

OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

7 June 2016 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: - Councillors Elkins (Chairman), English (Vice-Chairman), Ballard, Mrs Bence, Blampied, Mrs Harrison-Horn, Hitchins, Mrs Oakley, Mrs Rapnik, Warren and Dr Walsh.

Councillors Bence, Bower, Mrs Brown, Chapman, Dendle, Dingemans and Wotherspoon were also present for either all or part of the meeting.

[Note:- Councillor Dr Walsh was absent from the meeting during consideration of the matters referred to in Minute 38 (Part)].

27. WELCOME

The Chairman, welcomed Members, officers, and representatives from the press to the meeting.

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs Daniells, Edwards, Hughes and Oliver-Redgate and from the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance, Councillor Wensley.

29. 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 on the new local code of conduct.

Overview Select Committee
07.06.16

- 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.

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

Although there were no Declarations of Interest made, Councillor Elkins confirmed that he might need to declare a Prejudicial/Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 9 (Council Tax Support Task and Finish Working Party – 24 May 2016) in relation to reducing discounts on unfurnished properties if this was debated.

30. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 15 March 2016 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

31. START TIMES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That its start times for meetings during 2016/2017 be 6.00 pm.

32. THE COUNCIL’S 2020 VISION – WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE

The Chairman in welcoming the Chief Executive to the meeting outlined to Members that an updated A3 coloured copy of Appendix A to the report, outlining the current status of Phases 1 and 2 and Arun Improvement Programme (AIP) projects, had been circulated to the meeting.

The Chief Executive then presented his report and covered the background to the 2020 Vision programme which had been established following the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Review Challenge conducted in March 2014. This addressed how the Council needed to change and it provided the strategic direction to help it become a more effective and sustainable one and to enable it to meet future demands.

The need for the Council to change had been presented to Members at past meetings of the Council as the forecast in its Mid-Term Financial Strategy 2015-2021 showed that its balances would fall below the recommended level by 2020 if no further improvement to the Council’s revenue/budget deficit was made through the 2020 Vision work.

Via a series of workshops held from early 2015, Members had been engaged in discussion in various forms about the future of the Council leading up to 2020 and had agreed the route to becoming a better Council. The Council’s agreed priorities linked to the four changes outlined below:

- Offer an improved customer experience
- Build better relationships with other organisations and the community
- Provide more digital opportunities to make dealing with us easier
- Become smaller but more effective

The Chief Executive outlined that these changes addressed the changing demographics of the District and to achieve these the Council needed to be more digital; increase its income; reduce its costs; make service improvements; reduce the demand on its services; and determine what services it should or should not be involved with.

The second phase of the Vision work proposed a major restructure of the organisation to reduce management costs. It was anticipated that this would have the least effect on the public but would achieve the required savings year on year. Further reports to Cabinet and Full Council would identify longer-term savings.

The Chief Executive referred Members to the circulated Appendix A as this identified, out of the basket of projects listed, which ones were progressing well and which ones required more time to develop. The varying timescales for projects were due to a lack of capacity available within the organisation to progress all of the projects at the same time.

Six of the Phase 1 projects were ‘shared services’ and looked at what the Council could do differently and in a better way with a partner authority. The history behind this was that the Council already shared many of its services with Chichester District Council and due to the success of this, discussions were moving forward with Chichester and Horsham District Councils in terms of how further joint working could be progressed. A Working Board and a Steering Group had been set up with a consultant having been appointed from the LGA to look at possible options. Some funding from the LGA had been provided for this work. The final report from

Overview Select Committee
07.06.16

the consultant had not yet been completed but would be reported through to Cabinet in the near future.

Finally, the Chief Executive explained that the few changes agreed by Full Council on 13 January 2016 required an acceptance of information technology assisting the Council to move forward. Although Phase 1 of the Vision programme would save a substantial sum of money year on year, the overall savings fell considerably short of the up to £4m target. To meet this figure a digital transformation of services was required to meet the changing culture and expectations of the public whilst at the same time driving down costs.

