

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

21 September 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bower (Chair), Hughes (Vice-Chair), Chapman, Coster, Elkins, Kelly (Substitute for Edwards), Lury, Thurston and Yeates

Councillor Gunner was also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Apologies: Councillor Edwards

270. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

271. MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 July 2022 were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

272. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIR OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent items.

273. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that there had been no questions from the public submitted for this meeting.

274. BUDGET 2023/2024 - PROCESS

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Interim Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the report which provided Members with a summary of the budget process for 2023/24 as required by the Council's Constitution and having been endorsed by the Policy and Finance Committee on 6 September 2022 [Minute 241]. It was noted that this was the second budget produced under the Committee style of governance and that due to the cost of living crisis more reports might need to go to the Policy and Finance Committee as and when more information became available.

Members then took part in a full debate on the item where a number of points were raised including:

- the situation behind the increased cost identified against 'Employees' in the budget and whether this was due to increased costs for existing employees or due to increased numbers of employees
- the reasons behind the reduced amounts against 'Supplies and Services'

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- the expectations of reduced income against 'Other Income'
- the zero based budgeting project and the likelihood of it bringing some cost savings

The Interim Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer and the Group Head of Planning provided Members with responses to points raised during the debate, including:

- confirmation that there was growth in the number of Full Time Equivalent posts within the Planning Department as part of an on-going restructuring exercise, and that the budget for this (which allowed for the additional posts) was agreed at Full Council in May
- that 'Supplies and Services' expenditure varied mainly due to expenditure on the Local Plan, which was intermittent by nature
- the previous year having been exceptional as far as 'Other Income' was concerned, this being predominantly Development Control fees
- zero based budgeting being outcomes focussed budgeting that moved resources to priorities and sought to avoid the holding onto of resources that might not align with priorities that incremental budgeting could result in

The Committee then noted the Budget process for 2023/24 as outlined in the report.

275. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2022-2026 - QUARTER 1
PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 30 JUNE 2022

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Planning presented the report which set out the performance of the Key Performance Indicators at Quarter 1 for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2022. It was explained that this Committee had one KPI to note [CP36 – Number of new homes completed].

Members then took part in a full debate on the item where a number of points were raised, including:

- clarification was sought on when new homes got counted and included in this KPI, for example when they were ready to be lived in or at an earlier stage in the process
- the location within the District of these completed new homes
- whether this figure included all new homes or only affordable ones
- whether the report referenced in the commentary box of the KPI, regarding housing delivery targets and whether the market in the area could actually deliver the required number of homes, would be available to Members and what the timescales involved were
- whether more detail was available to contextualise the 'not achieving' status, for example how far was Arun from reaching the targets, and what needed to be done to achieve them
- whether Arun was in a similar situation to neighbouring Local Authorities in not achieving this target

- the issue for Arun to accommodate higher numbers of houses whilst being bordered by both the sea and a National Park
- that it would be helpful for Members to have a briefing to see how these things have progressed before publication of the housing target deliverability report
- dissatisfaction with the amount of housing Arun has needed to accommodate as part of its Local Plan housing requirements
- the meaninglessness of this target when presented without context
- the unfairness of the Planning Department having this as a target when they are not responsible for building the houses, and therefore whether this Key Measure should be reviewed as it only reflected what builders were building
- the Planning Department, and by extension Arun, being set up to fail with an unrealistic target as it could not force the implementation of approved but yet to be commenced development
- whether the Policy and Finance Committee should be asked to re-evaluate this KPI and seek to amend it so that it was more meaningful in what Arun rather than a third party could actually deliver
- the need to have the figures for planned and unplanned development and the consequences for unplanned development when approved planned development was not built out

The Group Head of Planning provided Members with responses to points raised during the debate, including:

- explanation that the report contained the best interim figures available, which had been taken from new Council Tax records and applications and Building Control completions (recognising that Building Control did not deal with every development within the District as developments could have appointed Inspectors), until the more thorough end-of-year data (which also included site visits, site inspections and direct contact with developers) collected for Annual Monitoring Report purposes became available, which would be reported in January. This report would also include the location of the houses and the figures for planned and unplanned development, which would be resource-intensive poor use of Officer time to report on a quarterly basis
- confirmation that the figure included was for all new homes
- confirmation that Members would receive a briefing on the housing target deliverability report ahead of publication but that Officers were very keen that the report only became available when it was certain that it looked at the issues that it needed to look at, and confirmation that Officers were in active ongoing conversation with the consultants on its preparation
- a finished useable report might be able to be brought to the November meeting of the Committee, though the January meeting was more likely in order to provide Members with a briefing on the report and for it to pass through the Corporate Management Team (CMT) process first
- explanation that the targets were assessed against the Standard Housing Methodology, which had to be used for the purposes of the Annual Monitoring Report, and involved significant amounts of evidence and data

- feeding into how those targets were achieved in a context of changing targets
- Arun being in a unique position within the context of Local Authorities and housing number requirements in terms of the amount of development it had been asked to provide, the contrasts with other Districts with similar requirements (Horsham, Mid Sussex) that were performing better in meeting their targets but that were also more attractive markets being closer to London and Gatwick etc
 - explanation that the targets were set by Arun's statutory Local Plan and how locally agreed targets would be meaningless in the context of planning applications and planning appeals as the Authority would still not be meeting its statutory targets and as an Authority needed to know where it was in relation to its statutory targets at all times

The Chair confirmed that this report was an information paper with no recommendations for the Committee to consider. The Committee then noted the report.

276. THE PROVISION OF RESOURCES TO ASSIST THE COUNCIL ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE A27 ARUNDEL IMPROVEMENTS - FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Planning presented the report which sought to make financial arrangements to implement the recommendation of the Committee at its meeting of 27 July 2022 [Minute 194] where the future Local Plan work programme of the Planning Policy Team, as a result of the decision of Full Council to approve the continued suspension of work on the Local Plan for 2022/23 [Minute 129], was discussed and agreed.

It was explained that prior to Minute 194, the Committee had considered a report on 'The Provision of Resources to assist the Council on matters relating to the A27 Arundel Improvements' [Minute 193] which contained a recommendation to approve a supplementary revenue estimate of up to £50,000 which would have had a financial implication for the Council, but that in light of the decision made at Minute 194 this meant that some of the budget provision in 2022/23 for the Local Plan was available to fund other matters and that funding the proposed work by virement from another budget was preferable as the net spending of the Council would not be increased although it would mean the funding for the Local Plan would need to be revisited in the future.

After clarification was given on the nature of the professional resource to be employed, the recommendation was proposed by Councillor Chapman and seconded by Councillor Yeates.

The Committee

RESOLVED

To note that a virement from the Local Plan budget of up to £50,000 in 2022/23 to employ, on a 'call-off' basis, a consultant to support Arun's involvement with the National Highways A27 Arundel Bypass scheme had been actioned and that this superseded Minute 193 of the meeting on 27 July 2022.

277. OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Thurston provided a verbal update to her report on the South Downs National Park Authority [on Page 1 of the supplement pack] by noting that the Arun Valley project was still on the reserve list for DEFRA funding. The Committee then noted the report.

278. WORK PROGRAMME

One Member raised the need for a seminar on sustainability issues. The Group Head of Planning confirmed that he was in communication with facilitators to provide training to Members after the May 2023 Local Elections and that this would be included as part of that training. The Committee then noted the Work Programme.

(The meeting concluded at 6.35 pm)