

SPECIAL OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

3 December 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: - Councillors Dingemans (Chairman), English (Vice-Chairman), Blampied, Hughes, Mrs Oakley, Mrs Rapnik, Miss Rhodes, Dr Walsh and Wheal.

Councillors Clayden and Wensley were also in attendance for part of the meeting.

[Note: The following Councillors were absent from the meeting during the following items of business – Councillor English - Minute 279 to Minute 283 (Part); and Councillor Dr Walsh – Minute 288 to Minute 289].

279. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting.

280. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs Bence, Edwards, Elkins and Oliver-Redgate.

Apologies for absence had also been received from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown, and from Councillor Bence as the Cabinet Member for Residential Services.

281. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dr Walsh declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 6 [Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Working Age)] in his capacity as a Member of West Sussex County Council and a Member of Littlehampton Town Council.

282. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 November 2018, which had been circulated separately to the agenda, were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

283. LEISURE OPERATING CONTRACT – YEAR TWO REPORT

The Group Head of Community Wellbeing in introducing representatives from Freedom Leisure to the meeting outlined that Freedom Leisure’s second year managing the Leisure Services Contract had been both successful and constructive. The representatives in attendance were invited to present their Annual Performance report:

Carrie Reynolds – South Lead for Active Communities
Andrew Smith – Area Manager
Ivan Horsfall-Turner – Managing Director

The Area Manager and the South Lead for Active Communities reported on:

- The background to the Contract in that it had commenced on 1 April 2016, for a 10 year period covering the Arun Leisure Centre, Littlehampton Swimming and Sports Centre, the Windmill Entertainment Centre and the Bested Park Community Centre
- How the Contract delivered a Community Development Programme and how it met the Council’s key wellbeing objectives
- The headline successes achieved over the second year
- New programmes and activities including free swimming for over 75’s; swim only memberships; free swimming for serving military personnel; free use for looked after children; and how work had progressed with the Arun Wellbeing and Think Family team to deliver fitness and nutritional courses. Updates were also provided on the junior summer fitness challenge; an increased range of activity classes; the Les Mills Fitness Classes; ASA Swimming Lesson Programmes; Active Sussex Workplace Challenge; and School Sports Premium Programmes; and the increased number of cardiac rehabilitation classes at Bersted Park.
- Updates were provided on investments on new gym equipment at the Arun Leisure Centre; improved café and reception and fitness changing areas at the Arun Leisure Centre; as well as general building improvements planned for the Windmill entertainment centre.
- An update on the new Littlehampton Wave which was due to open in Spring 2019 was also provided and how the additional space at the new Centre would allow for additional swimming and other activities for members.

- Finally, Members were informed about a range of other schemes that would benefit residents of the District.
- Looking ahead, Members were reassured that Freedom Leisure would continue to improve the financial performance of all the facilities that they managed; would develop new initiatives and programmes to increase participation from all segments of the community; would increase community presence and would continue to work with local partners to provide targeted outreach programmes.

Members then asked a range of questions on the presentation that they had just received. These have been summarised below:

- Why had solar panels not been placed onto the new Littlehampton Wave? It was explained that the low carbon combined heat and power unit was a more efficient way of providing the required energy. In receiving this response, a Member of the Committee queried this as it was his belief that West Sussex County Council was investing heavily in solar panels for all of its projects, due to their effectiveness and so why did Freedom Leisure not feel that solar panels were financially successful?
- Praise was given for keeping the Windmill Theatre going, though a comment was made that this facility did not seem to be a top priority for Freedom Leisure, yet it was an extremely important facility for Littlehampton and the east of Arun. It had proven to be hugely successful as a cinema and as a venue for local theatre groups but now needed investment to keep the premises going and to bring it up to date. Freedom Leisure was asked what investment plans were in place for the Windmill. It was explained that in terms of a repairs and a maintenance programme, £20k had been earmarked in Freedom Leisure’s 2019-20 budget to replace the sky lights and various roof repairs. Freedom Leisure acknowledged that this was an ageing building and did require work to keep it up to an acceptable standard and funding has been set aside for replacement carpets. The Group Head of Community Wellbeing added to this confirming that he would raise the points made with the Council’s Property & Estates team.
- The enhancements made to the Arun Leisure Centre were applauded in terms of the gym improvements; changing areas; and the new cafe. However, it was acknowledged that the wet side changing rooms needed to be refurbished urgently.

The Group Head of Community Wellbeing confirmed that applications for Section 106 funding were being sought from developments in the area.

- The Committee was full of praise in terms of how the Contract had been managed over the past year. Many improvements could be seen.
- One Member stated that she was no longer a member of Freedom Leisure because the classes that she had been interesting in attending were not held at times that fitted in and around her busy work schedule. She asked if there were plans with the new Littlehampton Wave facility to offer classes at varying times. It was confirmed that a completely new, high specification fitness programme would be launched which would be run to suit the needs of the customer.
- Members were pleased to hear of Freedom Leisure’s involvement with the District’s ageing population, but was asked if dance classes could be offered as an activity. The schemes and activities in place and those being developed were explained.
- The Freedom Leisure Development Plan 2018-2019, supplied with the report, was applauded and seen as an excellent document promoting healthy activity in the District.
- Concerns were expressed about transport links to the new Littlehampton Wave Centre. Freedom Leisure explained that they were working with community transport organisations investigating the provision of routes at certain times. Cycle routes had been improved to the Centre and negotiations with Stagecoach were in place. It was outlined that there were drop off and pick up points located outside of the Centre to encourage bus operators to provide routes to it.

