OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

6 October 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Northeast (Chairman), English (Vice-Chair), Bennett, Bicknell, B Blanchard-Cooper, Mrs Catterson, Mrs Cooper, Dendle, Dixon, Elkins, Gunner, Huntley, Miss Needs and Tilbrook

Councillors Bower, Charles, Clayden, Coster, Edwards, Mrs Gregory, Oppler, Mrs Pendleton, Mrs Staniforth, Stanley, Dr Walsh, Mrs Warr and Mrs Yeates were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Apologies: Councillors Miss Seex

240. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

241. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview Select Meeting held on 1 September 2020, were approved by the Committee.

242. RESIDENTS SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS 2020

The Group Head of Policy provided Members with a brief overview of the survey results and referred Members to page 15 in the agenda for the detail of her report. She explained that the survey was carried out annually in the spring of each year and completed by BMG. She advised Members that BMG believed Covid did not negatively the survey and could have had a positive impact due to the number of people at home during this period.

The Committee had a full debate on this item a summary of discussions has been provided below;

- Members felt that simply posting the survey was an outdated approach and that the ability to have the survey completed online would potentially reach a wider audience. It was felt that this option should be researched and considered in time for the next survey in 2021. It was also commented that it was important to continue with the survey via post when considering the online approach as this would potentially stop a proportion of residents who do not have access to online facilities from taking part.
- There was concern raised regarding the integrity of the data when comparing the data to last year's results where it was evident that the weighting had been changed significantly in some cases

It was then proposed by Councillor English that a Working Group be set up to take forward the suggestions that had been raised by the Committee; this was then seconded by Councillor Dendle.

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that the Local Government Association (LGA) look at two questions in particular, the general satisfaction question and the question around the cleanliness of the area, so whilst he appreciated what Members were saying, nationally these are the two areas focused on and the Council had done very well on those two particular questions.

The Chairman then returned to the proposal that had been put forward by Councillors English and Dendle. It was clarified if the proposal was for a Working Group (held in public) or a Working Party (held in private), it was agreed that a Working Party was what the Committee wanted to be resolved and on being put to the vote,

The Committee RESOLVED that;

> A Working Party be established to take forward the suggestions that had been raised by the Committee and that the Membership of this Working Party would be, Councillors, Mrs Cooper, Dendle and Tilbrook

243. COVID 19 UPDATE FROM CEO

The Chief Executive advised Members that the figures in West Sussex had risen, the Arun District figure was 24.3 cases for every 100,000, but Arun's figures are still low in comparison to other areas. He further advised that currently the Track and Trace service had 96 hours to contact an individual to advise on their need to self-isolate, however the contact time would be being reduced to 48 hours and then reduced to 24 hours, he highlighted that it would create a significant amount of pressure on those undertaking this role and local Council's would need to ensure that they keep their eye on this. He then spoke to the changes to the self-isolation support payment of £500 from the Government. He concluded that large events were continuing to be discouraged and that the District had a number of events coming up e.g. Remembrance Sunday and Bonfire night where there would need to be serious thought given the current level of restrictions.

A summary of the debate had by Members is detailed below;

- A question raised to the Chief Executive was did he know if County Councils were having to pay to have access to the Track & Trace service? He confirmed that he was aware that private companies had to pay for access to the service but did not know if this also impacted County Councils, he advised he would find out and inform members
- It was confirmed that the Council was still waiting to have a response from central government in relation to support needed for the leisure industry.
- A concern regarding the enforcement of restrictions was raised, it was confirmed that extra monies had been received for extra officers for

Environmental Health which would help with this. Working in partnership with the Police would be required and ongoing discussions locally and nationally will see plans in place by 12 October 2020.

The Chief Executive then provided the Committee with an update from the Covid-19 Working Party meetings, that centred around 5 themes that had been agreed by the Working Party to take forward to Cabinet at the November 2020 meeting.

- A request for more information regarding the food strategy was made, it was confirmed that the proposal for this was put forward by Councillor Ms Thurston and seconded by Councillor Tilbrook. As more information was expected from central government on this topic, it was also confirmed that more detail would be given once this had been received.
- Overall comments were made that this Working Party was making a difference and it was agreed that there was much more work to do.

