

Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held in Room 209/210 on the Second Floor, The Marine Workshops, Railway Quay, Newhaven, East Sussex, BN9 0ER. on 14 March 2024 at 9.30 am.

Present:

Councillor Zoe Nicholson (Chair).
Councillors Christine Robinson (Deputy-Chair), Chris Collier, Johnny Denis, Wendy Maples, Laurence O'Connor and Mark Slater.

Officers in attendance:

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Ian Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning), Becky Cooke (Director of Tourism, Culture and Organisational Development), Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer), Kate Slattery (Head of Legal Services), Luke Dreeling (Performance Lead), Chris Gape (PR Lead), Nathan Haffenden (Assistant Director, Property and Development), Steven Houchin (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance)), Lynn Ingram (Interim Head of Financial Planning) and Oliver Jones (Lead, Housing, Homelessness & Community Safety).

Also in attendance:

Councillor Stephen Gauntlett (Chair of Audit and Governance Committee) and Councillor James MacCleary (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group).

52 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2024 were submitted and approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

53 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were reported from Councillor O'Brien, and visiting member, Councillor Brett.

54 Declarations of interest

None were declared.

55 Revenue & Capital Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2023-24

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Finance and Performance, providing 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).

The report detailed that the Council was forecasting a balanced position by year-end. Section 2.3 of the report detailed the main underlying pressures which the Council was seeking to mitigate.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 7 March 2024 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full.

Resolved (Non-key decision):

(1) To note the forecast outturn position for 2023-24 and associated risks.

(2) To delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Performance and the portfolio holder for finance to apply any budget virements required to effectively manage the overall budget.

(3) To note Appendices 1 & 2 to the report.

Reason for decision:

To update members on the financial position of the Council and ensure that the Authority complies with its financial regulations.

56 Portfolio Progress and Performance Report Quarter 3 - 2023-2024

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Finance and Performance, asking it to consider the council's progress and performance in respect of service areas for the third quarter of the year (October-December 2023), as shown at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Performance Lead reported that quarter 4 would provide greater detail on the activity of Solution Sprints throughout the year, along with associated direction of travel for the new financial year.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 7 March 2024 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full.

Resolved (Non-key decision):

To note progress and performance for Quarter 3 2023/24.

Reason for decisions:

To enable Cabinet members to consider specific aspects of the council's progress and performance.

57 Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Partnership – Annual Report (Lewes)

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning, regarding the 2023/24 performance of the Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Partnership.

The report detailed that for 2023, Lewes District in general was a low crime area, matching a similar number of crimes reported to the previous year.

As detailed, the Council was continuing to drive forward best practice in managing domestic abuse and was working towards obtaining full accreditation over the past year. Cabinet commended this, along with the other initiatives set out and undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership and partners.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 7 March 2024 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full.

Resolved (Non-key decision):

To note the achievements and activities of the Eastbourne & Lewes Community Safety Partnership in 2023/24.

Reason for decision:

To consider progress on delivery of the current Community Safety plan.

58 Housing Development and Property Update

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning, providing an update on the housing delivery programme and context to the current challenges in maintaining the existing social housing stock.

Cabinet commended and thanked the Tenants of Lewes District Council (TOLD) for their work in partnership and significant contributions to proposals set out.

Section 7.4 of the report stated that four disproportionately high-cost void Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets had been identified. These were reported at the meeting as:

- 1A and 1B Penlee, Ringmer (Block of 2 flats)
- 3 Talbot Terrace, Lewes (2-bedroom house)
- 60 Valence Road, Lewes (3-bedroom house)

Through conversations and partnership work with TOLD, it was determined that the most cost-effective option would be to dispose of these assets, as granted by previous Cabinet delegation. As part of the collaborative working

with TOLD, it was agreed that in order to dispose of the assets, the Council would seek to buy four replacement homes, with an equivalent number of bedrooms at target social rents within the wider District. It was expected that this would leave a surplus in capital receipts after the homes were purchased, which could be used to purchase or build additional new homes.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 7 March 2024 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full. The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor MacCleary, spoke in support of the proposals, especially the inclusion of the garage sites and disabled adapted homes in the report.

Resolved (Key decision):

(1) To note the progress of the housing delivery programme, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, and evolving New Homes Principles.

(2) To note the pressures on budgets in maintaining the existing social housing stock in the current market economy.

(3) To approve an increase to the total budget allocation within the capacity of the existing HRA Capital Programme of up to £4.7m for the purchase and development of land and assets at Peacehaven Golf and Fitness in accordance with Appendix 2 (Exempt), subject to planning, contract, valuation, and full due diligence.

(4) To approve a new budget allocation within the capacity of the existing HRA Capital Programme of up to £1.6m for the development of land and assets at Broyle Close, Ringmer, to be taken through the Modular Housing Framework, in accordance with Appendix 3 (Exempt), subject to contract, valuation, and full due diligence.

(5) To approve £150k within the capacity of the existing HRA Capital Programme (2023/24) in order to capitalise costs associated with securing planning permission for the Phase 1 Garage Infills Programme.

(6) To authorise the Assistant Director – Property and Development, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Performance (S151 Officer) and Lead Member for Finance, Assets and Community Wealth Building, to progress recommendations (3), (4) and (5) in the report and to conclude them including the approval and implementation of all processes and procedures, negotiation and agreement of terms, award of contract(s), and authorising the execution of all related documentation.

Reason for decisions:

(1) To provide Cabinet with an update on the growing housing delivery programme, in the context of the Corporate Plan.

(2) To support HRA finances in the context of current pressures and further the

Council's objectives to build and maintain quality, affordable, and sustainable homes.

(3) To update on the challenges and financial pressures in maintaining the existing social housing stock, in the context of national cost increases and limitations in generating new income streams within the HRA.

Notes: (1) Appendices 2 and 3 remained exempt. (2) Exempt information reason 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The meeting ended at 9.58 am

Councillor Zoe Nicholson (Chair)