

CABINET

29 April 2020 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors Dr Walsh (Chairman), Oppler (Vice-Chair), Mrs Gregory, Lury, Purchase, Stanley and Mrs Yeates

Councillors Bennett, Bicknell, Chapman, Clayden, Cooper, Mrs Cooper, Dendle, Edwards, English, Gunner, Mrs Pendleton and Roberts were also in attendance at the meeting.

517. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Members, the press, officers and members of the public to this historic first virtual meeting held by the Council.

He provided a brief summary of how the meeting would be conducted and the protocol that would be followed and, as this was a brand new experience for all participants, how any break in the proceedings due to technical difficulties would be managed.

The Chairman took this opportunity to thank all Council staff for their hard work in dealing with the demands of the pandemic.

518. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

519. QUESTION TIME

No public questions had been submitted.

520. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2020 were agreed by the Cabinet and would be signed by the Chairman as soon as practically possible.

521. OFFICER DECISIONS TAKEN DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

The Chairman introduced this item and stated that when major emergencies occurred, such as the present Coronavirus crisis, officers were able to make urgent decisions and report back to Members at a later date, as set out in the Council's Constitution.

Almost daily Emergency Planning Team meetings had been held over recent weeks, whereby a team of officers, led by the Director of Services, had been dealing

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with the emergency and the Chairman expressed his thanks to that team. He also took the opportunity to thank Council staff who had continued to work diligently, mostly from home, to ensure the Council continued to provide services to its communities and that they were provided with the information they needed during the Coronavirus emergency.

As the pandemic continued, the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) had set up a series of communication processes to ensure Members were kept up to date, whilst acknowledging that, for the first few weeks at least, things had been changing on an almost daily basis. As part of this process, the CEO had had regular discussions with the Leader and Deputy Leader, as well as weekly meetings with the other three political Group Leaders, Councillors Chapman, Dixon and Mrs Thurston. The CEO had also had many conversations with individual Councillors and, through these various communications, had discussed decisions being made by officers as they occurred. Support had therefore been obtained from the four Group Leaders at the relevant time prior to the decisions in the report being taken.

The Chief Executive then presented the report and drew attention to the fact that the Directors, Group Heads and himself had authority to make urgent decisions in emergency situations under powers set out in the Council's Constitution. He thanked the Leader, the Cabinet and the other three Group Leaders for their full support on every decision that had been taken as, without that support, the task of officers would have been far more difficult.

Three decisions, in particular were highlighted by the Chief Executive, namely:-

- (i) The substantial distribution of business grants – the Government had provided £39m and, as of 28 May 2020, £18,825 had been distributed to small businesses, a percentage of 63.77. It was anticipated that the remainder of the eligible grant funding would go out in the next few days.
- (ii) Freedom Leisure had requested financial support as it was a Trust and did not have a large financial holding; assistance was therefore required to enable it to survive. The Council had provided support in respect of the management fee; keeping the building safe; and staffing costs and how repayment might be managed was being looked at and might include the extension of the present contract.
- (iii) £13,000 had been outlaid to provide partitioning at the Bognor Regis and Littlehampton Reception areas to enable members of the public to still be able to access the offices and yet keep members of staff safe. The work had been done by the Facilities Team during the first weekend of lockdown.

Before opening the debate, the Chairman advised that, right from the beginning of the emergency and in consultation with the CEO, the following main priorities had been identified irrespective of what support came from central Government or elsewhere and these were:

- To deal with the homeless, rough sleepers and domestic abuse and violence cases and provide accommodation, which had been provided by Butlins.
- To introduce a commercial rent holiday on properties leased from the Council and to defer payments for 3 months plus giving tenants longer to pay of up to 1 year and, in extreme situations, up to 2 years.
- To make car parks free and to not enforce single yellow lines across the District.
- In the event of staff sickness/absence the waste, recycling and green collection services would be subject to cascading but, after an initial glitch at the beginning, the service was running normally.

The Chairman thanked his Cabinet Member colleagues for their contribution and involvement in discussions with officers.

As there was no debate from the Cabinet, the Chairman turned to questions from other Members who had submitted these prior to the meeting. The Committee Services Manager clarified that a full schedule of questions, answers and supplementary questions and answers would be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes and would also be uploaded to the website as a separate document following the meeting. The Chairman sought and received support from the Cabinet that questions asked at the meeting should be in line with the procedure for virtual meetings and that there would not be an opportunity for Members to participate in a general question and answer session.

The Cabinet then

RESOLVED

That the action taken by officers be noted and supported.

