

CABINET

22 June 2020 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors Dr Walsh (Chairman), Oppler (Vice-Chairman), Coster, Mrs Gregory, Lury, Stanley, Mrs Staniforth and Mrs Yeates.

Councillors Bennett, Bicknell, Bower, Charles, Mrs Cooper, Cooper, Edwards, Gunner, Mrs Pendleton and Roberts were also in attendance at the meeting.

53. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, Officers and members of the public to what was the third virtual meeting of Cabinet. He provided a brief summary of how the meeting would be conducted and the protocol that would be followed and how any break in the proceedings due to technical difficulties would be managed.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman, Councillor Dr Walsh, declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 8 [The Council's Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic Situation] as a Member of West Sussex County Council.

55. QUESTION TIME

The Chairman confirmed that no questions had been submitted for this meeting.

56. URGENT BUSINESS - FURTHER OFFICER DECISION TAKEN DURING THE CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY

The Chairman confirmed that in accordance with the provisions of the Officer Scheme of Delegation in the Council's Constitution, one urgent Officer Decision had been taken by the Interim Monitoring Officer in relation to the Council's Virtual Meeting Procedure Rules. This decision had been uploaded to the Council's webpages earlier that day and had been taken on 19 June 2020.

The Chairman explained that in consultation with the Chief Executive, who in turn had consulted with the Group Leaders on 18 June 2020; and in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Constitution Working Party, and the Portfolio Holder being notified, in order to conduct remote hearings of the Licensing Sub-Committee in accordance with relevant legislation, an addition to the Virtual Meeting Procedure Rules had been required at Paragraph 14 in respect of the Licensing Sub-Committee and the ability of this Sub-Committee to hold hearings in accordance with relevant legislation to ensure a fair hearing.

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Part 5, Section 5 – The Virtual Meeting Procedure Rules had been updated to allow the access of the public and press to attend and participate in Licensing Sub-Committee meetings. The change to the Constitution had been urgently required to allow a Licensing Sub-Committee to proceed on 26 June 2020.

The Cabinet noted and supported the actions taken by the Interim Monitoring Officer.

57. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2020 were agreed by the Cabinet and would be signed by the Chairman as soon as practically possible.

58. BUDGET VARIATION REPORTS

The Chairman confirmed that there were no items to bring to this meeting,

59. UPDATE ON WEBCASTING OF MEETINGS - PROCUREMENT OPTIONS

The Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Councillor Stanley, introduced this item outlining that following the reports that had been made to Cabinet on 8 July and 9 December 2019, this report fed back to Cabinet the findings from the corporate officer group that had been established to examine the future webcasting needs of the Council and associated costs. This report had been slightly adjusted to reflect the Council's current financial position as a result of Covid 19 meaning that it would now be necessary to consider a range of options and possibly at different time stages and so a further report would be presented to Cabinet setting out the costs and long-term financial implications of these options for webcasting.

In view of the timescales involved for this work, Cabinet was being asked to instruct Officers to extend the existing contract with Auditel for the webcasting of all public meetings for the next twelve months, the cost of which would be met from existing budgets as the existing contract with Auditel would imminently be expiring.

It was also intended, subject to any future decisions regarding the options for webcasting, that when meetings returned to the Civic Centre with the public being allowed to physically attend, then webcasting would revert back to web-streaming live Full Council and Development Control Committee meetings only.

Councillor Stanley emphasised the fact that the officer group had undertaken a lot of work which had included a soft market testing exercise to understand the technical requirements of upgrading and extending the current webcasting arrangements including the Committee Suite and the key information relating to this had been set out in Section 2.1 of the report. It was also highlighted that the Committee Services team, ICT and the Senior Estates Surveyor have worked collaboratively with Auditel's Senior Management Team in escalating and resolving the issues previously reported to this meeting, the result of which has been a much-improved client relationship.

The Director of Place endorsed the points made by Councillor Stanley and invited questions from Cabinet Members.

Comments from the Cabinet outlined the importance of this report as one of the Council's long-term objectives was to improve the transparency and accountability of its meetings. Previously, the equipment installed in the Council Chamber had seen only the Development Control Committee rely on the equipment for webcasting meetings. Cabinet endorsed its view that webcasting needed to be widened out and needed to be continued to be used and to reflect the increasing numbers of those who watched the web streams either live or on demand.

