

CABINET

22 March 2021 at 5.00 pm

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

Councillors Bennett, Bicknell, Bower, Clayden, Cooper, Mrs Cooper, Edwards, English, Gunner, Huntley, Mrs Pendleton and Roberts were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

[Note: The following Councillors were absent from the meeting during consideration of the matters detailed in the Minutes indicated – Councillor Mrs Yeates – Minute 501 to Minute 503 (Part)].

Apologies: Councillors Oppler

486. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Members, Officers, non-Cabinet Members, representatives from Land Use and those watching this from the public and press for the eleventh 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.

487. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

488. QUESTION TIME

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

489. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman confirmed that there was one urgent item for this meeting regarding the sound barriers on the Fitzalan Road extension in Littlehampton.

The Chairman invited the Chief Executive to update the Cabinet. He explained that he had only very recently been made aware of a problem with the height of the barriers which were originally understood to be 2.5m high but had now been raised to a height of 3.5m. In view of the concerns expressed by Councillors, he had approached Officers at West Sussex County Council to see if the concerns raised over the height of the barrier could be addressed and reduced to a more satisfactory level. The Executive Director of Place and Services at West Sussex County Council had confirmed that the County Council had raised the issue of the fence height with the developer who was exploring the options available. A further update was expected soon and the Chief Executive confirmed that he would report this back to Members.

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The Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Lury, asked whether by reducing the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph the barrier height could be returned to 2.5m, but reiterated that the issue was a County Council Highway matter. He did note that he was pleased that the Council had at least tried through different channels to talk to West Sussex County Council and the developer, and thought that it would be useful if Cabinet could draft a letter to the County Council to add further pressure. The Chairman agreed that a letter would be sent urging WSCC to reconsider the proposed speed limit on the new road which was located in an urban setting and very near to a school.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED

That a letter be sent to West Sussex County Council urging reconsideration of the proposed speed limit on the new road.

490. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of Cabinet held on 8 February 2021 were approved as a correct by Cabinet. The Chairman confirmed that these would be signed at the earliest opportunity to him.

491. BUDGET VARIATION REPORTS

There were no matters discussed.

492. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

The Chairman requested and Cabinet agreed to a change in the order of the Agenda allowing Agenda Item 9 [Place St Maur and Esplanade Project, Bognor Regis] to be considered next as there were external representatives in attendance.

493. PLACE ST MAUR AND ESPLANADE PROJECT, BOGNOR REGIS

The Chairman welcomed Ed Manning, Principal Landscape Architect and Alex Massey, Associate Landscape Architect, from Land Use Consultants (LUC) to the meeting. He then invited the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Mrs Staniforth, to introduce this item. She highlighted that the Place St Maur project had reached an important stage with the conclusion of the public consultation process. As part of the report, an update would be provided on the results of the consultation and how the project team had used the feedback to produce the preferred design for the site. Councillor Mrs Staniforth confirmed that she was delighted that consultants from LUC were in attendance to present the key findings from the consultation undertaken.

The Principal Landscape & Project Officer emphasised that if approved, the design would become frozen to ensure the landscape architects were working to a fixed scope that would avoid any impact on the cost and programme of the project which she noted was already very tight. Ed Manning and Alex Massey from LUC then gave their

presentation including the results of the consultation and an explanation of their designs.

The Chairman thanked them and then invited questions from Cabinet Members. Councillors Stanley, Staniforth, Yeates and Lury spoke in favour of the design proposal. Questions were asked around how the consultation compared with other projects LUC had been involved with, how the design may positively impact issues around anti-social behaviour and the colour of paving during the winter months when the water jets would be switched off. LUC responded that the level of engagement with the consultation was significantly higher than with some other projects they had been involved with, that design could reinvigorate civic pride in areas that could positively impact behaviour and that paving design was likely to develop throughout the project.

