

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting held in Room 209/210 Marine Workshops - Marine Workshops on 30 May 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Christine Brett (Chair), Councillors Janet Baah (Deputy-Chair), Ezra Cohen, Nikki Fabry, Charlotte Keenan, Paul Keene, Paul Mellor and Daniel Stewart-Roberts.

Officers in attendance:

Homira Javadi (Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer)), Nick Peeters (Committee Officer), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Gary Hall (Head of Homes First), Peter Jenion (Project Manager - Community Wealth Building) and Kate Richardson (Sustainability Lead).

1 Minutes of the previous meeting

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The minutes of the meeting held on the 7 March 2024 were submitted and the Deputy Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clarkson, Clews, Davies and Keenan. Councillor Gallagher was a substitute for Councillor Clarkson.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

4 Urgent Items

There were none.

5 Written Questions from Councillors

There were none.

6 Appointment to Greater Brighton Economic Board - Independent Call in Member

The Chair, Councillor Brett, introduced the item and explained that the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee was required to appoint one member and one substitute to the Greater Brighton Economic Board 'call in' Panel.

Councillor Baah agreed to be appointed as the Panel member and Councillor Fabry agreed to act as substitute.

Resolved that Councillor Janet Baah be appointed to the Greater Brighton Economic Board 'call in' Panel and Councillor Nikki Fabry be appointed as a substitute.

7 Policy and Performance Advisory Committee work programme

The Chair, Councillor Brett, introduced the item and reminded Members that there was a requirement for the Committee to set its own work programme for the year ahead. Members had been emailed ahead of the meeting for any areas or issues they felt should be considered for inclusion in the work programme. Councillor Brett highlighted a number of areas that she had asked to be reviewed:

- An update on changes to the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract and progress towards a new contract.
- A review of play areas in Lewes District
- Update on customer service responses and recruitment

It was confirmed that those responses already received from Members would be included for consideration as part of the work programme.

Resolved to note the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee work programme.

8 Emergency Climate Change Panel report

Councillor Baah, Chair of the Emergency Climate Change Panel, introduced the report which updated the Committee on the work of the Panel over the previous year and sought the views of the Committee on the Panel's terms of reference and direction going forward. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- Engagement with young people was being done through community partners and their work with schools and other community groups. An annual joining of community groups had been written into the strategy and young people groups and school interest would be included, such as Green United, a Lewes based group that brought young people together to address climate change. Members requested that, if not already being engaged with, young people in the District's coastal areas be consulted.
- A Strategic Climate and Nature Board was due to be established, a cross-party advisory board that would advise the Cabinet on climate and nature matters, as well as the implementation of the emergency climate strategy. It was expected that the Board would be implemented before the end of July 2024. The Policy and Performance Advisory Committee would continue to have the same level of access to climate and nature issues and work done

by the Council, as part of the Strategy.

- Members considered that the continuation of the Panel should be supported by the Committee at least until the Board was established and then a further review could be considered.

Resolved to note the report and support the continuation of the Emergency Climate Change Panel.

9 Update on the Lewes Farmers Market petition - to follow

Lee Banner, Assistant Director - Neighbourhood and Transformation, introduced the report which updated the Committee on the work towards producing a survey for the Lewes Farmers Market parking provision. During discussion, the following points were highlighted.

- The exact number of people that would be included in the survey was not known, however, it would be shared with local traders, market traders and the general public. The social-media network and other Council profiles would also be used in order to reach as many people as possible. The Survey would be live for one month following the General Election, with a car park survey during a day when the market was operating and one when it was not, to provide comparison.
- As well as contacting traders, signs with QR codes would be placed around Lewes Town and take people directly to the survey and explain its purpose. Work would also be done to access any hard-to-reach groups. The three datasets would be analysed by the Council's officers.
- Members expressed concern that a two-day survey of car parks would not provide an accurate representation as external factors such as the weather or other events taking place could impact on results. Members also felt there was an opportunity for a wider survey of car parks to be undertaken, and that a hard copy of the survey could be made available at the Council's offices in the High Street.