Members had agreed an initial £120k to be made available to help develop the first phase of the 2020 Vision projects and the detail of what had been spent to date had been provided within the report. This confirmed that £37k had been spent but that further investment in digital technology would be required to create further savings. The Click, Call and Come In initiative had improved performance but more work was required to improve ‘Click’ and the digital side of what the Council did on a daily basis as already emphasised.

The Chairman then invited the Committee to ask questions. The questions asked and comments made are set out below:

- An opportunity was being missed as the most obvious way to make substantial savings and to provide a simpler way of doing things was to create one or two Unitary Authorities for West Sussex by deleting the tier making up District and Borough Councils. The Chief Executive confirmed that a combined authority approach to Devolution was an ongoing project but that such proposals were to combine authorities and not to create Unitary Authorities.
- There was very little reflection on what the changes proposed would mean for the public. Although it was accepted that improvements needed to be made in enhancing the customer experience and the Council would be more cost effective, no evaluation in terms of how this would be perceived or understood by the public had been provided – how would residents see that their services would be improved. The Chief Executive explained that the most recent performance figures would be submitted to the next meeting of Cabinet on 27 June 2016. These illustrated the high performance the Council was delivering. Having the resources in the right area would provide

an overall better service. Each project had an element of improvement for the Council’s customers.

- Concern was expressed that restructuring services did not always mean progress – would the changes proposed elongate the Council’s decision making process? The Chief Executive outlined that a reduced management tier would simplify the process. Work was also progressing in looking at the levels of delegations given to Officers and where there were opportunities to conduct business in a quicker and more efficient way. A complete review of the Council’s Constitution and Financial Regulations would be undertaken to streamline processes as part of the Vision programme.
- When was the Wavelength Panel abolished and in looking at the importance of customer service, several references had been made about Councillors having to appreciate that a ‘smaller and more effective’ Council would result in Councillors having to accept that the Council would have to do continue running with less staff resource - what services to Councillors would be reduced and how would this affect the service that Councillors provided to their Constituents? The Chief Executive outlined that it would be necessary for the Council to reduce the money it spent on such processes. An alternative way of conducting consultation on satisfaction of Council services had taken place at minimal cost to the Council. The last Wavelength Panel was in February 2015 and this process had saved £6k. The outcome of the work of the Cabinet Working Parties and the results of the Vision projects would confirm how the Council should operate to become more efficient and effective. Any changes to decision making would be included in this work.
- Who formed the Corporate Peer Challenge Review? This process and the make-up of the challenge team was explained by the Chief Executive.
- Why was the Council not tackling really big projects and issues such as Housing – which could be outsourced to a company? The Chief Executive explained that there were clear projects that did address these issues in the programme circulated (Appendix A). With the housing and planning function, contact had been made with all West Sussex District and Borough Councils to see if a shared service approach could be investigated further. However, no interest had been received. Complex issues surrounding legislation and computer systems and software made partnerships difficult to pursue.

The ongoing work of the Cabinet Working Party looking at proposals to establish a Local Housing Company was explained.

- What would the £20k requested in the third recommendation be spent on? The Chief Executive stated that this would be used to employ an external consultant to work with him to undertake the work at restructuring the overall management structure covering the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Senior Management Team (SMT).
- Concerns were expressed about getting the balance right in terms of the number of managers compared with officers – what would the new structure look like and how would this work? How could Members be expected to support Recommendation 3 without a draft structure in place to analyse? The Chief Executive explained that more information would be available for Full Council on 20 July 2016 as he was conducting an informal consultation exercise with staff at this time.
- The Vision Programme project table showed the savings total expected to be achieved from completing the projects listed but this showed a large shortfall in meeting the £4m required savings. Did this mean that the Council would have far less staff in the future? It was confirmed that the Council was looking at reductions in staffing that would equate to around £400k in savings. Staff terms and conditions would also be changed and would assist in filling the shortfall gap.
- Concerns were expressed about the proposed changes in working practices for planning. The Chief Executive explained the work of the Cabinet Working Party looking at reviewing delegation and the Cabinet/Committee Structure.
- The timescale surrounding the completion date of the London Road Student Accommodation project was queried. It was confirmed that the project was aiming to be completed by April 2019.
- The importance of ensuring the joint funding of public conveniences was highlighted and the need for the Council to continue working with Town and Parish Councils to provide this vital service. The Chief Executive confirmed that a report would be going to Cabinet on 25 July 2016 to move this project forward.
- The progress of a Shared Service for Finance was queried – why was this suspended? The Chief Executive explained that no other authorities had shown interest in sharing this service due to the differing software packages used. However, plans were in place to still look at the finance department going

forward through another stage later on in the year, along with a number of other services not currently covered by the 2020 Vision programme. Furthermore, other parts of this service being Payroll and Audit formed separate shared services projects which were progressing.

