

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting held in Ditchling and Telscombe Rooms at Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB on 17 March 2022 at 2.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Liz Boorman (Chair).

Councillors Robert Banks, Nancy Bikson, Christine Brett, Roy Clay, Isabelle Linington, Christine Robinson, Adrian Ross, Steve Saunders and Richard Turner.

Officers in attendance:

Lee Banner (Transformation Programme Manager), Philip Brown (Property Lawyer), Luke Dreeling (Performance Lead), Oliver Jones (Strategy and Partnership Lead), Ola Owolabi (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance)) and Nick Peeters (Committee Officer).

63 Minutes of the previous meeting dated 27 January 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022 were submitted and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

64 Apologies for absence

There were none.

65 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

66 Urgent Items

There were none.

67 Written Questions from Councillors

There were none.

68 Requested reports due for consideration by the Cabinet on 24 March 2022

It was confirmed by Members that, as part of the call-over process, all the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda would be included for consideration by the Committee.

68a Lewes District Homelessness Strategy

Olver Jones, Strategy & Partnerships Lead (Housing & Communities), presented the report which sought to introduce a new homelessness & rough sleeping strategy and request Cabinet approval of the strategic goals, objectives, and associated action plan. During discussion the following points were highlighted.

- Additional funding had been provided to by Public Health England to support people that had already been placed in temporary and emergency accommodation during the Pandemic. The focus over the previous months had been to ensure that single people were assessed under the current legislation and the level of support provided that would prevent those people from being inadvertently placed back on the street.
- The Housing and Communities team had looked at all the organisations that obtained funding through the Communities Grant Framework, to ensure a coordinated approach was being taken and to utilise the financial support provided through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. Funding had been provided to external organisations who were being worked with to ensure they played an active part in the 'prevention-hub'.
- The increased financial pressure on households was recognised and part of the work would focus on a coordinated approach to providing access to key areas - training, employment and advice.
- The Committee expressed concern at the high, average cost of homes in the District and the difficulties that young people experienced in accessing the housing market. Members felt that affordable housing should be made available and future developments on Council owned sites should focus on one-bedroom units.
- The 1,050 households referred to in section 3. of the Strategy included homeless households but the figure was more broadly, any household that fell within the 5 main categories of housing need.
- Measures of the impact of the Strategy would be introduced, particularly around reducing the number of people in temporary accommodation and reducing the cost to the Council of providing this type of accommodation.
- Members requested further detail on the locations of the Hubs and their accessibility to the public. It was highlighted that the Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA) had a Hub in Newhaven and there could be an opportunity for partnership work.

Resolved to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report.

68b Finance update - performance quarter 3 - 2021-2022

Ola Owolabi, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, presented the report which sought to update members on the Council's financial performance in Quarter 3 2021/22. During discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The issues that the Organisation faced in terms of attracting staff were due to a number of factors that affected the majority of local authorities and were in part, a result of the Pandemic. Different options were being explored, including apprenticeships, training programmes and recruiting from universities, however this was a time consuming process and results would not be immediate. The Contact Centre was an example of a service areas where staff were being trained to a high standard of expertise and then moving on to other services in the Organisation.
- The Council's return on investments had been low as a result of historically low interest rates. A number of the Organisation's counter-parties were offering negative returns and other areas were being looked at. However, the focus was on minimising risk and assuring the security of investments. This was pertinent in the current political environment. £953,000 would be placed into the Organisations reserves as a boost to deal with unknown pressures should they arise.
- There were various factors that impacted on delivery of the Capital Programme including a change of costs for existing projects, lack of supplies and being able to appoint the appropriate consultants and provide leads for delivery of projects. The projects in the current Programme were expected to be delivered by the end of 2023/2024. There would be no additional funding beyond the Levelling Up Fund and the Council would need to resource management of the Levelling Up Fund projects.
- Members expressed concern that although the capital investment was available for the Council's projects, the revenue investment needed to provide staff to deliver the projects would not be sufficient.
- The Planning Service was as near to capacity as it could be in terms of staff but that there would always be a turnover which impacted on staff retention.
 - It was agreed that further detail would be provided on the following areas.
 - The net underspend variations (2.2 in the report), in particular around Customer & Neighbourhood Services.
 - Case Management and Special services.
 - The number of current vacancies, which areas were impacted and the reasons for difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff.
 - Service areas that had apprenticeships and the total number of apprenticeships in the organisation.

Resolved to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report.

68c Local Connection Eligibility Self-build and Custom Housebuilding

Register

Leigh Palmer, Head of Planning, introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval to include Local Connection Eligibility into the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register.

- Following concern expressed by the Committee that self-build schemes, which were intended to have a degree of affordability, were often misrepresented and ultimately delivered as custom-build schemes, it was confirmed that Planning Policy did not differentiate between the two.
- Although the final figure for the register entries was expected to be lower than it currently was, it would not be confirmed until the process of testing eligibility had been completed.

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

68d Portfolio progress and performance report quarter 3 - 2021-2022

Lee Banner, Transformation Programme Manager, presented the report which sought to update members on the Council's financial performance in Quarter 3 2021/22. Luke Dreeling, Transformation Lead, was introduced to the Committee. During discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The figure provided for the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting, was historically delayed as it was dependant on data provided by East Sussex County Council.
- Further detail would be provided on the level and type of data used for the measurement of air quality in the district.
- The Council could not directly influence the performance indicator for the total number of fly-tipping incidents but would continue to deploy cameras, increase monitoring and target hotspots. A single bag of waste left was considered an incident of fly-tipping and there were no direct correlations between the increase in the number of incidents and specific activities or changes of practice by the Council in the district. It was agreed that the changes of policy, including reduced hours of access and the introduction of charges for the depositing of certain items at household waste and recycling sites would be looked at for any correlation to the increase in incidents. The number of fixed and mobile cameras in use would be confirmed.
- There was a recruitment drive ongoing to attract new staff to the Contact Centre which allowed for existing staff who were moving into other areas of the Organisation. It was anticipated that this would improve the performance indicator for the increase of calls to the contact centre answered in 60 seconds. A new chatbot was also being introduced which would allow for the more complex types of enquiry to be dealt with by staff. The early resolution of email enquiries was also being targeted. It was

agreed that the Committee would be updated with the outcomes of the changes made.

- Analysis had shown that, prior to the Pandemic, people accessed the reception area at Southover House to leave documents and although it had now reopened and people continued to leave documents, it would function differently and visitors who had more complex enquiries would be able to use a phone and speak to staff who could deal with the enquiry in full.

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

69 Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions - March 2022

The Chair for the meeting, Councillor Boorman, introduced the Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions. Members requested that the following reports be included on the agenda at the next meeting, for consideration:

- Introduction of Planning Obligation Monitoring Fees
- Homes First Repairs Service: Re-design and Development

Resolved that the Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions be noted.

70 Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme

The Chair for the meeting, Councillor Boorman, introduced the Committee's Work Programme. Members requested that the following item be included on the agenda for a future meeting:

- An update on the Robinson Road Waste and Recycling Depot and the Avis Way Waste Vehicle Depot (Newhaven).

Resolved to note the Committee's Work Programme.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm

Councillor Liz Boorman (Chair)