

CABINET

11 January 2021 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, Clayden, Mrs Cooper, Cooper, English, Gunner, Mrs Pendleton and Roberts were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

395. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Members, members of the public and Officers to what was the ninth virtual meeting of Cabinet and the first in the New Year. 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.

396. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

397. QUESTION TIME

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

398. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman confirmed that there were no urgent items for this meeting.

399. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of Cabinet held on 14 December 2020 were approved as a correct by Cabinet. The Chairman confirmed that these would be signed at the earliest opportunity to him.

400. BUDGET VARIATION REPORTS

There were no matters discussed.

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#### 401. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mr Glenn Smith, Director, from Housing Finance Associates Ltd, the Council's external consultant, to the meeting as he would be providing a presentation on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan Update.

Firstly, the Cabinet Member for Residential Services, Councillor Mrs Gregory, introduced this item stating that the report provided the annual update on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and that it set out the baseline position for the HRA Business Plan projections, planned forecast in terms of income, expenditure, investment and borrowing in respect of Council housing over a 30 year period. The key headlines were that £2m of HRA balances were to be retained during the 30-year period covered by the forecast and the inclusion of new build programme commencing in 2022/2023 to deliver 15 new homes annually and delivering the capital programme within available resources.

Mr Smith confirmed that each year an update was provided on the baseline position for the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan projections in respect of the provision of Council housing within the Arun District over a 30-year period. He explained that the underlying information was continually changing in terms of updated changes in inflation and borrowing rates but that it provided some continuity in terms of delivering the long-term plans that the Council set each year. Mr Smith then referred to the numerous charts set out in the report providing information on the health of the HRA as forecasted in terms of the level of balances; the HRA capital programme; the level of HRA debt; and the ability of the authority to repay debt within a reasonable timescale. This information had been produced using the Council's own data and budgets for the revenue and capital programme and in terms of stock condition works that needed to be conducted over the long-term and that use of the Council's projections had been made in terms of the development of projects and schemes which were either planned or where the Council had aspirations to deliver in future years.

The Cabinet Member for Residential Services, Councillor Mrs Gregory, responded to the presentation by thanking Mr Smith for providing such a detailed overview but in a way that was very easy to follow. It was great news that the HRA's finances allowed the Council to continue to purchase Council stock to a total of 230 properties between now and 2026. Despite this, it was still disappointing that the Right to Buy initiative, still resulted in the Council's valuable stock continuing to be eroded at a time when there were so many local families in housing need. The cost of providing the required temporary social housing was very high putting a further strain on budgets.

The Chairman also thanked Mr Smith for his detailed overview of the report and confirmed that he welcomed the information that it held in that the Council was able to provide more affordable lower cost to rent housing to those on the Council's waiting list and to obviate the need to put residents into temporary accommodation. He welcomed the medium-term commitment to continue to substantially increase and maintain the Council's building programme to make sure that the housing stock was maintained and increased in the long-term.

The Chairman then invited non-Cabinet Councillors if they had questions to ask. Questions were asked about the baseline revenue forecast and the use of balances.

The Cabinet, then

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That the updated Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for 2020/21 be noted.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/044/11012021, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

402. WEST SUSSEX JOURNEY TO WORK PROGRAMME - END OF YEAR REPORT - MIRIAM NICHOLLS

The Chairman introduced this report as the Leader of the Council and explained that over the past 7 years, the Journey to Work project and its successors had been well received by many of those who needed support to move towards employment. Its value had been recognised not only by those it has helped but also by local employers who had welcomed the opportunity to employ people who may have needed a little extra support but had been more than willing to take up the opportunity of work.

Many local residents had received support allowing them to take up part or full-time employment whilst others had moved along the road towards employability by volunteering or taking qualifications. The report provided an overview of the Journey to Work project covering the past year.

The Business Development Manager then provided further information explaining that this project had been a success largely due to the superb links that the Council had established with the District's business community. The report was not about physical transport to work, it was about the need to focus on each individual's employment journey and how they could tackle any barriers in place preventing them from moving from one point in their life to employment. The report emphasised the different and varied journeys that often had to be taken by individuals to reach their goals. To explain the unique successes of the project, some case studies were presented to the meeting. Arun had less budget as it had always used Job Centres or its own offices or met where suited to the client. As a result of this, Arun was able to use its budget wisely and was able to supply a lot of training. It used its regular email address to the business community to showcase clients to employers.

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In receiving the report, Cabinet praised the work undertaken and the benefits the project had provided. This was particularly relevant at this time due to the current unemployment crisis as a result of Covid-19 and so it was felt that anything that the Council could do in partnership with Government grants and other Local Authorities had to be welcomed.