The Committee noted the update.

244. PROPOSED CORRECTION OF OSC MINUTES FROM 10 MARCH 2020

The Group Head of Policy introduced this report to the Committee and provided a brief outline of what was required from the Committee at this meeting in terms of Councillor Huntleys request. She drew Members attention to section 2 of the report that detailed the original minute against the new proposed wording for the minute. Members were also advised that there had been numerous opportunities for Councillor Huntley to have raised his concern with these minutes prior to their publication and approval by the Committee.

Councillor Huntley was then invited by the chairman to speak on this matter. At this point he requested further amendments be made to the previously agreed new wording at section 2.3 in the report. He advised the Committee that as a horticulturalist the original wording was “dangerously inaccurate”.

The Committee had a full debate on the request from Councillor Huntley, there was a large proportion of the Committee who were not in agreement with the request who stated that they felt as the minutes had already been approved by this Committee, they had already been agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting that took place on 10 March 2020. It was also felt that this change should have been raised at Full Council (*date) as this process had not been followed, no change should be made.

The Committee RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL;

The minutes from the Overview Select Committee Meeting of 10 March 2020 be approved with no change.

245. FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS OF THE HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2020

Councillor Bennett advised the Committee that due to a last-minute change he was unable to attend the meeting held on 9 June 2020, he did however provide the Committee with some highlights from the minutes of that meeting that included;

- A good discussion was had regarding the Sussex Strategy Plan and West Sussex joint placed based response to the NHS long term plan from the CCG
- The new operating model for the new mental health response was explained
- A possible merger between Western Sussex and Brighton Hospital will be on the agenda soon.

246. FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 25 JUNE 2020

Councillor Mrs Yeates provided the Committee with an overview of the meeting held on 25 June 2020. She highlighted her visit to the Chichester Custody Centre and in particular the safety of Officers and quality of care for detainees.

A concern was raised regarding the amount of money that had been spent on the temporary refurbishment costs for the Chichester Custody Centre when it was only going to be used as a temporary unit. Cllr Mrs Yeates advised that she thought the figures would all be reported in the next review; however, she would ask the question at the next meeting of the Panel.

247. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS AND UPDATES

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Residential Services and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood services who provided an update to Members in advance of this meeting. He then proceeded to invite verbal updates on Portfolios from other Cabinet Members in attendance at the meeting.

Cabinet Member for Commercial Business and Development advised that nothing had changed since his last update regarding the recruitment of a Commercial Manager. He reiterated that he does need Officer support in order to get this moving and he felt that we just have to get on with it and that Officers were heavily distracted in dealing with the Councils response to the Pandemic he also said that he understood it was difficult for them at this time.

Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing advised that it was the middle of Annual General Meeting (AGM) season and that unfortunately she missed the West Sussex Hospital Trust meeting as it had clashed with a Development Control Meeting at Arun. She did provide an update on the Voluntary Action Trust advising that a number of issues relating to the Pandemic had seen a rise in demand for mental health advice,

debt advice, domestic violence and support for carers. She explained that there was a shortage in volunteers for this area and that fundraising from events and trading had generally plummeted. However, she reiterated that there is still help there for those who need it.

The Chairman then invited questions from the Committee to Cabinet Members starting with the question submitted in writing by Councillor Bower ahead of the meeting.

The first question was to the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing this was "given the fact that Planning Policy Sub was held on 22 September 2020 and *did not* include an item to agree the Council's response to the Government Consultation on *Changes to the Current Planning System* (report circulated the day after the Press release issued) and the next Planning Policy Sub Committee is not until December, how was it proposed to ensure compliance with the Constitution Part 3, Section 5, 3.5 iv, *to approve consultation responses* before the Governments closing date on the *Planning for the Future* consultation on 29 October 2020?
I also note an email to members from the Group Head of Planning suggesting this item would be on the Agenda of the Cabinet meeting for 19 October 2020, however, the Constitution clearly states at Part 3, Section 2, 2.1, the Cabinet will exercise those functions which are **not** the responsibility of … b: Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels of the Council.
Would Members agree that a single-issue Planning Policy Sub - Committee be held?
How do these Councillors propose compliance with the Constitution on this matter?

