

OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

22 November 2016 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: - Councillors Elkins (Chairman), Mrs Bence, Blampied, Hitchins, Hughes, Mrs Oakley, Oliver-Redgate, Mrs Rapnik, Warren, Dr Walsh and Wheal.

Councillors Dendle, Bence, Chapman, Wensley and Mrs Ayres were also present for all or part of the meeting.

[Note:- Councillor Dr Walsh was absent from the meeting during consideration of the matters referred to in Minute 331 to Minute 335].

325. WELCOME

The Chairman, welcomed Members, officers, and representatives from the press to the meeting. The Chairman also welcomed Councillor Wheal to his first meeting of the Committee.

326. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ballard, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown and Cabinet Member for Community Services, Councillor Wotherspoon.

327. 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.
- 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.

Overview Select Committee  
22.11.16

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.

Councillors Mrs Oakley and Mrs Rapnik declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5, Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, as recipients of a single person's discount.

Councillor Dr Walsh declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 as a Member of West Sussex County Council and Vice-Chairman of the Health and Adult Services Select Committee.

328. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 26 July 2016 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

329. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

The Benefits Manager presented the report that outlined the proposed amendments to the Council's Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR) from April 2017, as part of the Council's overall Vision programme.

It was noted that the Council had undertaken a full public consultation between 27 July 2016 and 16 October 2016 on the available options:

- Option 1 - Require all working age applicants to pay at least £3.70 per week
- Option 2 - Remove the Family Premium for all new working age applicants
- Option 3 - Reduce backdating to one month
- Option 4 - Reduce the period a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to 4 weeks.
- Option 5 - Remove the element of a Work Related Activity Component in the calculation for new Employment Support Allowance (ESA) applicants
- Option 7 - Remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium where another person is paid Universal Credit (Carer's Element) to look after them; and
- Defer the inclusion of Option 6 [Limiting the number of dependent children within the calculation to a maximum of two] for consideration in the 2018.

The Benefits Manager stated that although there was disappointment with the low rate of response to the consultation with only 158 replies, 61% of those were in favour of changing the scheme.

The Benefits Manager then explained that deferral was requested for Option 6 until 2018. This change was still proposed for Housing Benefit but the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) had not finalised the details including any exceptions. As these details were not known and as a sharp increase in payments would be experienced for larger families it was recommended that the changes should be deferred until 2018.

In debating the report, Members were in favour of deferring Option 6 for the reasons that had been outlined.

Concern was expressed that the changes would affect the poorest in the District and cause significant hardship. Debate centred on the impact of the proposed changes on residents and the need to produce annual savings in the region of 1 million. Arun District Council would benefit from approximately £110k savings with the majority of this saving being realised by West Sussex County Council.

Following questions, the Benefits Manager confirmed that there is a hardship fund available for those in need. It was noted that Arun District Council had not had the need to use this fund during the last two years. It was noted that Arun District Council had not had the need to use this fund during the last two years.

The Committee then discussed the additional administrative burden that the scheme would place on the Council. It was proposed and seconded that a further recommendation be added as follows; ‘request that Cabinet seek to obtain agreement from West Sussex County Council to cover the additional cost of the Scheme’s administration.’

In turning to the report’s recommendations, the Chairman proposed that each Option was voted upon.

The Committee then,

#### RECOMMEND TO CABINET – That

- (1) Consider recommending onto Full Council that the following Options be included in the Local Council Tax Support Scheme from April 2017:
  - Option 1 - Require all working age applicants to pay at least £3.70 per week

Overview Select Committee  
22.11.16

- Option 2 - Remove the Family Premium for all new working age applicants
  - Option 3 - Reduce backdating to one month
  - Option 4 - Reduce the period a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to 4 weeks.
  - Option 5 - Remove the element of a Work Related Activity Component in the calculation for new Employment Support Allowance (ESA) applicants
  - Option 7 - Remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium where another person is paid Universal Credit (Carer’s Element) to look after them; and
- (2) Defer the inclusion of Option 6 [Limiting the number of dependent children within the calculation to a maximum of two] for consideration in the 2018 scheme; and
- (3) Cabinet seek to obtain agreement from West Sussex County Council to cover the additional cost of the Scheme’s administration.

Councillor Dr Walsh asked that it be recorded that he voted against Options 1, 2 and 6.

330. VOLUNTARY ACTION ARUN & CHICHESTER

The Leisure and Voluntary Sector Manager introduced Hilary Spencer, the Chief Executive of Voluntary Action Arun & Chichester (VAAC) to the Committee.