- Would redundancies meet the current Council policy of covering its costs within 3 years and in the case of CMT 1.5 years? The Chief Executive confirmed that this would be the case in line with Council policy.
- Looking at longer term savings, what would be looked at to ensure that the up to £4m saving target would be met? The Chief Executive outlined that further reports to Cabinet and Full Council would identify these and how the Council would move closer to financial sustainability.

The Committee then turned to the recommendations in the report and in looking at Recommendation 1, Councillor Mrs Oakley proposed the following amendment to read [deletions have been shown using ~~striketrough~~ and additions have been shown using **bold**] “Cabinet agrees the 2020 Vision for the Council, as outlined in Paragraph 2.5 of this report, and ~~accepts the~~ **understands the serious** implications arising, as outlined in the report, which **will require detailed consideration by Members and Officers.**”

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Dr Walsh.

Discussion on this amendment saw questions being asked about the interaction that had taken place with Members throughout this process. Members were reminded of the series of workshops that had been held since February 2015 which had given them the opportunity to be engaged in all of the discussions that had taken place. A further Vision workshop was planned for 16 June 2016.

On the amendment being put to the vote it was declared CARRIED.

Returning to the substantive recommendations, Councillor English proposed an amendment to Recommendation 3 to read as follows [deletions have been shown using ~~striketrough~~ and additions have been shown using **bold**] “Cabinet ~~support~~ **considers** the general revised structure principles, outlined in Paragraph 3.1 of this report”. This amendment was seconded by Councillor Dr Walsh.

Overview Select Committee
07.06.16

Speaking to this amendment Members queried how a revised structure could be supported at this stage without them being able to see the full detail of it. The Chief Executive explained that the outcome of this review had not yet been concluded. A special meeting of Cabinet on 11 July 2016 would consider the way forward. With the report being considered by the Committee this evening, it was accepted that there were some gaps which would be filled in time for this meeting and then Full Council on 20 July 2016. By that time the Consultant’s report on the outcome of the shared services reviews would be complete and the formal consultation with CMT and SMT on the intended management restructure would have been undertaken.

On the amendment to Recommendation 3 being put to the vote it was declared CARRIED.

Having thanked the Chief Executive for his presentation and detailed responses, the Committee

RECOMMEND TO CABINET – That

- (1) Cabinet agrees the 2020 vision for the Council, as outlined in Paragraph 2.5 of this report and understands the serious implications arising, as outlined in this report, which will require detailed consideration by Members and Officers;
- (2) Cabinet notes the progress of the Phase 1 and 2 projects identified in Appendix A of this report;
- (3) Cabinet consider the general revised structure principles, outlined in Paragraph 3.1 of this report;
- (4) A supplementary estimate of up to £20k is supported to assist with the Council’s management restructure [equivalent to a Band D council tax of £0.35] ; and
- (5) Cabinet notes the remaining estimated financial shortfall anticipated following Phases 1 and 2 of the 2020 Vision programme. A further report on Phase 3 priorities will be presented to Full Council in due course.

(During the course of the discussion on this item, Councillor Dr Walsh declared a Personal Interest as a Member of West Sussex County Council and Littlehampton Town Council.)

33. THE EUROPEAN SINGLE PROCUREMENT DOCUMENT

The Committee received and noted a report from the Procurement Officer which updated the Committee on the introduction, in January 2016, of the European Single Procurement Document and how this affected the Council in terms of how this would work in practice.