522. UPDATE ON FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Prior to introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support took the opportunity to thank all the staff of the Council for enabling and facilitating its work across all the different platforms for the benefit of residents. He also thanked the Facilities Team, working in the background, for their hugely professional effort in erecting the new partitions in the receptions at Bognor Regis and Littlehampton, which had been completed within a very tight timescale.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Support stated that the purpose of this report was to provide an update on the financial consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. He advised that the Group Head of Corporate Support would provide some more contextual information whilst the Financial Services Manager would add a further explanation of Appendix 1 which closely correlated to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) return that was submitted on Wednesday 15 April 2020. He also highlighted that the situation that this Council and Councils

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across the country were facing was unprecedented and had resulted in direct financial consequences in terms of loss of income and cash flow, additional expenditure had been incurred and there would continue to be significant cash flow implications. He confirmed that this was going to be very much an ongoing situation and certainly in the short and medium term the impact on the cash flow position of the Council would be serious.

The Group Head of Corporate Support provided a brief overview of the current position by reminding Members that, in participating in various discussions on the Budget, it had been anticipated that Government funding would be considerably less for 2021/22 and only last night the Government had announced that the Fair Funding Review had been rolled forward yet again to 2022/23, which could only further affect the financial position of the Council. He was of the view that there would be a probable recession and that less resources would be received by the Council in future years.

An approximate estimate of the Council's losses due to the emergency had been provided to the Government and in last night's announcement, Arun was due to receive £1.6m towards those costs. Whilst welcoming that, the Cabinet was advised that there would still be a significant shortfall and there would have to be careful consideration of the Council's current budget and its medium term financial strategy going forward in light of how long the emergency might last and the resultant financial implications.

The Financial Services Manager then presented the report which provided an update on the financial consequences of the corona virus emergency. The summary tied up with the financial response supplied to the MHCLG on 15 April 2020. It was stressed that, although the financial information was just a snapshot in time, it did provide a good overview of what was a fast moving environment, with the underlying assumption that the lockdown would continue for 3 months before things gradually returned to some form of normality.

The Financial Services Manager advised that the estimates in Appendix 1 illustrated that the Council's finances would be £2.4m worse off in 2020/21 and beyond and that that figure was dominated by the anticipated loss of income of around £1.9m. The actual losses would depend on how long the lockdown continued and what the economy looked like when things returned to the new normal.

The significant loss of income reflected the importance of fees and charges to the Council's budget, and some of this would not be recouped, such as car park income. Other estimates depended on how badly the economy was going to be affected which could, in turn, reflect in a potential reduction in collection rates in areas like Council Tax and Business Rates. It was stressed that the estimates would change as more information became available.

To summarise and to put the fast pace of financial change into context, the Financial Services Manager advised:-

- £1.6bn Government C19 Emergency funding was announced on 19 March – Arun's share was just £64k

- The MHCLG return was submitted on 15 April
- The Cabinet Report was finalised on 16 April and 2 days later on 18 April Government announced a further £1.6bn C19 support - with no detail of allocations.
- The £1.6m grant announced last night was good news but the funding to date did not cover the Council's anticipated losses. Therefore a measured approach must be taken in supporting individuals and suppliers as resources were limited.

The Financial Services Manager concluded her presentation by reiterating that the figures provided in the report were subject to change and would be kept under review.

In discussing the report, Members again expressed their thanks to staff for their efforts in maintaining services.

The Leader and CEO were thanked for their input into lobbying Government for a fairer share of the emergency funding that was being made available and the Leader confirmed that that had been done not just in respect of funding but also to stress the importance of the horticultural industry within the local economy.

Following further discussion which centred around the effects of the lockdown on the physical and mental wellbeing of residents during the period of lockdown, the Chairman turned to a question from another Member. A full schedule of questions, answers and supplementary questions and answers would be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes and would also be uploaded to the website as a separate document following the meeting.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The action taken and likely financial consequences contained in the report be noted; and
- (2) The continued lobbying of Central Government for additional funding be endorsed.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/050/290420, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

523. ELECTRIC VEHICLE STRATEGY AND CHARGE POINT INSTALLATION

The Cabinet Member for Technical Services introduced this report by advising that the Adoption of Electric Vehicles and a Strategy for Charging Points was an element of the many changes that would be needed to meet the UK's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050. The government had banned the sale of petrol and diesel cars from 2040 and was consulting on bringing that date forward to 2035 or 2032 – that would require a switch to electric vehicles (EV). A move to EV would also improve local air quality, which was already above the legal limits in Arun and the Council should play

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its part in facilitating that switch, in particular in providing the charging infrastructure which was required.

