

CABINET

17 September 2018 at 5.00 pm

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

Councillors Ambler, Mrs Madeley, Mrs Oakley, Mrs Porter, and Wheal were also in attendance at the meeting.

169. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, a representative of the public and officers to the meeting.

170. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Wensley.

171. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

172. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2018 were approved by the Cabinet as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

173. REVENUE & CAPITAL OUTTURN EXPENDITURE 2017/18

The Chairman introduced this item and invited the Financial Services Manager to highlight a number of matters contained therein.

The Financial Services Manager was pleased to advise that an unqualified audit certificate had been received by the statutory deadline of 31 July 2018, which was good news considering that the deadlines had been moved forward by a full 2 months this year as part of the Government's programme of early closure.

The following points were particularly highlighted through the Financial Services Manager's verbal presentation:-

- The savings achieved during the year, together with underspends, had enabled the transfer of £1.102m to the General Fund balance at 31 March 2018.

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- An additional contribution to Littlehampton Wave (the new Leisure Centre currently under construction and fitting out) of £2.055m had been made which had resulted in it now being fully financed.
- £1m had been added to the Business Rates Reserve to help mitigate future uncertainty and risk around the business rate reset due in 2020/21.
- Homelessness Bed & Breakfast provision continued to be a significant issue and a supplementary estimate of £230k had been approved during the year.
- The HRA balance at 31 March 2018 was £7.963m, of which £1.338m was held in the Major Repairs Reserve. This balance was expected to reduce over the first few years of the HRA Business Plan as a result of the programme of new dwellings and additional expenditure on sheltered housing.

The Chairman thanked the Financial Services Manager for a positive report and was pleased to note the recurring budget savings whilst at the same time acknowledging the risk in respect of business rates.

The Cabinet supported the recommendations in the report and then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/010/170918, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

174. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 30 JUNE 2018

The Financial Services Manager presented this report which set out the Capital, Housing Revenue and General Fund Revenue budget performance to the end of June 2018 and reiterated the continuing pressure from homelessness and Bed & Breakfast expenditure – it was anticipated that there would be a requirement for a supplementary estimate later in the year if the situation continued.

The Chairman was pleased to note that the Council was on track with its budget for the first quarter of the year and the Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/011/170918, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

175. FINANCIAL PROSPECTS 2018/19 TO 2023/24

In presenting this report, the Group Head of Corporate Support stressed that local government was facing an unprecedented level of financial uncertainty around the funding available to it, particularly due to the anticipated significant reductions in income presently generated by the New Homes Bonus and business rates regimes. It must therefore be recognised that it was not possible to make projections at the present time with any level of certainty.

The report on the table comprehensively outlined the significant risks to local government finance, not least because it was still not known what the impact would be of the changes to the New Homes Bonus and the methodology that Government would be using to reset the Business Rates baseline. The financial forecast had therefore been modelled on a number of assumptions which would have to be closely monitored and it was being recommended that £2m be transferred from the General Fund balances to the Business Rates Reserve to mitigate and smooth the effect for three years of the reduction in central government funding. However, it was stressed that this could only be seen as a temporary solution.

Reference was also made to the Fair Funding Review (FFR) which was due to be implemented for the year 2020/21 but was as yet to be confirmed. It was anticipated that there was likely to be a movement in funds from Districts to County Councils due to the pressure on Social Services.

Due to prudent financial management, it was felt that the Council had a comparatively healthy level of balances at the present time, although the Group Head of Corporate Support did refer Members to the table at paragraph 2.2.2 which detailed the indicative assumptions and deficits up to 2023/24. He reiterated that the figures must be considered in light of the huge uncertainties already highlighted and that the increase in the deficit was not surprising.

The Chairman was of the view that the report presented a realistic appraisal for the next 5 years and that the Council's financial position was stable due to prudent management and that was something to be proud of.

Following a question with regard to the pension scheme, which was answered at the meeting, the Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/012/170918, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

176. PLANNING PEER REVIEW

The Cabinet Member for Planning introduced this item and advised the Cabinet of the main recommendations that the Planning Peer Review team had put forward as a result of its findings. Those recommendation had been included in the appendix to the report which, Members were informed, had been prepared within an tight timescale and should be seen as the starting point for a range of service delivery improvements – the suggested changes and improvements would need to be worked up in more detail over the coming months and would then be presented for consideration by all relevant parties prior to any decisions being made.

The Group Head of Planning informed the meeting that one of the biggest issues that had been identified was how the Planning Team currently managed their caseloads and the extended length of time being taken to

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reach determination of an application. He explained how this was being addressed and advised that work would be undertaken to establish a set of principles that would be published on how applications would be considered to ensure that none remained undetermined for an unnecessarily long period of time. Investigations would also be undertaken on the potential for a future householder LDO (Local Development Order) where such proposals would not need to apply to the Council for certain specified works. That would, of course, have to be considered and agreed at a future date by the Development Control Committee.