Questions were asked by Non-Cabinet Councillors about whether this was the extent of regeneration in Bognor Regis, why the preferred option was neither of the two designs in the consultation, the return on investment, the maintenance of the water jets and lights and the costs involved, the impact of bad weather on performance, the budget for the project, the speed of delivery, the use of green energy and the storage and movement of the moveable items involved. The Chairman, LUC, Principal Landscape & Project Officer and Group Head of Technical Services provided Councillors with answers to all points raised.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED

That the designs presented at the meeting for the Place St Maur and the Esplanade be approved, and that the delivery of Place St Maur is progressed in line with the project programme.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/056/22032021, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

#### 494. ARUN IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - UPDATE

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Councillor Stanley, to introduce this item. He noted that this year had been busier than previous years due to the impacts of the pandemic and he thanked the team for all their work whilst still making progress on other significant projects such as the digital agenda. The Head of Technology & Digital then highlighted key aspects of the report including it having been a very busy year, the change of priorities with a shift to a mostly homeworking Council still delivering services but remotely and the building of new applications and channels to make it easier for customers to deal with the Council over the internet whilst still managing to deliver planned major projects.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Technology & Digital and his team for all their work that had allowed the Council to continue delivering its services during the lockdown. Questions were asked by Non-Cabinet Councillors about website

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development and search engine functionality. The Head of Technology & Digital provided Members with answers to all points raised.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED

To note the activities of the Arun Improvement Programme.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/057/22032021, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

495. OPTIONS TO PROGRESS WEBCAST IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Councillor Stanley, to introduce this item. He explained that after discussion at Full Council in September 2020, where webcasting upgrade options were put forward, it was agreed that the matter be referred back to Cabinet for an update. The Director of Place then presented the detail of the report.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Place and then invited questions and comments from Cabinet Members. Councillor Stanley, stated that having reflected on the discussion and concerns raised at Full Council, he proposed making some small amendments to Recommendation 1 in the report, which was that the upgrades to the webcasting system set out in the table within the report be approved apart from:

- The projector and screen upgrades – new laser projector and screen = £18,000
- Replacement screens at outlying desks - £7,000

The remaining items listed were then proposed to be agreed as the upgrades needed to the webcasting system and that a supplementary estimate in the sum of £40k for these one-off projects costs for the webcasting hardware installation be approved. The amount that this equates for a Band D property in terms of equivalent Council Tax to be reported at the Full Council meeting.

Councillors Lury and Mrs Gregory also spoke in support of this. Questions were asked by Non-Cabinet Councillors about the essentiality of the proposed upgrades and how the Council was working to futureproof these upgrades. The Director of Place provided Members with answers to all points raised.

The Cabinet

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL – That

- (1) Approval be given to those items listed in Table A, with the exception of the projector and screen upgrades (£18,000) and replacement screens at outlying desks (£7,000), and that a supplementary estimate in the sum of £40,000 be approved for the one-off project cost for the webcasting hardware installation. The amount that this equates to for a Band D property in terms of equivalent Council Tax will be reported to Full Council verbally.
- (2) The proposed action to purchase the hardware required to facilitate hybrid meetings is noted; and
- (3) Subject to the approval of recommendation (1), to approve the additional on-going revenue costs for annual maintenance and broadband subscription of £21k per annum to be included in the Budget for 2021/22.

The Cabinet also

RESOLVED

That approval be given to extending the contract with the current provider of webcasting facilities for a further 12 months until June 2022.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/058/22022021, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

#### 496. CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Mrs Staniforth, to introduce this item. She explained that this report set out the Customer Services Strategy 2021 – 2026 and included the process for implementation to embed it into the organisation. This new Strategy was the culmination of work within the organisation and promoted a vision which aimed to put the customer at the heart of everything that the Council did. The Strategy included a Customer Charter which set out what the Council's customers should expect and the Council was committed to do.

The Group Head of Neighbourhood Services then presented the detail of the report. He emphasised the aim of strategy to be a customer focussed organisation working to understand our customers better and put them at the heart of everything the Council does and support customers to do more for themselves, and further noted the customer charter.