The Committee was advised that the document had been introduced as an obligation on contracting Authorities to accept the document from bidders as part of a competitive tender selection process. The aim of this was to reduce the administrative burdens on bidders and authorities by simplifying the manner in which information and evidence was produced at selection stage.

To date local authorities had not received any formal guidance from the Government and so it was not possible to inform Members as to how this introduction would work as there were still some key questions that needed to be answered in terms of how the use of the document would fit together with the Pre-Qualification Questionnaires.

34. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS AND UPDATES

The Chairman asked the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Councillor Wotherspoon, a question about street drinking in the Sunken Gardens in Bognor Regis and what plans the Council had in place to combat the problem.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Councillor Wotherspoon, provided a detailed response. He outlined that the problems associated with street drinking in Bognor Regis Town Centre and the Sunken Gardens in particular were an ongoing issue which had no easy or quick solution.

Whilst reported problems of alcohol related antisocial behaviour (ASB) has reduced over the last 12 months, it was acknowledged that the visibility of street drinking and public concern remained. Through the Safer Arun Partnership (SAP) and assisted by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, a Street Community Outreach Key Worker had been employed to work with individuals who had some of the most entrenched behaviours. This work had significantly reduced the negative public impacts of a number of key individuals. In addition, directed patrol activity had taken place by the Police in the Sunken Gardens and surrounding areas and under the current Designated Public Place Order (DPPO) confiscated alcohol where ASB was or was likely to occur.

Overview Select Committee
07.06.16

Members were reminded that Cabinet, at its meeting held on 31 May 2016, had agreed to consult on introducing a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which would transfer the powers contained in the DPPO to a PSPO, along with powers to disperse individuals causing or likely to cause ASB. It was made clear that the Council had not adopted a PSPO only agreed to consult (commencing 20 June) on the proposals.

A meeting had already been planned for this week involving the Council's Community Safety Team and Sussex Police to identify what future actions could be taken to minimise the impacts of alcohol consumption in the Sunken Gardens.

A representative from a local Community Group active in the Sunken Gardens was advocating the designation of a town centre space to enable street drinkers to consume alcohol. Whilst there were examples of this approach being undertaken in other parts of the Country, it required the involvement of the Police and support services to be successful. Currently this approach was not being supported due to the resource implications.

The response of some Members of the Committee was that they were appalled to hear that someone should recommend drinking in Bognor Regis as this was an area where such activity could be harmful to tourism. Councillor Wotherspoon was asked if such a strong consultation process on the PSPO was needed and at a time when the Council was intent on making savings? Councillor Wotherspoon responded by confirming that it was necessary to formally consult on the Order. The Chief Executive confirmed this but outlined that in terms of cost, the Council was anticipating spending only a minimal amount of money on this consultation exercise.

The Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure, Councillor Bower, updated the Committee on two matters. Firstly, the Planning Department was pursuing the objective of bringing on board planning apprenticeships which would be introduced over the next couple of weeks. Some interest in terms of applications had already been received. It was confirmed that funding for this was being provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government in conjunction with Chichester University. Secondly, Councillor Bower reported back following his attendance at an A27 Arundel By-Pass Stakeholder meeting which he had attended a few weeks ago. It was disappointing to report that no options had been presented, instead those in attendance had been asked to contribute information on alternative routes used by residents. Consultation was timetabled for April 2018.

35. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT TASK AND FINISH WORKING PARTY –
24 MAY 2016

The Chairman of the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Working Party, Councillor Hitchins, asked the Benefits Manager to explain to the Committee the recommendations that had been put forward following the meeting of the Working Party held on 24 May 2016. The Minutes from this meeting had been circulated to Members separately to the agenda.

The Committee

RECOMMEND TO CABINET – That

(1) elements of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Year 5 – April 2017 be aligned with the Council’s Housing Benefit scheme as this would make the scheme easier to administer and understand by both staff and claimants;

(2) subject to the above being approved, it be noted that aligning the scheme in this way would gradually remove the family premium and that the backdating provision be reduced to one month;

(3) Option 11 – introducing a minimum payment – Method B – that all working age recipients of Council Tax reductions pay an extra £3.70 (or the Department of Works and Pension deduction –whatever is greater) be approved with this being introduced for April 2017; and

(4) no further changes are made to reducing discounts on substantially unfurnished properties.