The Cabinet Member for Planning responded by stating that he thought to help members to understand both the question and his response it would be helpful to provide an explanation. Firstly, there are two consultations, issued at the same time. The first *Changes to the Current Planning System* had a closing date of the 1 October 2020 for responses. The second *Planning for the future – White Paper* has a closing date of the 29 October 2020.

For the first consultation paper there was considered insufficient time to prepare a report to the Planning Policy Sub Committee when you take into consideration when the report would have needed to be finalised. This issue was compounded by the work that was required on preparing a response to the other consultation- the Planning White Paper.

In consultation with Officers it was decided that the response to this first consultation paper could be submitted by myself as portfolio holder under a loose interpretation of the specific responsibilities of the post which includes - Liaison with all outside bodies, agencies and organisations responsible for matters relating to land use, planning, highways and public footpaths and - To represent the Council's views where relevant to outside bodies and at other relevant meetings.

This approach was set out in the Forward Plan as early as August 2020. A copy of the proposed response was circulated to all the Group Leaders inviting any comments in late September 2020.

My intention will be to report the response to the next available meeting of the PPSC. I understand when you were portfolio holder you took a similar approach.

In respect of the second consultation paper the Cabinet has a broad range of functions including - to clarify the Council's position on issues of importance through appropriate internal and external communications. It would seem sensible for the Cabinet to put forward its view on these major changes to the planning system including the preparation of local plan since Cabinet as the Executive also has responsibility for the consideration and implementation of matters relating to the major plans, strategies and policies of the Council.

I would welcome comments from Councillor Bower during the consideration of this matter at Cabinet and we would be pleased to hear from him.

Councillor Bower was then invited by the Chairman to ask a supplementary question. He stated that, we have totally different Councillors from when I was the Planning Portfolio Holder, I did when and where possible try to include consultation through the Planning Policy Sub-Committee. I would like to draw the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing's attention to the constitution and I advise I shall be seeking advice from the Monitoring Officer on this matter moving forward.

The Cabinet Member for Planning responded that this item had been on the Forward Plan since August, this question has taken two months to come to fruition. The Group Leaders were all written to on 18 September 2020 with the proposed response to the changes consultation and requested to submit a response by 1 October 2020. We did not receive a response from the Leader of the Opposition. If the white paper was to be taken to the Planning Policy Sub-Committee, a report would need to be prepared by 4 September 2020 and this was just not practical. It is also worth noting that Councillor Bower will not have seen the draft response yet, so it is probably worth waiting for that.

The Chairman then invited the Leader of the Opposition to ask his question to the Leader of the Council. He advised that last week he attended a meeting about the public realm work in Littlehampton from the train station through the High Street and down Beach road. At this meeting we learnt that this project is now in jeopardy and asked if the Leader of the Council would like to provide an update on this?

The Leader of the Council. Cllr Dr Walsh advised that the project was grant funded from two external sources totalling £3.4million pounds, a request for tender went out and when it came back only one had been received. The Regeneration Committee received a presentation last week and contrary to the assertion that has been made, the scheme is not in doubt, it will go ahead. Because the monies did not match the sum of the original tender, it was decided to put out a slightly reduced scheme, detailing that work from Littlehampton train station to the south end of Arundel Road will not be completed at this first stage. It is hoped that on the reduced retendering we will receive more competitive tenders to enable the reinstatement of this work. Something similar happened in Bognor Regis under the last administration, due to funds not being available in the first instance, so the work was split into different stages, but it was completed. Littlehampton public realm work will start in March 2021, but it will now e completed in different stages at this point.

Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Gunner then asked his supplementary question which was, what we heard in the update last week was that this work would not start until after March 2021 and this could mean that we could lose all funding? And

is it time we relooked at the strategic targets of the Council as currently 8 are not being met – Do you agree with me?

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr Walsh responded that it took the last administration 10 years plus to agree the Local Plan and we are now looking to revise this plan. He also reminded Members that for the last 6 months the Council had been focusing on its response to the current Pandemic – we are not living in a business as usual situation. We will continue to work towards meeting the agreed strategic targets. He then drew Members attention back to the results of the residents' survey that had been discussed earlier in the meeting advising that based on these results the public are increasingly satisfied with the way things are going.

