

Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held in Room 209/210 on the Second Floor, The Marine Workshops, Railway Quay, Newhaven, East Sussex, BN9 0ER. on 9 November 2023 at 2.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Zoe Nicholson (Chair).
Councillors Christine Robinson (Deputy-Chair), Johnny Denis, Wendy Maples, Emily O'Brien and Laurence O'Connor.

Officers in attendance:

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Homira Javadi (Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer)), 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), Nadeem Din (Planning Policy - Lead), Oliver Dixon (Lawyer and Data Protection Officer), Mark Horan (Improvement and Business Design Lead), Bill McCafferty (Lead for Income Maximisation and Welfare), Leigh Palmer (Head of Planning First) and Jo Wunsch (Specialist Advisor (Sustainability)).

Also in attendance:

Councillor Christine Brett (Chair of Policy and Performance Advisory Committee), Councillor Stephen Gauntlett (Chair of Audit and Governance Committee) and Councillor James MacCleary (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group).

25 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 were submitted and approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

26 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were reported from Councillors Collier and Slater.

27 Declarations of interest

None were declared.

28 Public question time

The Cabinet received two written questions from Mary Campbell, in relation to digital infrastructure across Lewes District.

In accordance with procedure rules, verbal responses were given at the meeting. The Chair confirmed that full written answers would be sent to the questioner following the meeting, also addressing any supplementary questions.

29 Updated and Aligned Scheme of Delegation to Officers

The Cabinet considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, setting out the need for an updated and aligned scheme of delegation to officers, and outline key amendments.

The document has had extensive consultation prior to Cabinet, including two meetings of the cross-party Constitution Working Group and consideration by the Audit and Governance Committee, held on 4 September 2023.

Thanks were conveyed to officers for their work in producing the report.

Resolved (Key decision):

(1) To consider the draft updated and aligned scheme of delegations to officers, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report and approve all executive delegations.

(2) To refer its approval to Full Council for noting.

Reason for decisions:

Lewes District Council's existing Scheme has not been fully updated since 2015, leading to lack of clarity over certain officer powers and difficulty with implementation.

30 Housing Benefit War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Policy

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery, seeking their recommendation to Full Council for the disregarding, in the assessment of Housing Benefit, War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation income above the statutory disregard.

For several years, Lewes District Council has used its discretion to fully disregard any income that residents receive from War Widow's (Widower's) Pension, War Disablement Pension and the Armed Forces Compensation Schemes if they claim housing benefit. The report recommended that the council continue its support.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 7 November 2023 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full.

Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):

To recommend the disregarding in full of War Pensions income and the Armed Forces Compensation income in the assessment of Housing Benefit.

Reason for decision:

As set out in the report.

31 Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy- Annual update

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning, providing an update on the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy and action plan, and set out proposals for climate change activities in 2024/25, including refreshing the Strategy and action plan.

The report detailed a 16.8% reduction in carbon emission on the total baseline figure from 2018/19 and a 13.8% reduction in fleet emissions, which confirmed that the council was on track in terms of its emissions commitments. Additionally, the carbon footprint of the district has reduced by 15% since 2018, based on the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ – previously Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's – BEIS) data, since 2018. Thanks were conveyed to officers and partners for their contribution towards this progress.

Update on key actions contained within the strategy was detailed at section 5 of the report.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 7 November 2023 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full. Councillor Brett, Chair of PPAC was in attendance to present PPAC's discussion and questions raised at that meeting.

Resolved (Key decision):

(1) To approve the Climate Change and Sustainability Annual Update (as attached at Appendix 1 to the report) for publication on the council's website.

(2) To note progress to date on the Strategy and action plan, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

(3) To delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Planning and Regeneration to deliver the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy refresh, in consultation with the portfolio holder.

Reason for decisions:

To progress the aims of the council's Climate Emergency Declaration (2019) to make the authority net zero carbon by 2030 and to assist the same aim to be achieved within the wider district.

32 Lewes Local Plan, Preferred Options and Policies Directions

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning, seeking their recommendation to Full Council for a period of public consultation on the Regulation 18 Local Plan 'Towards a Spatial Strategy and Policies Approaches', and publication of supporting documents.

The Local Plan covers the area of the district for which the Council is the local planning authority. The area of the district covered by the South Downs National Park is not included in this Local Plan. The Local Development Scheme (December 2022) sets out the stages of public consultation in preparing the Local Plan and the Statement of Community Involvement sets out when and how the Council consult on planning matters.

The Spatial Strategy set out the policies and framework for new homes, employment space and community facilities across the district. The plans are evidence led, with the information gathered by council officers informing where development is appropriate and where it is not. Thanks were conveyed to officers for their work undertaken thus far.

Subject to consideration at Full Council at its meeting on 20 November, the public consultation was scheduled to run from 29 November 2023 to 8 February 2024 and include a range of opportunities for people to have their say, including local exhibitions across the district and online feedback. As part of the discussion, residents were urged to get involved with the next stage of consultation on future development in the district.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 7 November 2023 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full. Councillor Brett, Chair of PPAC was in attendance to present PPAC's discussion and questions raised at that meeting. It was advised that full responses to questions raised by PPAC would be responded to following the meeting.

Councillor MacCleary, Leader of the Opposition and Councillor Gauntlett, Chair of Audit and Governance Committee also addressed the Cabinet, supporting engagement in the consultation process.

Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):

(1) To approve the Local Plan Regulation 18: Towards a spatial strategy and policies directions document, as set out in Appendix 1, together with the supporting documents for public consultation in accordance with the regulations and the Local Development Scheme.

(2) To agree delegated authority to the Director of Regeneration and Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure to make any minor changes to the appearance, format and text of the Local Plan

and supporting documents in the interests of clarity and accuracy prior to their publication for consultation.

Reasons for decisions:

The preparation of the Local Plan must be undertaken in accordance with the relevant regulations. This includes consultation at Regulation 18 of the Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The proposed consultation is at Regulation 18.

The consultation document sets out policy directions for policies to be developed further at the subsequent draft Local Plan stage. It also sets out the identified development needs of the plan area, and the Council's proposed approach to meeting these needs within its plan area.

As part of this consultation, assessment material of land submitted in response to the 'Call for Sites' will be included. This assessment has drawn on the technical evidence produced to support this stage of the consultation as well as information that has been submitted by parties with an interest.

The meeting ended at 3.17 pm

Councillor Zoe Nicholson (Chair)