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The Chairman thanked the Group Head of Neighbourhood Services and then invited questions and comments from Cabinet Members. Following a Cabinet Member question, it was confirmed that the strategy applied to all aspects of the Council's business and all interactions with customers. A Non-Cabinet Member asked about the 10 day response rule. The Group Head of Neighbourhood Services provided Members with answers to all points raised.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED

To formally adopt the Customer Services Strategy 2021- 2026 and approve the process of implementation to embed it into the organisation.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/059/22032021, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

497. ANTI-GRAFFITI SYSTEMS LTD - TRADING AS AGS ONE - ADMISSIONS AGREEMENT TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME

*(Councillor Dr Walsh declared a personal interest in this item in his capacity as a Trustee of the West Sussex Pensions Scheme administered by West Sussex County Council.)*

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Councillor Stanley, to introduce this item. He reminded Cabinet Members that in January of last year, Cabinet had resolved to outsource the Council's Pest Control service and that following a competitive procurement process, the contract for delivery of the Council's Pest Control service had been awarded to AGS One who began operating the service on 1 March in a seamless transfer of the function. As expected, this had led to savings for the taxpayer and overall lower prices for customers using the service, whilst securing quality service provision.

The Group Head of Technical Services provided further background explaining that at the time of transfer of the function to our new contractor, there was a member of staff engaged in the delivery of the pest control service. The member of staff was TUPE transferred to the contractor and in accordance with TUPE regulations, the new employer was obliged to ensure that the staff member received a pension no less favourable than the Local Government Pension Scheme. The solution to resolving this situation was for the contractor to become an admitted body to the Local Government Pension Scheme. To do this, West Sussex County Council required Arun to be a guarantor in the event that AGS One failed to make their employer contributions. The report set out the proposal that Cabinet should recommend that Full Council should agree to act as guarantor.

The Cabinet

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That the Council acts as a guarantor in respect of any and all pension liabilities which may arise through the term of the Pest Control Contract and delegated authority is given to Legal Services to enter into the Admission Agreement and Guarantee.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/060/220321, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

498. CONTRACT AWARD FOR PASSIVE FIRE WORKS FOR COUNCIL OWNED HOUSING STOCK

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Residential Services, Councillor Mrs Gregory, to introduce this item. The Group Head of Residential Services then presented the detail of the report. She explained that the proposed passive fire works to council housing had been identified as part of the regular programme of fire risk assessments done in accordance with the Council's legal and regulatory responsibilities. It was acknowledged by Cabinet that this report superseded ICM/182/18022021 which was withdrawn.

Questions were asked by Non-Cabinet Councillors regarding the budget predictions and how these had been calculated. The Group Head of Residential Services provided Members with answers to all points raised. The Chairman confirmed that the funding was coming from the Housing Revenue Account.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED

To approve the Calling off the CHIC framework to award Keystone Fire Safety Limited a 3-year contract up to £5m in value to undertake passive fire works.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/061/220321, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

499. THE COUNCIL'S FUTURE FINANCIAL ISSUES

The Chairman introduced this item in the absence of the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Corporate Support, Councillor Oppler. He thanked the Council's financial team for their ongoing support and regular updates on the financial position and explained that the Corporate Management Team had been continually monitoring the Council's budget and that this report provided an update on some of these proposed approaches.

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The Chief Executive was then invited to present the detail of the report. He highlighted the achieved, ongoing and new projects listed in Appendix A, and explained that Officers now needed guidance from Cabinet on the way forward to ensure that financial security would be delivered for the Council and that valuable Officer time would not be wasted on areas that did not have Cabinet support.

The Chairman then invited questions and comments from Cabinet Members. Councillors Stanley and Coster spoke in favour and particularly noted the proposals for additional beach huts and solar panels in car parks. Non-Cabinet Members raised points about there being too many beach huts, the return on investment from beach huts and the absence of future savings. The Chairman, Cabinet Member for Commercial and Business Development and Director of Place provided Members with answers to all points raised.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED

To note the financial actions achieved and it instructed Officers to proceed with all of the proposals listed in the report and the Appendix.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/062/220321, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

#### 500. COMMERCIAL MANAGER POST

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Commercial and Business Development, Councillor Coster, to introduce this item. He reminded Councillors that through the Council's strategic targets, it had agreed funding for a new Commercial Manager post which had been planned for 2020/21. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus pandemic had impacted on the recruitment process. The Chief Executive explained the need for the Council to be more commercial in its approach and its need for expertise to support this aspect. He also shared his disappointment around the issues with recruitment.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED

To support the principle of delaying the appointment process of the Commercial Manager post, until after the Covid pandemic has reduced demands on the resources of the Council.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/063/220321, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

501. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SITUATION

The Chairman introduced this item which was the latest update report on the Coronavirus pandemic for the period 11 February - 8 March 2021. He praised the Officer team for their continued hard work during difficult working environments, many with home schooling issues as well, until recently when schools re-opened. He explained that he and the Chief Executive had continued to provide weekly communications and noted that now was the anniversary of week 52 of these communications. He confirmed that the Council was still administering the various Government grants shown in Appendix A to the report, and, a year on, the Council continued to work hard to help residents and businesses recover from the pandemic.

