

CABINET

19 June 2017 at 5.00 pm

Present : Councillors Mrs Brown (Chairman), Wensley (Vice-Chairman), Bence, Charles, Clayden, Haymes and Wotherspoon.

Councillors Buckland, Cooper, Dendle, Mrs Oakley, Mrs Porter, Mrs Stainton and Tyler were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

31. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, representatives of the public, press and officers to the first meeting of Cabinet for the Municipal Year 2017/18.

In response to the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower, London, the Chairman acknowledged that Arun District Council's tenants may have concerns. To address this and provide reassurance the Chairman read out a letter that had been sent to all Council Tenants and Leaseholders. This letter advised of the actions Arun District Council was taking and confirmed that although Arun District Council had used cladding on some buildings none of the cladding was of the type identified on Grenfell Tower.

The Chairman then stated it was felt that it was important to ensure absolute peace of mind for the Council's residents and therefore some checks would be undertaken on the materials and installation of the cladding on the Council's buildings. Members agreed this communication was a positive way to ensure tenants understood that they have no need to worry.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer has advised Members of interim arrangements to follow when making declarations of interest. They have been advised that for the reasons explained below, they should make their declarations on the same basis as the former Code of Conduct using the descriptions of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Reasons

- The Council has adopted the government's example for a new local code of conduct, but new policies and procedures relating to the new local code are yet to be considered and adopted.
- Members have not yet been trained on the provisions of the new local code of conduct.
- The definition of Pecuniary Interests is narrower than the definition of Prejudicial Interests, so by declaring a matter as a Prejudicial Interest, that will cover the requirement to declare a Pecuniary Interest in the same matter.

Cabinet – 19.06.17

Where a Member declares a “Prejudicial Interest” this will, in the interest of clarity for the public, be recorded in the Minutes as a Prejudicial and Pecuniary Interest.

There were no declarations.

33. QUESTION TIME

(Please note that the questions and answers in these minutes are a summarised version, with the full version published on the Council’s website)

(a) Questions from the public (for a period of up to 15 minutes).

The Chairman invited questions from members of the public who had submitted their questions in advance of the meeting in accordance with the rules of the Council’s Constitution.

(1) Councillor Mrs Brown, the Leader of the Council, was asked if Arun District Council considers the proposal of a Speakers Corner in Littlehampton to allow people the opportunity to express their opinions a viable enhancement to town affairs & advancement of the democratic process.

Councillor Mrs Brown thanked the questioner for his question. The Leader recalled attending the Hyde Park Speakers Corner in London, on several occasions, and had enjoyed listening to the speakers and debates. It was advised that this had been checked with West Sussex County Council who confirmed that there was no requirement for licensing/permission from them for something like this. Arun District Council licensing team had said the same. It was explained that if the events caused any kind of public nuisance then that would become a police matter, but having a discussion/debate in public on a small scale would not require a licence or permission and would also not require authority from this council meeting.

(b) Questions from Members (for a period of up to 15 minutes).

The Chairman then invited questions from Members that had been submitted in advance of the meeting. Three questions had been submitted by Councillor Dendle.

(2) Councillor Mrs Brown, the Leader of the Council, was asked about the confirmation at the Overview Select Committee in a question put by Councillor Dingemans that there were no Contingency plans for an increase in housing in the Local Plan. If housing numbers substantially increase to more than 1200 per

annum, which Councillor Dendle believed they might, during the local plan inspection and bearing in mind Councillor Bower was kept in position when many thought he should go, the Leader was asked if she would take personal responsibility for that outcome?

Councillor Mrs Brown responded that the reason why the Chairman of the Overview Select Committee was informed that there wasn't a contingency plan to provide additional housing should the Local Plan Inspector consider more housing was necessary was because of a combination of factors.

Firstly, the Council had always determined the proposed level of housing according to the evidence available, whether that was the Objectively Assessed Needs assessment or other documents such as the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment. As the questioner would be aware the required provision that the Council must seek to accommodate has increased rapidly in recent years.