It was also acknowledged that the current pandemic had forced the Council to change its focus on how meetings were now run and as this had worked successfully it was important for the Council to consider options for webcasting moving forward. In view of this, Councillor Stanley confirmed that he wished to make an amendment to Recommendation (3) to read as follows – additions have been shown using **bold** and deletions have been shown using ~~striketrough~~:

~~If within the next 6 months the public are allowed to attend meetings in the Civic Centre then the webcasting will revert to the Full Council and Development Control Committee meetings only.~~ **In the event of physical meetings becoming possible in the next six months which the public are allowed to attend in the Civic Centre, Officers investigate the ongoing use of Zoom and/or the utilisation of the Council Chamber for both Cabinet and the Overview Select Committee to be webcast alongside Full Council and the Development Control Committee.**

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Oppler.

The Chairman then invited debate on the amendment asking Officers firstly if they could provide any comment on the amendment made.

As there were no questions from Cabinet Members, the Chairman invited non-Cabinet Members to ask questions.

Questions were asked with regard to the key elements of the draft specification for a fully comprehensive system as had been set out in the report at Section 2.1 in relation to the number of microphones that would be provided and if these would be wireless.

Positive comments were received in relation to the amendment as it was felt that all Council meetings should be webcast. Councillors were also interested to learn what the viewing figures had been for meetings. Councillor Stanley confirmed that for Cabinet on 29 April 2020 there had been 354; for Annual Council there had been 379; and for the Littlehampton Regeneration Sub-Committee 65. This confirmed that there was a considerable difference between the larger Committees compared with smaller

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Sub-Committees and this was why the amendment to Recommendation 3 had been proposed.

Moving forward Councillors agreed that as it was difficult to anticipate when physical meetings could once again resume, the possibility of being able to look into using a hybrid approach for meetings could resolve a number of issues and most likely save on costs. It would therefore be interesting to see what other alternatives could be available.

Following some further discussion, the amendment to Recommendation 3 was put to the vote and this was declared carried.

The Cabinet therefore

RESOLVED – That

- (1) In view of the timescales involved for this project, to instruct Officers to extend the existing contract with Auditel, for the webcasting of all public meetings for the next twelve months the cost of which is to be met from existing budgets;
- (2) To note that a further report will be provided to Cabinet setting out the anticipated costs and long-term financial implications of a range of options for webcasting; and
- (3) In the event of physical meetings becoming possible in the next six months which the public are allowed to attend in the Civic Centre, Officers investigate the ongoing use of Zoom and/or the utilisation of the Council Chamber for both Cabinet and the Overview Select Committee to be webcast alongside Full Council and the Development Control Committee.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/002/220620, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

60. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC SITUATION

The Chairman introduced this report confirming that it provided another update in terms of how the Council had been dealing with the Coronavirus over recent weeks. All Members had been receiving a weekly update from the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council and the bulk of those briefings had also been sent to the Council's partners. The first part of the report provided a formal record of what had been done to date.

The Chairman then outlined that it was now very important for the Council to consider not only the economic impact on the Council, local businesses and the community, but also that these social impacts be fully considered. The report also discussed both aspects from a short, medium and long-term point of view.

Finally, the report proposed the establishment of a Working Party to discuss, in private, how the Council could help the Council and the community to recover from this terrible pandemic. The Chairman confirmed that he welcomed and fully supported this approach, and that he believed that the three other political parties were also supportive of this approach.

The Chief Executive then presented his report confirming that he wished to thank the Economic and Communications Teams for their recent phases of work in preparing for getting the District's High Streets ready for coming out of Lockdown last Monday, 15 June 2020. They had had to work with very little Government guidance and very little time to deliver the programme that balanced a warm welcome with confidence for the public to return to shops safely. They had worked closely with Town and Parish Councils to make practical arrangements for retail areas across the entire District and were now currently working with the Town and Parish Councils on further improvements.

The Chief Executive outlined that the report discussed possible changes in society addressing the terrible downsides; deaths, isolation, mental health issues, domestic violence, business failures and unemployment issues. There had also been positive outcomes being an uplift in community spirit, caring for others, improved health, lower pollution and family time - all of which had encouraged stronger support for supporting being "local" and more sustainable in the future.

This was an important time for the Council to provide Leadership, economic stimulus and to facilitate recovery, using the positives that had come out of the pandemic. As a Council, Members and Officers together, had just as much chance as any expert or consultant to come up with possible answers for the recovery programme, and the report proposed the establishment of a Working Party to help take this forward and to provide proposals for Cabinet to consider in the future months. The report suggested short, medium and long-term issues to consider and work on.

The Council's finances were of great concern as it headed towards a possible deficit of £2.9m for this financial year. The Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) had been meeting regularly to discuss possible financial solutions which would be discussed further with Cabinet over the coming weeks. The Council would also have to consider its priorities and probably make difficult and swift decisions to help the recovery phase move forward quickly.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for his presentation and invited questions from Cabinet Members.