As there were no further questions from the Committee the Chairman then invited questions from non-Committee Members with the approval of the Committee. Councillor Mrs Pendleton asked a question to the Cabinet Member for Residential Services which was, as you are aware there has been a lot of concern raised about the living conditions at Flaxmean house in Felpham, the showering facilities are less than satisfactory. Flaxmean House is outdated and not fit for purpose. I would like to propose to you that we put into place an emergency plan to rectify the awful conditions for the residents living there. I propose the following as a plan of action;

- Engage with residents individually
- Assist those who will move to ensure the move is without stress and at no cost to themselves – do not subsequently backfill these spaces
- Put in place a timeline for residents to have been moved by and have a priority list
- For those residents who remain install internal shower cubicles and have these individually assigned to the remaining residents

Surely at a cost of £3,000 maximum per shower unit, this could be done? During the ensuing period of encouraging remaining residents to accept alternative accommodation, draw up plans to demolish the site and rebuild, I call upon you to support this proposal and actively deliver it within a year.

The Cabinet Member for Residential Services thanked Cllr Mrs Pendleton for her statement and proposal and replied that she agreed with the remarks she had made in terms of Flaxmean not being fit for purpose. In March 2020, when the Pandemic was announced we made a decision to install external showers, not ideal but we had no indication of how long the Pandemic would last, clearly with winter approaching the external showers are no longer viable, we have written to the affected residents providing them with options of additional cleaning of the external showers remaining. An estimated cost was also obtained to install showers in vacant flats. This was not a particularly good or cost-effective solution as tenants would still have to leave their flat in order to shower**,** plus there would be a significant lead in time. She stated that she had suggested to the Director of Services and the Group Head of Residential Services that the offer of alternative self-contained sheltered accommodation with either bathing or showering facilities should be considered. There are funds set aside to refurbish/update all of the Councils sheltered housing accommodation to meet modern day standards, but any progress had been hampered by the Pandemic, however she had encouraged feasibility studies of all the sheltered accommodation. In summary she stated that the proposal was quite an ask especially with the timeframe of a year. Whilst she does have experience of similar projects it would be a false promise that this could

be completed in a year, however she admired Cllr Mrs Pendleton's expectations. She advised that she would, take her ideas to the relevant Officers for consideration.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Cooper to ask his question to the leader of the Council which was, regarding the Littlehampton Regeneration briefing, I am looking for the Leaders cast iron guarantee that we will not be seeing time slippages and his assurance that this scheme will go ahead.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr Walsh advised that as he had explained in his earlier answers the scheme was going to go ahead, there is a slight delay, due to the funds available to us from the grant's fun. If the tender had come in at over £3.4 million we would be going ahead with the full plan, but we haven't go that, hopefully a further tender will be more competitive and we will be able to start in March 2020, with great benefit to the Town and District.

Councillor Cooper was then invited to ask a supplementary question which was, I would like a guarantee that as the new tender process goes forward that the quality will not slip and that Littlehampton gets the very best it deserves and we ensure that, that happens?

Councillor Dr Walsh responded giving his guarantee that there would be no sacrifice, the small section from the train station has had to be removed for the new tender, hopefully that will be reinstated at a later date. I am determined that it has the highest quality finish and appearance, we want to enhance the shopping experience, the food & drink facilities and all the other attractions that Littlehampton has to offer.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Roberts to ask his question to the Leader of the Council which was in reference to the strategic targets: would he be prepared to review these across the whole Chamber and concerning the Littlehampton Public Realm work, will he guarantee the work will start before March 2021 and will be fully funded?

The Leader of the Council responded: as Leader I am very happy to receive suggestions from anyone, any group at any time. Secondly the funding is limited, it was not that we have run out of funds. As I have previously explained the retendering process had to be followed to ensure that the scheme fits the Capital that is available. It is expected that work will start in March 2021, we are in talks with the Group Head of Economy and the funding bodies to ensure that if there is any further slippage, most of which has been directly related to the Pandemic, that these are resolved by March 2021.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Roberts to ask his supplementary question which was, is there an opportunity to have an extension on the timeframe for this funding and if not, its very dangerous to say that it is absolutely going to happen.