Secondly, it was explained that the Council was required to establish whether it could assist neighbouring Councils with their housing provision under the terms of the Duty to Co-Operate legislation. The work this council had undertaken with other Councils in the area on strategic planning matters was recognised for its excellence by the Royal Town Planning Institute. Councillor Bower was chairman of relevant Strategic Planning Board at that time and the work he put into that was recognised as leading the way forward for other Councils and much admired by the Councils in our duty to cooperate area. The cumulative effect of these factors had accounted for all of the strategic sites that had been identified as being potentially suitable for development.

Furthermore, it was stated that the Inspector would quite reasonably say that if we did have reserve sites, shouldn't these be brought forward to meet, either the 1250 homes that would be still required to be identified on small sites as part of current plans, or make a larger contribution to the needs of our neighbours. Councillor Mrs Brown stated that she wasn't sure if that is what the questioner was suggesting - that Arun should be providing for even more housing. It was stated that in reality it wasn't believed that the evidence was there to support the provision of even more housing in Arun above what is currently planned.

The following Supplementary Question was then asked:

Supplementary to Question 2 – Councillor Dendle stated that he had asked if the Leader was personally responsible and asked again for a 'yes' or 'no' answer to the initial question.

Supplementary Response - The Leader answered that Full Council had taken a vote on this, which included Councillor Dendle, and so the responsibility was shared with the whole of the Council.

- (3) Councillor Wensley, Deputy Leader of the Council, was asked a question by Councillor Dendle. Councillor Dendle had noted that in a recent write off of Sundry debts which were handled by Individual Cabinet Member Decision, that the policy for writing off sundry debts has not changed in over 9 years (a very long time). It was asked what efforts had he made to ensure officers innovate and improve the collection of outstanding debts?

Councillor Wensley responded that the policy and procedures for writing off debts was actually last reviewed in 2014.

He was satisfied that before consideration of writing off any debt the procedure was being followed. As a result, every debtor had received an invoice, reminder, final notice, a letter proposing legal action, legal action and a judgement against the individual. Unfortunately, the issue of a County Court judgement does not necessarily mean payment is made and writing off the debt is always a last resort. In response to the question about what action he was taking to ensure officers innovate and improve the collection of outstanding debts Councillor Wensley answered that working with officers the council was always seeking to improve but the total of write offs in 2016/17 amounted to £28,480 which equates to 0.47% of the total debt. This is a record that in Councillor Wensley's view was an enormous credit to the officers involved and one that many commercial companies and utilities would view with envy.

- (4) Councillor Mrs Brown, the Leader of the Council, was asked a question on officer pay. Councillor Dendle stated that this had now been allowed to stagnate for over 5 years and many employees had become de-moralised by the situation, it was asked if Councillor Mrs Brown thought it was time to give the council's employees an increase linked to the Consumers prices index?

Councillor Mrs Brown responded that Pay awards were considered annually by national negotiations with Trade Unions for all posts except that of the Chief Executive. It was explained that the LGA (*Local Government Association*), negotiated pay awards on behalf of the Council. As a result, a 1% increase was agreed from April 2017. Officers also had annual spine point awards, unless they were on the maximum for their grade. With regard to the minimum wage it was confirmed the Council was legally compliant.

It was thought that to move to Local Pay could be viewed as undermining national negotiations. In addition, it was explained that the national pay spine was currently under review in order to remain legally compliant with the National Living Wage. Options were being developed with the working group and trade unions nationally and final proposals would form the basis to seek an agreement between the Employers and Trade Unions in due course. It was anticipated that the review would result in increased costs to the pay bill and the council would therefore not want to consider moving away from national negotiations while this work was ongoing and the impact of the review on the pay bill was unknown. The outcome of the review was likely to be known in July 2017, and the council would respond accordingly.

Councillor Mrs Brown stated that she recognised the difficulties council staff were having during this period of restraint. Despite this national issue, it was recognised that staff were working really hard to provide excellent services for the public. It was noted that Council performance, particularly our high public satisfaction results, confirmed this hard work. In our residents' Spring Survey 2017, 73% are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the quality of the council's work. Councillor Mrs Brown extended her thanks to Arun District Council staff for their continued commitment to the Arun community.

34. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2017 were approved by the Cabinet as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

35. START TIMES

The Cabinet

RESOLVED

That the start times of meetings for the remainder of 2017/18 be 5.00 p.m.

