

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

26 January 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bower (Chair), Hughes (Vice-Chair), Coster, Edwards, Elkins, Lury, McAuliffe and Yeates

619. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Councillor McAuliffe as a new Member to Planning Policy Committee and extended thanks to departing Committee Member Councillor Thurston for her service to the Committee.

620. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

621. MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 November 2022 and the Minutes of the Special meeting on 7 December 2022 were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

622. 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.

623. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

624. COMMITTEE REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2023/24 - PLANNING POLICY

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Interim Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the report which asked the Committee to consider and recommend its revenue budget for inclusion in the Council's 2023/24 revenue budget for 2023/24. This would then be submitted to Policy and Finance Committee on 9 February 2023 when it considered the overall revenue and capital budgets for 2023/24 so recommendations could be made to a Special Meeting of the Council on 1 March 2023 on the budgets to be set and level of Council Tax for the District for 2023/24. It was noted that this was the second year of preparing the budget under the committee style governance system and that the budget had been prepared against a backdrop of a significant budget gap for 2023/24. The main budget changes from 2022/23 were highlighted - the full year cost of the proposed planning restructure being reflected in the establishment budget, £293k having been included for the Local Plan (£123k in the

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previous year), and the budget anticipating an increase in development control fees of £400k with a budget of £1.6m for 2023/24.

The Chair noted that this Committee was the budget holder for the entire Planning Service, with responsibility for both its own budget and statutory Development Control (Planning Committee). Members then took part in a full debate on the item where a number of points were raised. Clarification was sought on whether the figure quoted for 'Employees' was for a full compliment of staff given recent recruitment problems and whether there was any contingency within the budget to deal with additional pressures. The continued use and cost of agency staff was also raised. Further information was sought on the assumptions made on 'Other Income', as well as the figures for Local Plan expenditure and statutory fees in paragraph 3.8 of the Officer report [on page 3 of the supplementary pack].

It was confirmed that a full compliment of staff had been budgeted for and that there was some contingency in the budget before the need for requests of supplementary estimates to be made to Full Council. It was explained that expenditure could be earmarked at the end of the previous year in order to meet agency costs for example. If no funding was earmarked then the Planning Service would have to stay within its funding envelope, though through the Establishment budget held corporately there was the possibility of virement from elsewhere. It was further explained that due to the cost of living crisis assumptions for income were broadly flat, that though the Local Plan was paused some studies were ongoing hence the expenditure, and that statutory fees were set by statute over which the Council had no control.

As this was the final Planning Policy Committee meeting the Interim Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer would attend before leaving Arun, the Chair and Members thanked her for her services to this Committee and to the Council and wished her well in her future role.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That 2023/24 Revenue Budget as illustrated in Appendix A of the Officer report be agreed.

The Committee

RECOMMEND TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

That the Revenue Budget for this Committee be included in the overall General Fund Budget when considering the overall budgets on 9 February 2023.

625. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS) UPDATE

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report which sought Committee agreement to recommend to Full Council the adoption of an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS 2023), which was a legal document that set out an Authority's plan making programme and in particular set out the recommenced work programme for progressing the Gypsy & Traveller and Traveller Showmen Site Allocation Development Plan Document following consultation. One Member commended Officers on overcoming West Sussex County Council's (WSSC) previous objection to one of the proposed traveller sites. The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that negotiations had been undertaken to agree with WSSC that in principle it was possible to amend the terms of restrictive covenants on certain sites to allow for intensification of use subject to safeguards and protecting WSSC interests in the land. The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Lury and seconded by Councillor Hughes.

The Committee

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That the draft Local Development Scheme January 2023 for the period 2023-2025 as amended be adopted.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That authority be delegated to the Group Head of Planning, in consultation with the Chair of Planning Policy Committee, to undertake minor updating and drafting of any amendments required to the LDS prior to publication on the Council's website.

626. INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN (IIP) UPDATE

[During the discussion, Councillor Elkins declared a Personal Interest as both a Member of Ferring Parish Council and a Member for West Sussex County Council.]

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report which updated the Committee on the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) 2022-2024 and work scheduled for 2023 before the IIP was updated fully in 2024. It was explained that the Council's governance procedures allowed for a 'light touch' update in 2023 to existing projects on the IIP including any potential new projects that might be added and assessed.

Members then took part in a debate on the item where a number of points were raised. The liaising with and sharing information with Parish Councils was commended. The bringing forward of the Littlehampton Waste Centre project following the downgrading by West Sussex County Council of the Westhampnett Waste Transfer

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project was also discussed and concerns were raised for the impacts this might have on provision in Bognor Regis, for example whether expanded provision at both Chichester and Littlehampton could lead to the site in Bognor Regis being closed. The recommendation was then proposed by Councillor Elkins and seconded by Councillor Yeates.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That all infrastructure providers be invited to provide any updated information on the status of existing projects on the IIP and whether there were any potential new projects that providers may like to be considered for assessment and prioritisation.

629. WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN (WRMP) CONSULTATIONS

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report which briefed the Committee on the key messages from the consultations being held on the regional and individual water company Water Resources Management Plans (WRMP) and Arun's proposed responses. It was noted that the WRMPs relevant to Arun include Southern Water, Portsmouth Water and Icosa Water plans related to maintaining water supplies into the future.

Members then took part in a full debate on the item where a number of points were raised. There was concern that the presentations prepared by the Water Companies made little or no reference to Arun. The District's relationship with water was raised by a number of Members with some exasperation in discussing water scarcity when parts of the District were currently suffering from considerable flooding. The proposal for a desalination plant on the river Arun was raised and Members spoke both in favour and against. The combining of desalination and water recycling at Ford made sense for some, whereas other Members would need considerable safeguards before supporting such proposals over safety concerns given the reputation specifically of Southern Water with its lack of investment in new infrastructure to keep stormwater separate from sewage and the resultant discharges into the sea. The importance of tourism to the local economy and the impact of the lack of investment to the economy and the reputation of Arun's resorts was also noted. The inability of Portsmouth Water to meet current supply demands was raised. The need for clarity on the capacity of the network and whether too much stress was being put on the water system in Arun were discussed in response. Concerns were also raised around biodiversity and the need to consider wider solutions, the need for better engagement with landholders and the impacts of water neutrality in adjacent authorities.

Members and Officers concluded the discussion by recognising the challenges brought by climate change to water resource management. The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Hughes and seconded by Councillor Bower.

The Committee

RESOLVED – That

1. The content of the draft Best Value Regional Plan, the Southern Water draft Water Resources Management Plan, the Portsmouth Water draft Water Resources Management Plan and Icosa Water, where they affect Arun District, be noted; and
2. The proposed responses to the draft Best Value Regional Plan (Appendix 2); the Southern Water draft Water Resources Management Plan (Appendix 3); the Portsmouth Water draft Water Resources Management Plan (Appendix 4) and the Icosa Water draft Water Resource Management Plan (Appendix 5) be agreed.

628. ARUN AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT (AMR)

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report which updated the Committee on the Council's Authority Monitoring Report for the monitoring year 2021-2022. It was noted that the 5-year housing land supply stood at 2.36 years and was slightly down on the previous year's figure of 2.42 years. Members that spoke spoke of their frustration with the 5-year housing land supply measure as it was out of Arun's control and was a symptom of a broken system weighted towards developers. The Chair highlighted an approximate figure of 6,500 unimplemented permissions to illustrate this (and clarified this was total supply, not for the 5 year period). Though developers shared some responsibility by not building out permissions, another Member suggested that blame should principally rest with the Government as developers were only responding to the market and central Government methodology and figures were created in isolation from this. The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Elkins and seconded by Councillor Yeates.

The Committee

RESOLVED – That

1. The Authority Monitoring Report 2021/22 be noted; and
2. The Authority Monitoring Report 2021/22 be published on the Council's web site.

629. ARUN BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER (BLR)

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report which updated the Committee on Arun's' Brownfield Land Register 2022 and any changes to it since it was published in 2021 before being used as the basis for the annual BLR statistical return to Government required by national legislation. Members that spoke noted the difficulties in developing brownfield sites due to contamination

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issues and the particular issues in developing the Littlehampton West Bank LEGA site. The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Hughes and seconded by Councillor Edwards.

The Committee

RESOLVED – That

1. The 2022 Brownfield Land Register (Part 1) be noted; and
2. The Brownfield Land Register be kept under review regarding preparation of a Part 2 register and ‘permission in principle’ (including the carrying out of consultation and publicity requirements) should any suitable sites be identified, in accordance with the Brownfield Land Register Regulations 2017.

630. QUARTER 3 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report which set out the performance of the Key Performance Indicators at Quarter 3 for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 December 2022. This Committee had one KPI to note [CP36 – Number of new homes completed]. Not wanting to repeat the discussion in Minute 628 and the lack of control the Council had in achieving this KPI, it was suggested that resources could be better spent elsewhere rather than collating such an unhelpful metric. The Committee then noted the report.

631. OUTSIDE BODIES

A verbal report on the South Downs National Park Authority was given on Councillor Thurston’s behalf. It noted that the National Park Authority had finished its restructuring exercise in response to the reduction in real terms of its grant funding, and whilst inevitably some activity has been scaled back, the core issues of climate change, renaturing and a National Park for all were still at the fore of the work. The Authority was also reapplying for grant funding for the Lapwings and Landscape project in the Arun valley, and was hoping to re-convene the Local Access forum which had not met for a while.

632. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted that there would be a Special meeting of the Committee on 21 February 2023 to which reports on the NPPF’s consultation, Chichester’s Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation and the results of the housing market absorption study would be brought.

(The meeting concluded at 7.36 pm)