In his introduction, an omission from the report was outlined. It was explained that the full level of support that the Council provides to VAAC had not been indicated. It was noted that the Council let office space to VAAC in Bognor Regis Town Hall; this had been let at the open market rate of between £8 and £10 per square foot and reflected the charge made to other hirers in the Town Hall. VAAC paid £6,250 per annum for this office space. It was also noted that VAAC held a licence to occupy the learning and community centre at Bersted Green Court. This facility was refurbished with funding from the Learning and Skills Council and was let to VAAC at no rental cost. VAAC had a licence to occupy this building until 2027. Members were informed that VAAC paid all of the ancillary costs for the building and covers these costs by hiring the hall and office space.

The report requested the Committee to consider the future level of funding that the Council contributes to VAAC and make a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Chief Executive of VAAC then provided the Committee with a presentation which included the findings of a recent survey that VAAC had carried out to investigate the state of the voluntary and Community Sector in Arun and Chichester and reflected on the impact of the 20% cut that West Sussex County Council had made to VAAC’s funding.

It was noted that VAAC had prioritised support for organisations through restructuring the staff team in April 2016 and strengthened the free 1-1 support sessions available by referral to the development team, VAAC had:

- expanded the Introduction to Volunteering sessions
- supported the Volunteer Coordinators network
- introduced training for organisations to ‘self-serve’ on the Do-it!
- commissioned a promotional video to be used on the VAAC website
- developed ‘volunteering health check tool’
- encouraged organisations to promote shared / generic volunteering
- Held Trustee recruitment events

The Chief Executive of VAAC highlighted that one of the biggest concerns for voluntary organisations was funding. VAAC provided help and support by:

- Offering funding searches, reviewing bids, developing fundraising strategies
- Fundraising Network sessions monthly (10/year)
- Funding Focus e-bulletin produced monthly
- 12 October 2016 funding fair in partnership with the University of Chichester (80 attendees, 68 serving Arun)
- Delivered consultancy – bid writing

The ‘Volunteer Now’ leaflet and ‘Six Months in the Life Of’ leaflet were tabled at the meeting. These contained information on VAAC’s work in Arun from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and 1 April 2016 to 30 September 2016. The leaflets also outlined VAAC’s fundraising achievements.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive of VAAC for her informative and detailed presentation.

Overview Select Committee

22.11.16

Members of the Committee then debated the report's recommendations at length. A number of questions were asked and responded to at the meeting. The Chairman referred to the latest VAAC Annual Report which contained further background and financial information and asked if, moving forward, VAAC could become less reliant on public funding and, instead, generate their own income. It was noted that VAAC had a balance of £186,000 at the end of March 2016. The Chief Executive of VAAC stated that VAAC had a strong self-fundraising policy but the organisation had only ever managed to raise 20% of their own funds. It was explained that smaller organisations would struggle to pay VAAC a fee. It was recognised that VAAC did not deliver direct to the public but VAAC's membership had steadily grown.

The Chief Executive of VAAC then left the meeting so that the Committee could continue their deliberations. The matter was fully discussed and debated with consideration given to the benefits of VAAC to the Voluntary and Community Sector in Arun. There was feeling that VAAC could operate in a more focused way, targeting deprived areas and achieving set objectives. Members were keen to avoid duplication with charity work and it was felt that non-commercial organisations could sometimes work less effectively with little co-ordination.

There were differing opinions with some Members stating that they felt VAAC was good value for money. It was agreed that any organisation in receipt of funds from Arun District Council had to be accountable and Members were having difficulty seeing what quantifiable return was being delivered. Councillor Dr Walsh pointed out that during six months of 2016, 152 volunteers had been recruited and VAAC had helped voluntary organisations raise £1.4 million in funds. Comment was made that the voluntary organisations were themselves responsible for this return and it was difficult to determine if this money could have been raised despite the support of VAAC.

Following this debate, the Chairman referred the Committee to the report's recommendations to Cabinet. A recommendation was proposed by Councillor Dr Walsh and seconded by Councillor Mrs Oakley as follows;

*‘the Committee recommends to Cabinet that the Council reduces the funding to VAAC by 10% in 2017/18 and a further 5% in the second year 2018/19.’*

This recommendation was put to the vote and was lost.

It was then proposed by Councillor Wheal and seconded by Councillor Blampied that the following recommendation be agreed;

*‘the Committee recommends to Cabinet that the Council reduces VAAC funding by 20% in line with West Sussex County Council.’*

This recommendation was put to the vote and was carried.

The Committee then,

#### RECOMMEND TO CABINET

that the Council reduces the funding to VAAC by 20% in line with West Sussex County Council.

Councillor Dr Walsh requested that his vote against this recommendation be recorded.