The Peer Review had identified the need to have a closer relationship with developers on the implementation of schemes and that there should be improved input from other Council departments or consultees on planning proposals. Within Planning, the Strategic Team dealt with the more significant development proposals in the District; their resources had been increased and their focus had been changed, with a dedicated resource for implementation monitoring but this would need increasing, especially with the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test coming up (a report would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 12 November 2018).

The Group Head of Planning concluded by stating that a number of issues had been highlighted by the Peer Review – some would take some time to progress to a conclusion and there were others that were in the process of being progressed already or which could be done fairly quickly. All of these would be discussed with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Councillor Charles, and there would be tasks allocated and regular review meetings held over the coming months to action the findings of the Peer Review. The report on the table was therefore a first step in the work to be undertaken.

In discussing the item, a concern was raised that no decisions should be taken on any changes to process, etc. without due consultation and consideration by Members. An assurance was given by the Group Head of Planning that any future changes would go through all the relevant channels, i.e. the Development Control Committee and/or Cabinet and/or the Portfolio Holder for Planning.

Following consideration, it was agreed that the word “endorse” would be removed from the recommendation as it was felt that implied tacit agreement to the changes flagged up in the appendix to the report.

The Cabinet then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/013/170918, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

177. CORPORATE PLAN 2013-18 – YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT 01.04.17. TO 31.03.18. AND END OF 5 YEAR REVIEW 2013-2018

The Chairman introduced this item by advising that it was important that the Council understood the outcome of the performance indicators for 2013-2018 to enable it to be aspirational for its new 11 Corporate Plan Indicators for the next four years 2018-2022. She then invited the Head of Policy to take Members through the detail of the report.

The Group Head of Policy was pleased to advise that the report showed that 8 of the 18 performance indicators had either achieved or over achieved the target set, resulting in a 5% improvement in overall performance from 2017. In addition, there had also been a number of significant successes with regard to strategic activity which indicated that the general direction of the Council was good.

The Chief Executive informed the Cabinet that, following recent customer satisfaction surveys in respect of cleanliness of the District and the quality of the service that the Council provided, the dip in the results was of concern and steps were being taken to redress that.

Following a brief discussion, the Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/014/170918, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

178. SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN INDICATORS 2013-18 – YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT 01.04.17. TO 31.03.18. AND END OF 5 YEAR REVIEW 2013-2018

The Chairman, in introducing this report, reminded Cabinet that the Service Delivery Plan Indicators followed on from the Corporate Plan Indicators as detailed in the previous report and drilled down further to assess how each service was performing. The Group Head of Policy then provided more in depth detail on the figures contained in the report.

Following consideration, the Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/015/170918, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

179. VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT FUNDING

As an introduction to this report, the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing advised that the role of the voluntary and community sector was often overlooked and its value frequently under estimated. The sector was facing increasingly difficult times and good quality advice was much need to support

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this vital part of the community. He invited the Group Head of Community Wellbeing to provide Members with further detail.

The Group Head of Community Wellbeing commenced his presentation by providing the background to the recommendations contained in the report. In essence, the present funding model provided a fragmented service which delivered on local priorities but which lacked collaboration and a single direction of travel and voice for the sector. To overcome this, consultation had been undertaken with the voluntary and community sector; meetings had been held with delivery organisations and agreement had been reached that the sector would benefit from more structured representation.

Following this, local delivery organisations formed an alliance [to be known as the Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure (VCSI) Alliance] to provide a shared vision for the sector, together with a three year plan which would provide a model for collaborative working and improved efficiencies. As a result, the funding proposal Members were being requested to consider was that West Sussex County Council would fund the Alliance to deliver a core function and the District and Borough Councils would fund a local service to address local priorities.

The Chairman welcomed the report and stated that it was important to continue funding this sector and the Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/016/170918, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

180. JOINT AREA COMMITTEES

The Cabinet received and noted the minutes of the meetings of the Joint Area Committees as follows:-

Joint Western Arun Area Committee – 13 June 2018

Joint Eastern Arun Area Committee – 19 June 2018

181. EXEMPT BUSINESS

The Cabinet

RESOLVE

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

182. PROPOSED SHARED SERVICE ARRANGEMENT WITH ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS FOR PRINTING [Exempt – Paragraph 3 – Information Relating to Business Affairs]

The Group Head of Policy presented this report which was seeking authority to enter into negotiations with Adur & Worthing Councils for this Council to provide them with printing services.

The Cabinet welcomed this initiative, supported the recommendations and confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/017/170918, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

(The meeting concluded at 6.15 pm)