The Leader of the Council responded that it is expected and hoped that once the retendering process has completed, we will be able to start the work in March 2021.

The Chairman then suggested that the Council don't do the paving that is planned, we have perfectly good paving down currently, he felt that the new paving wouldn't be as robust and then the rest of the scheme could be completed. He explained that he had spoken to traders and the disruption the traders would suffer when the paving would be completed was not something, they were overly happy about.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Dr Walsh advised that it was a matter for the Sub-Committee to make and not for him on his own. The problem with this, was the whole scheme would need to be completely redesigned as the paving was an integral part of the current plan to improve the overall shopping experience. Equally the funding bodies would not be keen on an integrated scheme. I think therefore it would be unlikely the Sub-Committee would accept this suggestion.

The Chairman then invited Councillor English to ask his question the Cabinet Member for Residential Services which was, as there are a number Freedom of Information requests (FOI's) being sent in by the residents at Flaxmean House as they are very unhappy with the current suggested proposals, it was raised to me that on each floor there was a spare room that could be turned into shower rooms, why had this not been considered? And, what and how much consultation had been done by the Council with these residents?

The Leader of the Council answered on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Residential Services who had left the meeting. He advised he would relay the question over to Cllr Mrs Gregory for her to respond to.

Cllr Jacky Pendleton was then asked by the Chairman if she wanted to add anything at this point, she stated that she wanted to get some pressure behind this issue, to get it resolved for the residents. She felt that the residents could and should be involved whether it was a rebuild or a refurb. The environment at the moment was unacceptable in its current state, the residents want to stay within their community but not in the current environment.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Dr Walsh then stated that it was important to understand that the issues raised with Flaxmean had not just turned up since the Lib Dem administration, it had been getting steadily worse over a number of years. The time has come to do something about it, and he would ensure that a full consultation with the residents was completed.

The Chairman then invited Leader of the Opposition, Cllr Gunner to ask his next question to the Leader of the Council which was, Cllr Dr Walsh do you feel you have made any false promises to the residents of Arun? Cllr Dr Walsh responded by saying, no, we are living in difficult times and would ensure that any and all of the promises he had made would be seen through to fruition.

Cllr Gunner was then invited to ask a supplementary question which was, you have been in office for nearly 18 months, you've blamed the Government and the Pandemic, when are you going to start looking forwards and not backwards?

Cllr Dr Walsh stated that we are looking forward, we are developing the Littlehampton Public Realm, we are rolling out super-fast fibre broadband across Littlehampton, we are contributing to the Lyminster Bypass, the Sunken Gardens , the Place St Maur, all of these proposals will be coming forwards shortly.

The Chairman invited the Chief Executive to speak as he had indicated he wanted to do so. He then advised the Committee that he was unaware of FOI's that had not been responded to and he believed this was not the case. He also reminded Members that there was no need for them to put in FOI requests, as Members have the ability to ask for information and be given the information.

As there were no further questions to be asked, the Chairman thanked all for their questions and updates.

248. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

The Group Head of Policy advised that there had been a Call-in received, although it was not up for discussion tonight, it was expected that this meeting would potentially take place in early November 2020. She then advised members that funding had now been made available to commission an external organisation to complete the Equalities and Diversity work that had been referred to at the previous meeting.

The Chairman then drew Members attention back to the question that had come in at the last Full Council meeting from a member of the public which was, “Does the Chairman agree with me that there should be a full scrutiny of the way in which the Council has handled the application & regeneration proposals of the Sir Richard Hotham Project as an early and important item on this Committees Work Programme”, he explained that as there had now been a motion agreed at the last full council meeting and did the Committee was to accept this proposal to review at a later date or if indeed at all?

Members were in agreement that it was not the right time to complete a review on this and therefore should be deferred to a later meeting of the Committee should it still be needed. The Committee then agreed to add it to their work programme but to delay looking at this until March 2021.

The Committee noted the Work Programme for 2020/21.

(The meeting concluded at 8.52 pm)