environment), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Leigh Palmer (Head of Planning First) and Nick Peeters (Committee Officer).

1 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2021 were submitted and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stephen Gauntlett.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

4 Urgent Items

There were none.

5 Written Questions from Councillors

There were none.

6 Requested reports due for consideration by the Cabinet on 10 June 2021

6a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Chair advised the Committee that officers were not available to provide responses to comments. It was agreed that the following points raised by Members during discussion would be responded to by email following the meeting:

- What the results of the pilot scheme were and how had they impacted on the proposals for 2022/23?
- Was more detail on the 2.5 FTE posts available and how would they be managed?
- What was the current status of the Council Tax Hardship Fund and had the £210,000 remaining from the Fund been carried over?

Councillor Linington proposed and it was seconded by Councillor Miller that the Committee should not support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report.

RESOLVED by a majority of 5 to 4, with 1 abstention:

To not support officer recommendations (1), (2) and (3) in the Cabinet report:

(1) authorise the Chief Finance Officer to enter into consultation with the major precepting authorities.

(2) authorise the drafting of a scheme that calculates a Council Tax Reduction of 100% of a person's council tax liability, removes the Minimum-Income Floor for the self-employed and removes the £5.00 minimum award.

(3) on completion of the consultation and drafting authorised under (1) and (2) above, authorise the Director of Service Delivery to consult with other interested parties.

6b Recovery and Reset Programme

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

- A new revenue and benefits IT system was being looked at across both Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils. This was in recognition of the potential for economies of scale and a shared solution.
- The potential pay awards figure referred to in paragraph 2.2 of the Cabinet report equated to an award of approximately 2.5 percent for 2022/23. The pay award for the current year had not yet been agreed. Once agreed it would result in a revised savings target.
- It was anticipated that the Digital Democracy project would deliver savings in 2022/2023 but the total figure was not yet known.
- The original frequency of monthly meetings for the Recovery and Reset Member Board had been necessary when it was initiated. The pace of the programme had since altered, and monthly meetings were no longer

required. A large amount of background work was being undertaken to meet gaps in the budget in the current and future years, and the Board would be updated on this shortly. It was expected that the next report to the Cabinet would include a full set of proposed savings.

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

6c Community Wealth Building

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

- A number of options were being explored for ways in which Southover House could contribute to the Community Wealth Building project. It was confirmed that any change of use of the Southover House building would not result in a reduction in Council services.
- The two-year fixed-term post (£80,000 over the two years) included in the recommendations to Cabinet was a mid-range graded post and was needed to continue driving the project at the pace required. Partnership work with other key anchor organisations was one area that needed the additional, focused resource. The one-off fund of £20,000 being requested was to procure legal and financial advice related to the possible re-purposing of assets and/or the transferring of ownership in line with community wealth building principles.
- Concern was expressed that the Modular Housing Framework being developed would encompass 100 percent of the housing development programme. It was anticipated that this would not be the case and that further detail on the scheme would be provided following the meeting.
- Members felt that the additional post requested in the recommendations could be funded by redirecting 1 percent of the £6 million spent by the Council each year on goods and services.
- Councillor Linington proposed, and it was seconded by Councillor Boorman, that recommendation a) in the Cabinet report be supported but that recommendations b) and c) should not be supported by the Committee.

RESOLVED by a majority of 6 votes to 5 (with the Chair using his casting vote)

To support officer recommendation a) in the Cabinet report:

- a) To note the progress made in delivering the Reimagining Lewes District Action Plan and to agree the Re-imagining Lewes District Community Wealth Building Strategy set out at appendix A to the Cabinet report

To not support officer recommendations b) and c) in the Cabinet report:

b) To agree £80k to fund a two-year fixed term post to oversee the implementation of the Strategy, and

c) To agree a one-off allocation of £20k to enable the development of initiatives to promote and enable social entrepreneurialism, with both additional cost items being funded from reserves.

6d Biodiversity Strategy

Jane Goodall, Strategy and Partnership Lead, presented the report. During discussion the following points were highlighted:

- East Sussex County Council, including its Highways Team, was a key partner. Verges and hedgerows were an important area of conservation.
- Social media was underway to communicate the key messages within the strategy. It was noted that communication with residents was essential for understanding areas such as allowing hedgerows and verges to grow, which in turn contributed to a nature-rich environment.
- The development of the Strategy had led to closer working with the Planning Policy team and it was anticipated that elements of the strategy would be reflected in future planning policy.

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

6e Update to the Local Validation List (Information required to support/accompany planning applications)

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

- Assessment of open space and its potential loss required proportionality. The support of small and medium enterprises (SME's) was important and the key factor through the planning process was the provision of evidential and documentary material early in the process.
- It was requested that more emphasis be placed on the benefit to developers in engaging at a very early stage with Planners and the Local Validation List (LVL). Government guidance was that authorities undertake a two-year review of the LVL and learn from best practice nationally and from stakeholders locally.
- Developers would be invited at the pre-validation stage of the planning process to speak to the Planning team and they would be signposted to those elements of the LVL that were relevant.

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

6f Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation - to follow

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

- A fully inclusive consultation process would take place including with town and parish councils. Briefings with district, town and parish councillors would be held at the launch of the 'issues and options' stage. A key element of the process was the analysis of the feedback to better inform the Local Plan. All available mediums would be used for consultation, including online, paper and physical displays/meetings.
- It was a statutory requirement that the consultation run for a minimum 8 week period. A review of the call-for-sites was currently being looked at and the results would be produced following the results of the issues and options consultation.
- The development of brownfield sites first was a key theme and one which the Council was keen to achieve. It was also important to note the outcomes of the consultation and not predetermine the results.

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

7 Forward Plan of Decisions

The Chair, Councillor Miller, introduced the Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions. The following reports were requested for inclusion on the agenda at the Committee's next meeting:

- Corporate Plan- Review of year 1 achievements
- Portfolio progress and performance report quarter 4 - 2020-2021
- Finance update - performance quarter 4 - 2020-2021
- Medium term financial strategy
- Annual treasury management report
- Community Grants Prospectus
- Re-imagining Newhaven (Update on Future High Streets Fund project, including: Confirmation of funding award & Programme progress and anticipated timescales).

8 Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme

Members requested that updates on the following items be considered for inclusion on the agenda at a future meeting:

- An update on the Waste Service to include:
 - Information on incidents of fly-tipping including enforcement action.
 - Littering and the introduction of fines.
- The disparity between Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils for chargeable items (for example green waste bins).
- An update on the outcomes of the initial stage of the Local Plan.

The meeting ended at 4.40 pm

Councillor Joe Miller (Chair)