Having thanked representatives and Officers for attending the meeting and for the useful updates provided,

The Committee then

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) it be noted the Dual Use Officer Group had met on three scheduled occasions during the review period and that work priorities had been agreed in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

284. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME (WORKING AGE)

The Group Head of Residential Services introduced this report and stated that at the meeting of Cabinet held on 15 October 2018, the preparations for reviewing the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2019 had been explained.

The Overview Select Committee at its meeting held on 18 September 2018 had recommended that Option 2, to change the scheme to an income banded scheme, should be agreed as this would be simpler to administer and easier for customers to understand. It was pointed out that this Option also offered more support to lower-income families and gave more stability to people whose wages fluctuated each month. This Option also moved away from the complex means test that currently existed with the current scheme.

Cabinet had resolved that a full public consultation exercise on adopting Option 2 be undertaken immediately with the results being reported to this meeting for discussion and to allow the Committee to make final recommendations on a proposed scheme back to Cabinet on 10 December 2018.

It was outlined that although the level of response received was disappointingly low, the number of results allowed for a degree of confidence that the Council had representative views from residents of the District. The proposed bandings and changes had been outlined within the report and it was confirmed that the majority of responses received agreed that Option 2 should be confirmed as the Council’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019.

In discussing the report, Officers were asked various questions on what the financial impacts would be for certain applicants; the number of households that would be affected; how many households would receive more or less support than they currently received. It was confirmed that 3,818 households would receive more support than they received in 2018/19; that 511 households would no longer receive any support; and that a further 474 households would receive less support than in 2018/19 with the losses ranging from £0.51 to £37.30 per week.

As some Members were concerned at the level of loss for some households, if Option 2 was supported, it was explained that to mitigate any adverse effects of implementing Option 2 there would be the Discretionary

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Council Tax Reduction Hardship Fund [£100k] that could be used to support CTRS recipients who saw a reduction in their award. The Committee was keen to ensure that those affected be made aware of this fund and how they could apply for it.

In stating that Option 2 was the preferred way forward, the Committee outlined that it wished to have the opportunity to review the impacts for CTRS recipients around six months after the implementation of this Option, which was April 2019.

Following some further discussion, the Committee

RECOMMEND TO CABINET

That it recommends to Full Council that Option 2 [to change the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to an income-banded scheme] be agreed as this Council’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/2020.

The Committee also

RESOLVED

To ensure that it would have the opportunity to review the impacts of this revised scheme six months after its implementation in April 2019.

(During the course of the discussion on this item, Councillor Dr Walsh re-declared a Personal Interest in Item 6 [Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Working Age)] as a Member of West Sussex County Council and a Member of Littlehampton Town Council.)

285. INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) SERVICE STRATEGY – 2019-2023

The Committee received a report from the ICT & Service Improvement Manager presenting the Council's Information & Communications Technology (ICT) Service Strategy 2019-2023. It was outlined that this Strategy provided direction for how the Council would design and deliver computer services to support the operational and strategic goals of the Council now and in the future.

The Committee was being asked to approve and adopt the Strategy and to allow the Group Head of Corporate Support to have delegated authority to make any required consequential changes to it as a result of new legislation or alternative practices.

Having asked questions about Councillor Mobile Access; the provision and roll-out of laptops to staff; the provision of IT via I-Pads to Members post May 2019; insurance; and GCSx emails; the Committee

RECOMMEND TO CABINET – That

(1) the Information Communications Technology (ICT) Service Strategy 2019-2023 is adopted; and

(2) the Group Head of Corporate Support be given delegated authority to make any necessary consequential changes to the Information & Communications Technology (ICT) Service Strategy as a result of new legislation or alternative practices.

286. FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS OF HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER AND 15 NOVEMBER 2018

Councillor Blampied, as this Council's nominated Outside Body representative for this meeting apologised for the fact that he had not been able to submit a written feedback report to the Committee.

He then provided verbal feedback from the meetings that had taken place on 27 September and 15 November 2018.

Councillor Dr Walsh, as Vice-Chairman of HASC [as a West Sussex County Council Member] provided further information to the Committee. He

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outlined that WSCC's proposals to financially reduce housing support would have a heavy impact on the nineteen different homeless charities operating around West Sussex, the strategic budget options for these proposals had been deferred to the meeting of HASC taking place on 12 December 2018 where they would be discussed in great detail. The West Sussex Cabinet Member responsible for this portfolio area had already announced that the implementation date, if agreed, would be deferred for a further six months. The nineteen affected charities had formed a coalition and had pulled together a very powerful manifesto explaining what the consequences would be if the housing support reductions were agreed. It was outlined that the effects would massively impact the NHS, District and Borough Councils as well as Probation and other services.

The Committee then noted the contents of the verbal feedbacks provided.

287. FEEDBACK FROM MEETING OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2018

The Committee received and noted the feedback report provided by Councillor Clayden, as the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, following his attendance a meeting of the Sussex Police and Crime Panel held on 6 October 2018.

288. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS AND UPDATES

The Cabinet Members for Corporate Support [Councillor Wensley] and Community Wellbeing [Councillor Clayden] confirmed that they had nothing further to add to the detailed presentations that had been made earlier in the meeting covering their portfolio areas.

289. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE – 2018/2019

The Group Head of Policy reminded Members of the items scheduled for its next meeting taking place on 29 January 2019 which the Committee noted.

(The meeting concluded at 7.30 p.m.)