The Chief Executive was then invited to present the detail of the report. He confirmed that as the weather improved, the Council's primary concern was to ensure that the public could enjoy a safe return to the District's beaches, parks, open spaces and Town Centres. The Council was using the services of Covid Marshals, funded by the Government's Covid Outbreak Management Fund, to deliver key safety messages to the public and was anticipating further funding from this through the County Council. He also provided an update on the forthcoming May Elections which remained particularly difficult to organise whilst awaiting Government guidance on some issues. The Council's main priority was to ensure the provision of sufficient staff to deliver the Election and how the Council planned to react to a substantial increase in Postal Votes. He reassured Councillors that despite these challenges, he was confident that the Council would deliver a safe and transparent Election, albeit, under Covid conditions.

The Chairman also mentioned the Hardship Fund set up to provide financial resource to those hard hit during the pandemic. The Chief Executive provided more details on this fund and the support from County Council. The Chairman then invited questions and comments from Cabinet Members. Councillor Lury spoke in favour of Arun and West Sussex Councils working together. Councillor Stanley, in noting the range of impacts of the pandemic, welcomed the fund that could support the people hardest hit.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED

To note the actions taken to date.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/064/220321, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

502. PLANNING REVIEW WORKING PARTY - FEEDBACK FROM MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2021

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Councillor Stanley, as Chairman of the Planning Review Working Party, to introduce this item which contained recommendations for Cabinet to consider at Minute 9 [Consideration of

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Residents' Needs and Concerns in respect of Planning Matters]. The Chief Executive provided further detail about the planning review. He explained that there were multiple parts to the review – one part focused on recommendations concerning the role and performance of Councillors; another section related to recommendations that affected Officers and there was one other section affecting both Councillors and Officers together – and that this referred to the Members part of the review. He confirmed that the Officer review was an ongoing matter that he was dealing with as the Head of Paid Service, but that all parts of the review would eventually be brought together and brought before the relevant Committee for discussion.

The Chairman then invited questions and comments. A Non-Cabinet Member raised whether within the first recommendation there would be possible conflict should a position be declared when utilising Arun District Councillors. The Interim Monitoring Officer confirmed that as long as Members followed the Planning Protocol then the recommendation was acceptable. Another Non-Cabinet Member asked when and whether the findings of the Hanneby report would be published. The Chief Executive confirmed that a schedule would shortly be brought to Members, but confirmed that Members had seen the full report but that there might need to be some redaction to safeguard Officers before the document is made public.

Another Non-Cabinet Member raised concerns on the vagueness of recommendations 1 and 2. The Chairman amended the wording of recommendation (2) to 'the Council should improve its communication with, involvement of and training of Parish Councillors'. Councillor Bower proposed that 'in line with planning protocol' was inserted after 'Arun District Councillors' in recommendation (1). This was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Lury, and the Chairman.

#### The Cabinet

##### RESOLVED - That

- (1) The Council should influence developers to engage more constructively with Parish Councils and the public, utilising Arun District Councillors in line with planning protocol to help do this;
- (2) The Council should improve its communication with, involvement of and training of Parish Councillors;
- (3) Officers investigate the use of digital tools to improve public engagement;
- (4) Officers consider an online community guide to the planning system (possibly through short videos); and
- (5) Cabinet to confirm that it understands that the previous four recommendations may result in resource implications (both people and financial).

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/065/220321, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

503. HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP - 4 FEBRUARY 2021

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Residential Services, Councillor Mrs Gregory, to present the Minutes from the meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group held on 4 February 2021. Councillor Mrs Gregory alerted Cabinet to recommendations at Minute 21 [Gaining Access to Residents' Homes Policy].

The Cabinet

RESOLVED - That

- (1) The Access Policy be adopted; and
- (2) Delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Residential Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Residential Services to make changes to the Policy.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/066/220321, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

(The meeting concluded at 8.20 pm)