Firstly, the Chairman confirmed that the details of a new financial package from Government were awaited and would hopefully be received by the end of this week it was also hoped that further guidance might be received soon to establish when and how Leisure Centres could reopen alongside further revisions to social distancing rules, all of which would have significant impacts on the reopening of certain Council facilities

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as well as retail and leisure businesses such as pubs/restaurants which were all key parts of the local economy.

The Chairman stated that he was pleased to be able to announce that West Sussex County Council (WSCC) had confirmed that it would not levy its proposed tax on establishments wishing to place tables and chairs outside of their premises. This would allow cafes and restaurants, when they did reopen, to be able to spread out and enable a safe reopening experience.

Cabinet confirmed that it was delighted with the help that the Council had given to shops and businesses in the District since they had re-opened on 15 June 2020. It was also pleasing to report that shops had also positively fed back the assistance being provided by the public in maintaining social distancing and how they had conformed to queuing and other stipulated measures. This allowed a very clear message to be passed on in that the District was a safe area to visit and shop in.

The Cabinet then allowed non-Cabinet Members to ask questions and submit statements. These saw comments being made about the terms of reference proposed for the Covid-19 Recovery Working Party in that these should not be restrictive in any way whilst also acknowledging that it was just as important for Councillors to be able to look at what could have been handled better during the Pandemic looking at lessons learnt as this would assist the Council in the event of any second spike of the virus.

Non-Cabinet Members also sought Cabinet's assurance that the support already provided to hospitality businesses would continue as it was vital to get the local economy up and running again.

Discussion focused upon the business support grant and reaching out to those businesses who were entitled to receive the grant but had either refused or had not made an application. The need to continue processing appeal applications was also seen as vital.

Looking at the impact Covid19 had had on the social and well-being of some of Arun's residents, an update was requested on the showering facilities at Flaxmean House. The Cabinet Member for Residential Services, Councillor Mrs Gregory, confirmed that a written response had been provided on this issue.

Other comments on the report related to the public conveniences on the promenade at Bogor Regis; the need to think about providing free wi-fi in Town Centres to assist social distancing; to ensure that a campaign was in place to market the popular areas of the District as safe areas for tourists during a time of fantastic weather; and would the new Working Party address such issues.

The Chief Executive responded confirming that the terms of reference of the new Working Party had been kept deliberately brief to ensure that a wide-ranging review could be undertaken. The purpose of the Working Party was to focus on looking forward in line with the short, medium and long-term proposals that had been set out in the report.

Finally, the Chairman thanked the Council's Officers for processing nearly £28 m of business support grants. The Cabinet then

RESOLVED –That

- (1) The action taken to date be noted;
- (2) Consideration be given to the way for the Council post-recovery;
- (3) As part of the work in (2) above, support the establishment of a Coronavirus Recovery Working Party based on the following terms:
 - (a) Terms of Reference– to conduct a review on the way forward for the Council post recovery
 - (b) Size of the Working Party – 10 Members with seats allocated as follows – Lib Dems [4]; Cons [4]; Ind [1] Green [1]
 - (c) Nominations to the seats – to be made by the relevant Group Leader and confirmed as Councillors Bennett, Chapman, Mrs Cooper, Cooper, Dendle, Mrs Haywood, Mrs Staniforth, Tilbrook, Ms Thurston and Dr Walsh;
 - (d) Proposals for the allocation of seats if vacancies occur– to be for the relevant Group Leader to fill the vacant seat and report this information to the next Full Council meeting;
 - (e) Timescale for the work to be undertaken – over the next few months of recovery and to include whatever time is required in view of the uncertainty of Covid19
 - (f) To report back to Cabinet on 20 July 2020; and further meetings
- (4) If established, the Working Party can then:
 - (a) Review its terms of reference at its first meeting and recommend any change back to Cabinet;
 - (b) Make any recommendations to Cabinet based on the terms of reference – it will have no decision-making authority; and
 - (c) Meet in private unless it agrees that it will work to the Meeting Procedure Rules at Part 5 of the Council's Constitution.

The Cabinet then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/003/220620, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the minutes.

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61. JOINT ARUN AREA COMMITTEES

The Cabinet received and noted the minutes from the meeting of the Joint Western Arun Area Committee held on 11 March 2020. Cabinet noted that the meeting of the Joint Eastern Arun Area Committee planned for 17 March 2020 had been cancelled.

(The meeting concluded at 6.28 pm)