36. BUDGET VARIATION REPORT

There was nothing to consider under this Standard item.

37. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE SUPPLY, IMPLEMENTATION AND SUPPORT & MAINTENANCE OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH IT SOLUTION

Cabinet – 19.06.17

Cabinet received a report from the Principal Environmental Health Officer, Housing which sought approval for the award of contract following competitive procurement conducted in accordance with current European Union procurement legislation and internal contract standing orders.

It was reported that Environmental Health and the Private Sector Housing and Public Health Teams currently use an in-house IT system (EHADD) which was over 20 years old and no longer considered “fit for purpose”. This was impacting on service delivery and the teams had been unable to provide a cost efficient service. It was noted that a new system would allow the service to adopt efficient ways of working which in turn would support reduced operational costs.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer, Housing reported that ‘Supplier A’ had submitted the most economically advantageous tender (confirmed by thorough evaluation) and their system was within the agreed budget for the award of contract following a competitive procurement process.

In turning to the report’s recommendation, the Principal Environmental Health Officer, Housing, pointed out that legal advice had been received since the report had been written. This had meant that the report’s recommendation had been amended slightly and this amendment was tabled at the meeting.

Cabinet agreed the amended recommendation and then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/001/190617, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

38. FUNDING TO REVIEW/UPDATE MADE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The Group Head of Planning presented the report on funding to review/update Neighbourhood Development plans. It was explained that the increase in the Council’s housing requirement for the Local Plan period 2011-2031, has resulted in an additional 1,250 homes required to be delivered through new or updated Neighbourhood Development Plans.

It was reported that Arun District Council had received funding from Central Government to support the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and there was sufficient funding within this ear marked reserve to be able to provide additional funding (over and above further government grants that are available) to support new or updated Neighbourhood Development Plans. To assist those groups who intended to produce new or modified Plans, Arun District Council would provide grant funding of up to £5,000 per parish for any parish that is updating or creating a new Plan and will have reached a stage within 3 years where a plan was proposing an appropriate scale of housing development.

The Cabinet welcomed this report as good news and agreed its proposals. The Cabinet then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/002/190617, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

39. COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND – EXPENDITURE AND FUTURE USE

The Housing Strategy & Delivery Manager presented a report on the Community Housing Fund which informed Cabinet that the Council had been allocated a grant of £706,119 by Central Government to enable the delivery of community-led housing schemes in Arun.

Member's attention was drawn to recommendation 4, where the grant of up to £30,000 had been provided to the Angmering Community Land Trust as the transfer/acquisition of the land by the Angmering Community Land Trust had completed. Arun District Council had requested a receipt of a document setting out details of the intended expenditure and it was reported that this had been received.

In receiving the report, Cabinet agreed that the grant was excellent news as a one off opportunity and recognised the importance of spending this money wisely.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/003/190617, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

40. TACKLING HOMELESSNESS

Cabinet received a report from the Head of Housing on tackling homelessness.

It was noted that the incidence of homelessness continued to grow at a District, County and National level and the Head of Housing highlighted the following key issues:

- The Homelessness Reduction Bill would put a new duty on Councils to provide a written, personalised plan for every person who approaches the Council as threatened with homelessness. This change would be likely to require additional resources.
- The Council had recently been notified that it was to receive Flexible Homeless Support Grant which was a new grant that replaced Temporary Accommodation Management Fees. The new grant, £304,000 for 2017/18 and £350,000 for 2018/19, reflected more detailed analysis of Council Homelessness statistics to create a fairer formula which reflects homelessness demand and deprivation that is dealt within the district.

Cabinet – 19.06.17

- It was noted that the funding would provide an opportunity to help prepare the Council for the Homelessness Reduction Bill as well as develop new initiatives to prevent homelessness taking place.
- It was proposed that urgent consideration be given to purchasing suitable properties that could be used for temporary accommodation. Such an approval would effectively assist in reducing the shortfall the Council had in temporary accommodation for homelessness whilst at the same time reducing or helping to contain overall expenditure on bed and breakfast. Housing Services would effectively provide homeless clients for the temporary accommodation and would manage day to day activity via a Temporary Accommodation Officer, for which an additional post had already been appointed.
- It was reported that the option of purchasing further properties for use by the Council, as temporary accommodation, was currently being explored by Property and Estates, who had agreed the specification of requirements with Housing.