Following some discussion, Cabinet praised all elements of the scheme and the opportunities that it provided. The case stories explained at the meeting had been truly uplifting and showed how successful the scheme was and its value to those taking part.

Having had a series of questions asked which were responded to at the meeting, the Cabinet

#### RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/045/11012021, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

#### 403. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE TO COVER COSTS AWARDED AGAINST THE COUNCIL IN APPEALS - Y/103/18/PL AND EP/148/20/PL

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Lury, introduced this report explaining that a supplementary estimate was required to a maximum sum of £30,000 to settle the costs claimed against the Council as a result of two recent unsuccessful appeals. Councillor Lury urged Councillors to take note of the Planning Inspector's reasoning in awarding these costs in that the Council had previously been advised that it needed to be more risk adverse especially when objecting to an application on highways grounds, although he fully understood the frustration felt by Councillors in this regard. Councillor Lury explained that the two planning applications were Y/103/18/PL and EP/148/20/PL and he referred to the appendices that had been attached to the report containing the reasoning of the inspector regarding these two applications.

Much discussion took place in relation to this report. Councillor Stanley confirmed that this was a difficult situation and he stated that he did not envy those Councillors who sat on the Development Control Committee in terms of the number of different issues that they had to balance in determining applications. He agreed with the comments that had been made by Councillor Lury in that the Council needed to be more risk adverse with its decision making. He was of the view that the Committee had taken this viewpoint on board and had improved in discussing and communicating views where they could make a difference.

Other Cabinet Members agreed with the statements made and therefore highlighted the need for a Members' Seminar to be arranged so that collective discussion between Members and Officers could take place and the issues raised by the recent Planning Review report considered and a way forward confirmed.

Conflicting views were then raised by non-Cabinet Councillors who felt that Development Control Councillors should not base decision making solely in reaction to public representation. The Cabinet Member for Planning responded outlining that all decisions made by the Development Control Committee had been cross party and refusals had been based on genuine highway safety concerns, difficulties had arisen as the Highways Authority had opposing views, this was very relevant to these two planning applications.

Other points made were that decisions had been based on new standards for parking which had just been confirmed by the Planning Policy Team but this appeared to be in conflict with what the Planning Inspector had thought the Council should be doing and so there were Councillors who had difficulty in accepting the Inspector's decision on the appeals.

A further request was made for Member Planning training to resume and the need for the Council to engage better and more effectively with the Planning Advisory Groups.

The Cabinet

#### RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That a supplementary estimate of a maximum of £33,000 be approved to settle the award of costs in respect of applications Y/103/18/PL and EP/148/20/PL. This equates to a Band D Council Tax equivalent of £0.53.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/046/11012021, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

#### 404. VARIATION TO PARKING CHARGES

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Mrs Staniforth, presented this item explaining that this report looked at the parking charges in the Councils Off-Street Car Parks. This was because, the Council's Medium Financial Strategy required all discretionary charges to be reviewed and this included parking charges.

Councillor Mrs Staniforth reminded Councillors that a report had been submitted to a previous meeting of Cabinet in September 2020, but this had been withdrawn as it had been felt that it had not been the appropriate time to be looking to increase charges when businesses in the District needed all the support they could get due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This report was looking at increasing car parking charges for only the

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Council's seasonal car parks and not car parks situated in the Town Centres which were still suffering from the impacts of the pandemic. She explained that the Customer & Parking Services Manager, with the support of the Group Head for Neighbourhood Services, had written the report to provide the relevant information on Arun's car parks and that the Council should undertake a review of its parking charges. The report requested Cabinet approval to consult on varying the parking charges as outlined in Appendix A of the report. The report also provided the detail of other car parking initiatives and service improvements.

The Customer and Parking Services Manager expanded on the detail provided in the report emphasising that car parking increases had not been increased in the seasonal car parks since 2018. A survey of all car parks in the District had been undertaken to establish what works were required to enable a priority list of work to be confirmed. The survey covered the surface, signage, furniture and planting with car parks. A priority list was currently being agreed so that works could be planned over the next two years. Separate to this, works had been identified for the Fittleton multi-storey car park to include the refurbishments of lifts; a fire detection system as well as the painting and decorating of stairwells. Future developments included looking at providing more contactless terminals and virtual permits as well as reviewing all free car parks to see what opportunities there might be to generate future income. A further report would return to Cabinet setting out future plans in due course.

In discussing the report, Cabinet supported the proposals, subject to the outcome of the consultation as it made sense to target the increases to the seasonal car parks not affecting the day to day commercial life of the town centres and shopping parades. However, it was also recognised that there had not been an increase in car parking charges for some time.