*(During the course of the discussion Councillor Warren declared a Personal Interest as a recipient of VAAC Training and Councillor Hitchins declared a Personal Interest as a Rotarian of the Rotary Club in Bognor Regis.)*

#### 331. THE COUNCIL'S 2020 VISION - UPDATE

The Committee received a report from the Chief Executive that outlined progress with the Council's 2020 Vision in respect of Shared Services. Members were informed that a Project Manager had been engaged for all three authorities involved (Horsham District Council, Chichester District Council and Arun District Council).

It was noted that the shared services programme had been looking at the opportunities and business cases for sharing services with neighbouring authorities. These business cases related to the sharing of:

- ICT
- Internal Audit
- HR/Payroll
- Legal
- Revenues and Benefits
- Customer Services

Members were informed that work was progressing well to achieve final Business Plans. It was anticipated that the final Business Cases would

Overview Select Committee  
22.11.16

be presented to Cabinet early February 2017 with consideration at this Committee in January 2017. The Chief Executive advised that the report itself

might not be available for the Overview Select Committee meeting on 24 January 2017 but a verbal update would be given if the report was not completed. A meeting would also be taking place with the three Council Leaders and appointed representative Councillors on 19 December 2016.

The Chief Executive explained that a number of issues needed to be explored for each Business Case including:

- whether the financial benefits outweigh the risks
- whether the shared service would be financially liable
- location of each shared service and remote working
- use of self service

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for his report and Members asked questions that were responded to at the meeting. In discussing the report, the Chairman asked if the Chief Executive would meet the £4 million savings target. In response, it was noted that about £1 million had been saved to date but the Chief Executive stated that the Council had to remain steadfast and continue to work hard to achieve the total required savings. If this work continued the Chief Executive expected to achieve the £4 million target.

The Chief Executive agreed that there was a risk that staff would voluntarily leave the Council during this process and he was keen that time scales were kept short to alleviate staff concerns. It was noted that all staff had been kept informed of how the shared services programme was progressing and how this might affect them. It was explained that there were also opportunities for staff progression and Unison was also being regularly updated.

The Committee felt that they were not presented with enough detail to identify any risks to services that shared services might bring and, therefore, looked forward to receiving a more detailed report on Shared Services in January 2017. The Committee then noted the report.

### 332. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS AND UPDATES

Councillor Chapman, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services provided updates on:

- Pagham Beach – the Council had gone out to tender to recycle shingle to the front of the Yacht Club.



- Members of the Arun District Council emergency response team were praised for their help with the major incident (building on fire) in Bognor Regis on 20 November 2016. Staff from Arun District Council helped evacuate affected residents to Arun Leisure Centre. It was noted that the Council’s emergency planning had worked well.
- Councillor Chapman had hosted a Volunteer Group Conference which supported youths that assisted in Arun’s Parks and Greenspaces.
- Military Covenant – in valuing HM Armed Forces, the Council’s Leisure facilities offered members of HM Armed Forces leisure benefits that included free swimming and discounted memberships.
- Cllr Chapman reported that he had been invited to join the Sussex Legal Steering Group. In 2012 Arun Overview Select Committee (OSC) had undertaken a joint scrutiny exercise with West Sussex County Council to assess the impact of the curtailment of Community Legal Services. The outcome had contained a recommendation that more "pro bono" legal support was needed to help vulnerable members of the community. This new group had been formed in order to provide this service. As OSC had participated in the original Joint Scrutiny he hoped that members would find this report to be of interest.

333. FEEDBACK FROM WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL’S HEALTH AND ADULT SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE (HASC) HELD ON 2 AND 29 SEPTEMBER AND 10 NOVEMBER

The Committee received and noted the feedback reports that had been supplied by Councillor Blampied following his attendance at West Sussex County Council’s Health and Adult Services Select Committee (HASC) on 2 September 2016, 29 September 2016 and 10 November 2016.

The Chairman provided further update that the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had confirmed that all patients (approx. 7200) from the now closed Arun Medical Group (AMG) had been registered with one of the other local GP practices in the Arun Locality.

334. FEEDBACK FROM THE MEETING OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER

The Committee received and noted feedback from the meeting of the Sussex Police and Crime Panel held on 23 September 2016.

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Committee Meeting’

300

Overview Select Committee  
22.11.16

335. WORK PROGRAMME 2016/2017

The Head of Democratic Services reported that the Committee would receive a further report on Shared Services at the meeting on 24 January 2017. Members were reminded that at the March 2017 meeting of the Committee the work programme for 2017/18 would be reviewed.

(The meeting concluded at 8.17pm)