

## Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting held in Room 209/210 Marine Workshops - Marine Workshops on 7 March 2024 at 2.30 pm.

### Present:

Councillors Janet Baah (Deputy-Chair), Lesley Boniface, Graham Clews, Ezra Cohen, Paul Davies, Charlotte Keenan, Imogen Makepeace, Paul Mellor and Daniel Stewart-Roberts.

### Officers in attendance:

Philip Brown (Property Lawyer), Luke Dreeling (Performance Lead), Nick Peeters (Committee Officer), Linda Farley (Assistant Director, Customer Service and Delivery), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Nathan Haffenden (Assistant Director, Property and Development), Lynn Ingram (Interim Head of Financial Planning), Marc Stephens (Capital Delivery Lead) and Oliver Jones (Lead, Housing, Homelessness & Community Safety).

### Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector Di Lewis (Sussex Police)

### 51 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25 January 2024 were submitted and the Deputy Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

### 52 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brett, Keene, Fabry and Clarkson.

Councillor Keenan was a substitute for Councillor Keene and Councillor Boniface was a substitute for Councillor Brett.

### 53 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

### 54 Urgent Items

There were none.

### 55 Written Questions from Councillors

There were none.

**56 Update on the Lewes Farmers Market petition - to follow**

The Chair, Councillor Baah, introduced the item which was an update on the Lewes Farmers Market petition.

Members were advised that work was still ongoing towards compiling a survey and when the work was finished, an update would be made available to the Committee.

**Resolved** to note the update.

**57 Requested reports due for consideration by the Cabinet on 1 February 2024**

It was agreed by the Committee that all reports on the agenda due for presentation to the 14 March Cabinet would be considered.

**57a Revenue & Capital Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2023-24**

Steve Houchin, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, introduced the report which provided an assessment of the Council's financial performance against its approved 2023-24 budget, incorporating key financial risks, issues and opportunities identified since 2 April 2023 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The forecast net-spend under 'Head of Customer First' included a combination of salary cost, and supply and services expenditure. A detailed overview of the figure could be provided.
- The Council had implemented a new revenues and benefits system, with its implementation supported by members of the Business Strategy Performance Team. Part of the Council's financial regulations allowed the capitalisation of part of the costs in relation to the staff members' time.
- The increased Legal Services income related to requests from other local authorities and organisations to provide commercial work, such as reviews of contracts (and associated documentation) or composing and obligations of legal agreements.
- It was not unusual for capital programmes to have levels of underspend in a particular period, as there were sometimes elements of planned schemes that were not within the Council's control and impacted on the projected spend. It was anticipated that the forecast spend would be carried over to the following year. Capital programmes were constantly reviewed to ensure that the schemes included remained relevant.

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

**57b Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Partnership - Annual Report**

**(Lewes)**

Oliver Jones, Housing, Homelessness & Community Safety Lead, presented the report which detailed the 2023/24 performance of the Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Partnership (E&L CSP).

Chief Inspector Di Lewis was in attendance and highlighted the following points:

- The percentage increase in trafficking drugs reflected the Police's ability to locate and trace the drugs and remove the threat from the street. Additionally, there had been an incident of drugs washing up on the coast which may have filtered further inland.
- The Team for Lewes was at full strength to meet local policing needs, including a compliment of police community support officers (PCSO's), some of whom, it was anticipated, would go on to take up roles as police officers.
- Although Lewes was a relatively low crime area, it was recognised that any crime had an impact on individuals and communities. Although there had been a small increase in overall crime numbers, the figure over the previous three months had decreased. There were no trends to report. and no reporting of prolific offenders.
- There had been an increase in shoplifting reporting, but again, in terms of the reporting of crime, this had a positive element. The Business Crime team
- was working on the targeting of prolific offenders and ensuring that, where necessary, a body of evidence was available to make arrests and have a positive impact. The Co-op chain of stores was one example where there had been a dedicated drive towards dealing with shoplifting, with staff being provided with the necessary resources to report incidents. Every incidence of shop staff being assaulted was fully attended by Sussex Police. In cases where offenders were not remanded, significant bail conditions were imposed.
- The reporting of serious violence (which included domestic abuse) had increased and Sussex Police were proactive in providing safeguarding for victims.
- An operation was currently running that tackled anti-social driving, an in particular motorbikes. Working with the local authority and the introduction of public space protection orders (PSPO's), as part of the operation, was being considered. Bike thefts across the entire division had increased and a particular suspect had been identified.
- Sussex Police was supporting the UK Border Force and the Crime investigation team from the Home Office in relation to a recent incident that involved 7 illegal immigrants being trafficked into the Country through

Newhaven Port. One of the illegal immigrants had sustained significant injuries as a result of the incident.