Cabinet was also reminded that this report sought approval for the proposed charges which had been set out in Appendix A to be put out for consultation, a decision was not being made tonight. The future developments identified in the report such as the option for cashless parking and the selling of different types of parking permits were welcomed as it was recognised that the offer of contactless payments would sit alongside cash and other options in terms of payments – when this report was initially put forward there had been a comparison of charges proposed set against other nearby coastal towns, questions were asked as to why this information was missing from this report. It was explained that this information had been provided only when consideration was being given to increasing the charges for Town Centre sites which was no longer relevant.

Viewpoints were made that it was entirely sensible to slightly increase the seasonal car parks charges which were always constantly busy.

Having agreed all elements of the report, the Cabinet was asked by the Interim Monitoring Officer to consider slightly changing the wording to Recommendation (2) to read as follows – additions have been shown using **bold** with deletions shown using ~~strikethrough~~

(2) ~~Seek~~ **Give** delegated authority for ~~agreeing the increase via the Cabinet Member following consultation~~ **to the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services to consider the results of the consultation and to take a decision.**

The Cabinet

RESOLVED – That

- (1) Approve that the proposed charges in Appendix A are put out for consultation; and
- (2) Give delegated authority delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services to consider the results of the consultation and to take a decision.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/047/11012021, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

#### 405. CORPORATE PLAN AND SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN

The Chairman presented this item as the Leader of the Council and outlined that the Corporate Plan formed a series of targets that were measurable and, ideally, in the control of the Council. These were the Corporate Plan indicators. Service targets (Service Delivery Plan indicators – SDP's) were positioned beneath these corporate priorities to provide more detail about how services were performing. Performance of these indicators was reported to the Corporate Management Team every quarter and to the Overview Select Committee and Cabinet every six months and at year end.

Further to a request made by the Overview Select Committee at its meeting held on 1 December 2020, the Quarter 2 data from 2019/20 had been provided in the attached Appendix A and Appendix B to give comparable data with the same point at the previous year (Q2).

The Chairman then invited the Group Head of Policy to provide a further overview of the report. It was explained that there were eleven Corporate Plan indicators and that six of these were measured at Quarter 2. A full commentary for each indicator had been set out within Appendix A. A summary was then provided on the performance of these targets which is set out below:

- Not achieving target – these were CP3, CP7 and CP11). The Overview Select Committee (on 1 December 2020) requested additional information for CP3 (not just % information) on the Council Tax Collected. This had been provided in Appendix A. The Director of Services would be monitoring these targets.
- Achieving target – these were CP6, CP8 and CP10.

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Turning to the Service Delivery Plan Indicators, the Group Head of Policy explained that there were twenty-three Service Delivery Plan (SDP) indicators and that thirteen were measured at Quarter 2. A full commentary for each indicator had been set out within Appendix B. A summary was then provided on the performance of these targets which is set out below:

- Not achieving target – were indicators (SDP17 and SDP18). These would be monitored by the Director of Services. Overview Select Committee (on 1 December 2020) requested additional information for SDP17 (not just % information) on Housing Benefit overpayments recovered. This has been provided in Appendix B.
- Behind Target – were indicators (SDP4 and SDP5) and it was highlighted that these were only just behind target and were both indicators that the Council could not directly control.
- Achieving target – were indicators (SDP10, SDP16 and SDP22). SDP10 would be monitored by the Corporate Management Team and SDP16 would be monitored by the Director of Services.
- Over-Achieving target – were indicators (SDP1, SDP2, SDP3, SDP9, SDP12 and SDP19).

In discussing the report, the following comments were made. Congratulations were passed on to the Council's staff in relation to Corporate Plan Indicators CP6 and 8 as it was recognised that to be able to continue to process Housing and Council Tax Benefit Claims in 2.8 days less than the target stipulated during the Pandemic and with all staff working from home was a real achievement. Similarly, praise was given in relation to the number of new council homes purchased which were on track for the 36 completions which would take place during this month.

Reference was made to the three targets that were not achieving and it was felt that this was completely understandable during the Pandemic. For CP11 [Household Waste sent for Recycling] it was acknowledged that this was a very ambitious target which would most likely be met when the Food Waste Trial was introduced.

Looking at SDP 9 [Licence Applications Determined within Statutory or Service Time Limits] congratulations were passed onto the Licensing Team for achieving and improving the target compared to last year's figures and considering the pressures placed on the team due to Covid-19. There had been much discussion on SDP5 [Occupied Retail Units in Bognor Regis] at the Overview Select Committee. It had to be accepted that numbers would reduce further but it equally important for Councillors to realise the Council's position was comparatively good compared to the vacancy rates of similar sized Towns in other Local Authorities.