Resolved to note the update.

10 Verbal update on the Southern Water Panel

Councillor Cohen, Members of the Southern Water Panel updated the Committee on its work. Councillor Cohen advised that the Panel had met with a number of stakeholders on the 22 April to discuss the issues around Southern Water. Councillor Cohen confirmed that a further meeting had been scheduled with Southern Water on the 10 June and that following this meeting, a report would be provided.

Resolved to note the update.

10a Wave Community Bank Subordinated Loan

Homira Javadi, Director of Finance and Performance, introduced the report which detailed the principles of providing financial support in the form of a loan to Wave Community Bank, the proposal and the expected outcome. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The loan was considered to be low risk for the Council. Wave was a not-for-profit organisation, however any potential impact by the Subsidy Control Act 2022 would be considered by the Cabinet and as the scheme progressed.
- The scheme had operated previously for many years as the East Sussex Community Bank, as grant-aiding, and had historically received grants from the Council's Housing Service to provide financial support for tenants. The previous scheme was well established and had been promoted by the Council through social media.

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

10b Social Housing Regulation update

Gary Hall, Head of Homes First, presented the report which provided an update on revised changes to social housing regulation, including revised consumer standards and proposals to introduce a competence standard for social housing staff and a new complaint handling code. The report also included proposals for updated governance arrangements to take account of the changes. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The scrutiny element of the introduction of new regulations, standards and governance would be through the existing tenant involvement strategy and the scrutiny at a strategic level was already being done by Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD), an existing group of elected tenant representatives. It was anticipated that the work of TOLD would be supported by the Lewes District Cabinet member for tenants and those in housing need. The introduction of the Tenant Service Improvement Panel would allow TOLD to work with lead officers with responsibility for delivering housing services.
- A retirement housing forum also fed into the work of tenant representation and a wide a range of tenant involvement was always welcome. The engagement of all Housing staff with tenant representation was also a key area. The Committee felt that a wider representation of Members in TOLD and any tenancy improvement group would be a positive step.
- It was expected that all service-leads, including those within property services and with input into environment and sustainability improvements,

to be accountable for all elements of the changes introduced by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

Resolved to support the recommendations in the Cabinet report.

10c Sustainable Procurement Policy

Peter Jenion, Project Manager – Community Wealth Building, introduced the report which updated Members on the Council's sustainable procurement policy which outlined how the Councils was sourcing goods and services in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- The policy did not specifically demand evidence of monitoring and tracking of sustainability measures from suppliers and contractors, due to the cross-cutting nature of the procurement process and the wide range of sectors involved. However, where evidence that that a measurable level of tracking was taking place, was provided, it placed those contractors and suppliers in a stronger position.
- Members considered that a register or list of suppliers and contractors who could demonstrate best practice methods in sustainability, carbon emission mitigation, would be a positive step and help support local businesses.

Resolved support the recommendations in the Cabinet report, subject to the consideration by the Cabinet of the following additional recommendations:

- That the Cabinet considers the setting up of a register that includes local contractors/suppliers who can demonstrate that they promote sustainability within their practices; and
- That the Cabinet considers making provision in the Council's procurement policy, where appropriate, for credit to be given to suppliers/contractors during the tendering process, who can demonstrate that they are working within the Council's existing best value framework for sustainability and /or have a recognised accreditation in respect of their own sustainability policies and achievements. This is subject to ensuring that the policy is not thereby distorted so as to prejudice small and medium size enterprises.

11 Forward Plan of Decisions

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

Resolved to note the Forward Plan of Cabinet decisions.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the originally scheduled date of the next meeting, 4 July, was the date of the General Election. An alternative date was being sought and Members would be notified in due course.

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm

Councillor Christine Brett (Chair)