The Committee also

RESOLVED

That Councillor Mrs Bence would fill Councillor Dingeman’s place on the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Working Party for future meetings.

Overview Select Committee
07.06.16

36. FEEDBACK FROM WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S JOINT SCRUTINY GROUP HOUSING PROVISION FOR CARE LEAVERS REVIEW – 4 AND 18 APRIL 2016

The Chairman welcomed the former Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Dingemans, to the meeting. Before inviting Councillor Dingemans to provide his feedback report, following his attendance at the County Council's Joint Scrutiny Group meetings held on 4 and 18 April 2016, the Chairman stated that he wished to have placed on record his and the Committee's thanks to Councillor Dingemans for the work undertaken by him as Chairman of the Committee during 2015/2016.

Members were then reminded that the review aimed to consider the current housing provision for care leavers in West Sussex to help improve the co-working between District and Borough Councils and the County Council.

The Task and Finish Group (TFG) aimed to complete this review by May 2016 but issuing the final report for the Committee to consider had been delayed to allow participating authorities time to reconsider a Protocol called the Pathway Plan which addressed the care requirements of care leavers in the last 3 years of their time in care.

Councillor Dingemans outlined that the Joint Scrutiny Group had invited three young people to attend the meetings to hear from them their experiences both good and bad having worked through this process. It had been felt that the Protocol was not being applied properly across the County and so further work needed to be undertaken to strengthen this and to address care needs for care leavers beyond the age of 18. It was anticipated that the final report on this review would be available by the end of June 2016 so that it could be brought to the Committee's meeting on 26 July 2016.

The Committee then noted the contents of the updated provided.

(During the course of the discussion on this item, Councillor Dr Walsh declared a Personal Interest in his capacity as a Member of West Sussex County Council).

37. FEEDBACK FROM THE MEETING OF WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMMITTEE (HASC) HELD ON 27 APRIL 2016

The Committee received and noted a feedback report from Councillor Blampied following his attendance a meeting of the West Sussex County Council's Health and Adult Social Care Committee held on 27 April 2016.

38. WORK PROGRAMME 2016/2017

The Committee Manager reminded Members that the Council’s Constitution required the Committee to make a report annually on its future work programme to identify the major topics it would consider throughout the year.

At its last meeting held on 15 March 2016, the Committee had been asked to consider its work programme for the 2016/2017 year and to identify any issues to develop or review working to the key themes of the Committee’s responsibilities so that these could be included for consideration at this meeting.

A draft Work Programme for 2016/2017 had been attached to the agenda for the Committee to approve so that this could be recommended onto Full Council on 20 July 2016 for final approval. The work programme had been developed based on some of the suggestions put forward by Members at its last meeting, however, Members were asked to be mindful of the following:

- it had been structured to be able to accommodate required updates on the Council’s Vision as this progressed and any other issues needing to be accommodated as when they might arise;
- it had been developed recognising that in the future, following longer term savings, a smaller Council would mean that there would be less staff resource to undertake projects or reviews;
- any ideas coming forward would need to bring value to the Council
- work was progressing on items looking ahead to as far as 2017/2018 in which large reviews on items such as the Cleansing Contract Tender and Contract Performance would be undertaken (January 2018)
- how the Committee could “hold to account” Cabinet Members

Finally, the Committee Manager outlined that it was necessary to defer feeding back the results of the Council Tax Review Consultation from 27 September to the 22 November 2016 meeting. This was because in view of the recommendations agreed earlier to the 2017 scheme, a longer consultation period would be required.

Overview Select Committee
07.06.16

In discussing the work programme, Councillor Blampied asked if the Committee could review progress on the construction of the new swimming pool at Littlehampton. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Environment & Leisure Working Group would be receiving very regular updates on progress and that for its meeting in July it would be receiving a gant chart plotting out various development stages of this project. He recommended that from this, the Committee might wish to consider when it might want to look at reviewing any stages as the project developed.

The Committee

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That the Committee’s Work Programme for 2016/2017 be approved.

(The meeting concluded at 8.14 pm.)