The Cabinet



RESOLVED – That

- (1) The Council's Quarter 2 performance against the targets for the Corporate Plan indicators as set out in the report and Appendix A be noted;
- (2) The Council's Quarter 2 performance against the targets for the Service Delivery Plan indicators as set out in this report and Appendix B be noted; and
- (3) The minutes from the meeting of the Overview Select Committee on 1 December 2020 and associated comments and queries be noted.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/048/11012021, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

The Chairman then made an announcement confirming that he had consulted with the Chief Executive and the Group Head of Corporate Support and could confirm that the Council had decided to provide another three month rent holiday for its business tenants as had been the case at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. Hard pressed in addition to bus grants from cent gov huge help we can do extra little but by giving a rent holiday.

406. ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE WORKING GROUP - 10 DECEMBER 2020

The Chairman alerted Cabinet to the minutes from the meeting of the Environment & Leisure Working Group held on 10 December 2020 and confirmed that they contained recommendations for Cabinet to consider.

The Chairman firstly invited the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, Councillor Mrs Yeates, to present the first set of recommendations at Minute 20 [Safer Arun Partnership] and it was explained that this was the annual report of the Safer Arun Partnership and that Chief Inspector Carter had attended the meeting to provide a further overview to the report and to respond to questions asked by Councillors.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The work of the Safer Arun Partnership be endorsed and the importance of partnership working in contributing to reducing anti-social behaviour and addressing crime and disorder in Arun is recognised; and
- (2) Recognition is given to the work of the Safer Arun Partnership in contributing to the delivery of the Council's strategic priority 'supporting you if you need help'.

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The Chairman then invited the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Mrs Staniforth to present the recommendation at Minute 21 [Tree Planting Strategy]. Councillor Mrs Staniforth explained that the Tree Planting Strategy was a 10-year plan covering over 90 sites across the District. The Tree Planting Officer had attended the Working Group meeting to work through the detail of the report and the tree planting strategy. This was an exciting project for the Council as it would help to address some of the climate issues and the aims of the Council in tackling its Climate Emergency declared last year. The Plan detailed where trees would be planted and what species of plants and trees would be involved. Councillor Mrs Staniforth explained that the Council had a very experienced team of Officers working on this Strategy and that they had been working on planting initiatives for a very long time. It was highlighted that there had been a lot of debate on the content of the full plan resulting in the Working Group asking if this Strategy could go ahead and be progressed but that a Plan be formulated in terms of what should happen being returned to the Working Plan before the Strategy was approved. Councillor Mrs Staniforth confirmed that she would like to approve the Strategy with the understanding that it would come back to the Working Group when a Plan was in place for Members ' to comment on and to tweak if necessary and she asked if the Director of Services if Cabinet could approve this now rather than to support the full request from the Working Group.

The Director of Services provided some reassurance confirming that the Council's Tree Officers were all very experienced and had been involved in a massive range of successful tree planting schemes in the past. Once the Strategy had been worked up it could then be brought back to the Working Group or appropriate Committee and that this was the right way forward.

In view of the points raised, the Chairman then proposed a slight change to the wording in the recommendation – which is set out below:

“Arun endorses the principles outlined in the report which would form the basis of a Tree Planting Strategy 2021 to 2031 and an associated tree planting plan which would both be presented to the relevant committee ~~before being approved.~~”

Discussion then focused on this amendment and the Director of Services was asked by some Cabinet Members if she could provide further information. She provided further reassurance confirming that this type of work was the essence of what the Tree service was all about. The Council's Tree Officers had conducted Tree Planting Strategies before and could provide many examples of successful schemes. The team contained experts who would ensure that the tree planting scheme contained the correct species of native plants whilst at the same time promoting diversity and effectively working with a myriad of local groups that the Council then trained, this had been custom and practice for 25-30 years.

There were non-Cabinet Councillors who claimed that the report that had been submitted to the Working Group had contained insufficient detail and no plan of action which was unacceptable. Further information was required as there was widespread

nervousness about the report as it should be for Councillors to set the Tree Planting Strategy and develop ideas for further consideration by the Working Group to approve before the Strategy was implemented. As things stood, agreeing to principles outlined in the report was insufficient; there was not enough information to see to sign off the Strategy.

Having received further reassurance from the Director of Services that there was never any question of everything being delivered and not being brought back to the Working Group; that the tree planting work would be delivered by experts and professionals; and that an associated planting plan would be presented again or to the relevant Committee, the Cabinet

**RESOLVED**

That Arun endorses the principles outlined in the report which would form the basis of a Tree Planting Strategy 2021 to 2031 and an associated tree planting plan which would both be presented to the relevant Committee.

(The meeting concluded at 7.10 pm)