The Group Head of Technical Services advised Cabinet that, over the last year investigations had been undertaken as to whether Arun should be involved in providing EV charge points, and the options available for doing so. Feasibility work on installing EV charge points on the Council's car parks had been commissioned and the Council had been keeping in contact with the County Council whilst they had been developing an EV Strategy.

Public consultation undertaken as part of the development of that strategy identified "range anxiety" and the lack of EV charging infrastructure as the main barriers to residents switching. This led to the strategy prioritising the installation of charging facilities for those residents without private driveways. though there would also be some "destination charging" included such as town centres and tourist beaches.

In recognition of the Councils' financial positions, a key principle of the strategy was that the installation of EV charge points would be at zero cost to the participating Councils. The proposed way of doing this would be for participating Councils to jointly procure a concession contract which would commit a supplier to install EV charge points across a portfolio of sites to form a countywide network. This portfolio approach should avoid "cherry picking" of the most commercially attractive sites, ensuring more & better located charge points would be provided.

The Group Head of Technical Services highlighted that, under paragraphs 2.0 and 6.1 of the report there was reference to profit share: this had changed since the report had been written, as the project team at WSCC had identified that it would be administratively more efficient to share a proportion of the revenue, rather than the more readily challengeable profit element. It was therefore proposed that a share of the revenue arising from charges levied for electricity use would be provided to the Councils and split on the basis of the number of plugs on each Council's land.

If Members decided to take part, the Council would need to enter into an Inter Authority Agreement and provide a list of sites before the procurement process commenced on 1 July 2020, with contracts expected to be signed in November. The first year would focus on developing a network and delivery plan, with the supplier committing to install a minimum number of charge points; therefore the first EV charge points should be installed by November 2021.

In opening up the debate, the Chairman advised that this was a part of the vital strategy in achieving a reduction in pollution. He sought clarification as to whether there was going to be a standardisation of rapid charging points across the network so that vehicles could be charged as rapidly as possible and secondly, he understood that there were 2 or 3 different plug in systems and he wished to see a common standard being set nationally to avoid the use of adaptors, etc when using the charging points.

The Group Head of Technical Services advised that there would be two speeds of charging point – fast and rapid. Fast would be the cheaper installation and would be

suitable for overnight charging for residential areas whereas the more expensive rapid charging facilities would be more suited for destination charging, such as town centres. He went on to confirm that at the moment there were three different types of plugs used by different manufacturers but it was Type 2 that had the support of the Government and its funding streams and was therefore the most prevalent one on the market.

In considering the matter, comment was made that this initiative would support the Climate Change Emergency that the Council had declared and would appear to be a good starting point with minimal risk to the Council. It was felt that if the nation was to achieve the Government's target of banning diesel and petrol cars by 2040 then Councils should be part of collaborations like this across the country. It was an ideal way for Local Government to lead the way in making the transition from fossil fuelled cars to electric vehicles.

The Cabinet Member for Technical Services stated that the proposal did dovetail with the Council's strategies and there were environmental benefits as well. There were going to be economic challenges ahead, as previously discussed, and to have this infrastructure in place at zero cost to the Council would be of benefit to the District and the collaborative approach would provide consistency of charging across the County.

In closing the debate, the Chairman acknowledged that the Electric Vehicle Strategy was going in the right direction but he asked whether the Group Head of Technical Services was aware of any discussions at regional or county level with regard to the use of hydrogen power for public transport and private vehicles, etc which would move forward rapidly the achievement of a 0% carbon economy. An officer response was given that hydrogen had been considered in the early stages of the project but that the technology lagged behind electric vehicles by about 10 years and the car industry was moving in the direction of electric vehicles.

The Chairman then turned to questions from other Members who had submitted these prior to the meeting. A full schedule of questions, answers and supplementary questions and answers would be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes and would also be uploaded to the website as a separate document following the meeting.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED - That

- (1) The Electric Vehicle Strategy for 2019-2030 be approved;
- (2) The Council agrees to participate in the partnership approach to installing electric vehicle charge points on Arun District Council owned land; and
- (3) Delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Technical Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Technical Services and Neighbourhood Services, to enter into the Inter Authority Agreement and contract with a supplier following satisfactory completion of a West

Subject to approval at the next Cabinet meeting

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Sussex County Council led procurement process and to agree other matters in concluding the process of installing electric vehicle charge points on Arun District Council owned land.

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/051/290420, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

(The meeting concluded at 7.50 pm)