- Drug dealing and drug misuse in the Seaford area had been identified and Sussex Police were working diligently to try and mitigate the impact on the community and residents. The key message for people in the District was to continue reporting incidents of crime.

During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The cost-of-living crisis would have had an impact on areas such as increases in shoplifting incidents, however, in cases of prolific offenders, it was often drugs or alcohol dependency that were the root cause.
- Lewes district had a compliment of three teams, with a warranted officer, a sergeant and up to six PCSO's on each team.
- The figure for 'serious and organised inquisitive crime' related in large part, to online fraud. However, there remained isolated incidents of people having money taken from them fraudulently, often as a result of building work done on properties, or due to be undertaken. Work by Sussex Police PCSO's had been undertaken in the form of leaflet drops aimed at potentially vulnerable people who did not have access to online resources/information.
- Rural crimes were reported and dealt with by the Rural Crimes team. The incidents involved may result in civil action rather than prosecution by the Police.

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

#### **57c Portfolio progress and performance report 2023/24 - Quarter 3**

Luke Dreeling, Performance Lead, presented the report which detailed the Council's progress and performance in respect of service areas for the Third Quarter of the year (October-December 2023) as shown in Appendix 1 of the report. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- Agency staff had been employed to back-fill positions left by internal staff, whose expertise was needed to implement the IT elements of the changes associated with the new revenue and benefits NEC system.
- With regard to the performance indicator for customer complaints logged at stage 2 and resolved within 20 working days, a number of the complaints were around housing and housing repairs. There were delays between complaints being received and resourcing materials and implementing the work needed. A new code of practice was being introduced in April which would necessitate a more rigorous checking of the complaints being responded to within timescales.

- It was recognised that the performance indicator for the percentage of appeals allowed against the authority's decision not to grant planning permission was potentially out of date. The Planning team and the Portfolio Holder for Planning were working towards providing more relevant data.
- Further detail on the performance indicator for the of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting would be provided. Members noted that the data was provided by East Sussex County Council as the responsible authority for waste disposal.

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

## **58 Exclusion of the public**

**Resolved** to enter into an exempt part of the meeting for items 7d - Housing Development and Property Update and item 9 - Housing Development and Property Update exempt appendices 2 and 3, 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).

## **58a Housing Development and Property Update**

Nathan Haffenden, Assistant Director, Property and Development and Marc Stephens, Head of Developments and Acquisitions, presented the report which provided an update on the housing delivery programme, and also provided a brief context to the current challenges in maintaining the existing social housing stock.

Members discussed the points highlighted in the report and appendices and officers responded to questions.

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

## **59 Housing Development and Property Update - Exempt appendices 2, 3**

This item (and attached appendices) was dealt with as part of item 7d – Housing Development and Property Update.

## **60 Forward Plan of Decisions**

The Chair, Councillor Baah, introduced the Forward Plan of Cabinet decisions, which outlined those reports due for consideration by the Cabinet its future meetings.

Members were advised that the Chair of the Committee would be provided with an updated version of the Forward Plan ahead of the next meeting and would

liaise with Democratic Services when considering which reports needed to be included on the agenda.

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

## **61 Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme**

The Chair, Councillor Baah, introduced the Committee's work programme, which outlined those items previously requested for inclusion on future agendas.

Members were advised that the following items would be retained on the work programme:

- The Council's Ground Maintenance Contract
- The report from the Emergency Climate Change Panel
- Report from the Southern Water Panel.

## **62 Date of Next Meeting**

**Resolved** to note that the next meeting of the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee is scheduled to be held at **5pm** on the 30 May 2024 at The Marine Workshops, Railway Quay, Newhaven, East Sussex, BN9 0ER.

The meeting ended at 4.05 pm

Councillor