With agreement from Cabinet, Councillor Buckland made a statement, in accordance with the Council's Constitution Procedure Rules Part 5, Section 1, 11.2, on this report. Cabinet thanked him for his comments on the provision of bonds by Arun District Council and the need to tackle homeless issues in both Bognor Regis and Littlehampton. It was noted that the example given in the report on temporary accommodation in Bognor Regis was for illustrative purposes and did not mean that Littlehampton had been excluded.

In discussion, Cabinet fully supported the report's proposals, particularly welcoming the purchase of temporary accommodation as a way of flexibly helping to tackle homelessness in the District. This would also help mitigate the Council's spending on bed and breakfast accommodation.

The Head of Housing advised that a further report would be taken to the Housing and Customer Services Working Group meeting on 6 July 2017 which identified the initiatives to be considered along with means to demonstrate effectiveness in terms of reducing homelessness and costs to the Council for temporary accommodation.

In turning to the report's recommendations Cabinet were in full support.

The Cabinet,

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

that Full Council be requested to approve a supplementary estimate of up to £1million (equivalent band D tax £16.82) for the purchase of a suitable property or properties for use as temporary accommodation, with the purchase delegated to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support in conjunction with the

Group Head of Corporate Support and Group Head of Residential Services, once they are satisfied that a viable business case has been made.

The Cabinet then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/004/190617, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

41. CORPORATE PLAN 2013-2018 – PERFORMANCE OUTTURN YEAR-END REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017

The Executive Assistant to Chief Executive presented the report outlining the year end performance for Corporate Plan indicators for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Members were reminded that the Corporate Plan consisted of 18 indicators split out into the three priority headings of 'Your Council Services', 'Your Future' and 'If your family need help'.

It was reported that 18 Corporate Plan Performance Indicators were measured at year end. 7 out of the 18 performance indicators had either achieved or over achieved the target set for them. This meant that 39% of the Corporate Plan 2016/17 targets had been met.

Highlighted achievements were:

- CSB001 – Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events – this performance had exceeded the target of 8 days at 5.60 days and favourably compared with other Councils in the area with Arun District Council being one of the top achievers.
- ESC020 – The Level of Customer Satisfaction with the cleanliness of the District had a target of 69% and this had been over achieved with a performance of 72%.

The Executive Assistant to Chief Executive stated that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) had been made aware of the performance indicators that were behind target and these would be dealt with in the coming year.

The Cabinet then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/005/190617, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

42. SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN (SDP) 2013-2018 – PERFORMANCE OUTTURN YEAR-END REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017

Cabinet – 19.06.17

The Executive Assistant to Chief Executive presented the report outlining the year end performance for the Service Delivery Plan indicators for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Members were informed that 61% of the performance indicators had achieved or over achieved their target and of those that didn't clear commentary had been given with an explanation of why this had happened. It was reported that Officers did not believe any further action needed to be taken in relation to the performance of SDP indicators at the end of 2016/17.

It was noted that all indicators would be reviewed during the course of 2017 ready for a new set of indicators in 2018. Any indicators, carried over to the new period, which had experienced problems in the year, would be addressed during this review.

Highlighted achievements were:

CSC101 % of telephone enquiries resolved at first point of contact in Arun Direct (excl switchboard) – Arun Direct had achieved 86% against a target of 83% which was pleasing to note.

ESC106 Sustain or improve customer satisfaction levels with Environmental Health service - There were only 13 unhappy customers out of 947 which reflected an embedded customer focussed culture.

Cabinet commended the work of the Environmental Health team and praised their speedy response to Environmental Health issues.

The Executive Assistant to Chief Executive advised that both of the performance reports would be considered at the Overview Select Committee on 25 July 2017 where particular focus would be given to Planning indicators.

The Cabinet then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/006/190617, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

43. JOINT AREA COMMITTEES

The Cabinet received and noted the Minutes of the meetings of the Joint Arun area Committees as follows:-

Joint Eastern Arun Area Committee – 7 March 2017
Joint Western Arun Area Committee – 15 March 2017

(The meeting concluded at 5.44pm)