

HOUSING AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

6 October 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Pendleton (Chair), Mrs Cooper (Vice-Chair), Daniells, J. English, Gregory, Hughes, Madeley, Thurston, Yeates and Lury (Substitute for Needs)

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

334. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Haywood and Needs.

335. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

336. MINUTES

The minutes of the Special Housing and Wellbeing Committee meeting held on 12 September 2022, were approved by the Committee. These would be signed at the end of the meeting.

337. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN 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 matters for this meeting.

338. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

339. COMMUNITY TRANSPORT PLAN

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Community Wellbeing introduced Matt Roberts, Chief Executive Officer of Community Transport Sussex and the Development Coordinator Jacqui Cooke. He then introduced his report and explained that Community Transport Sussex was an infrastructure support organisation and also an operator of Community Transport. Historically Arun had supported two community transport organisations, Sammy Community Transport and Arun

Coordinated Community Transport. Following the merger and subsequent failure of the merged organisation, Arun Community Transport had emerged to fill the void and was steadily building its customer base, supported by a grant from Arun. There were also several smaller transport organisations across the District. Arun District Council had not historically had an overall strategy for community transport and Community Transport Sussex had been asked to draft a plan.

The Development Coordinator for Community Transport Sussex then provided a short presentation on a proposed Community Transport Plan for Arun. She explained how important Community Transport was, particularly for the more vulnerable residents, and that it provided a solution for those that struggle to use mainstream transport to get out and about. They helped people to access services, attend appointments and help them to keep socially connected and independent. Arun's Community Transport Plan had been developed to create an integrated and effective community transport provision across Arun. She drew Members' attention to section four of the plan which outlined the number of transport providers across the District. There was a really good range of providers in Arun, and it was important that each of those were supported in order to help them deliver the best possible service to vulnerable residents. Community Transport Sussex provided a key role as an infrastructure support provider. Once the Plan had been considered and hopefully approved by Committee, the next step would be to develop an Action Plan that would be brought back to the Committee in the new year. She also praised Arun for developing a Community Transport Plan, as no other district or borough in Sussex had so far done this.

The Chair thanked the representatives from Community Transport Sussex for their presentation and asked for a further explanation around the funding. The Group Head of Community Wellbeing explained that the intention was to provide a grant of £7500 to Community Transport Sussex to carry out all the infrastructure work. There would also continue to be a small grant given to Arun Community Transport. The Chief Executive Officer of Community Transport Sussex explained that the passengers paid a small fare to travel, which was roughly a third of a taxi fare. The fee paid by the passenger did not cover the cost to provide the transport. Community Transport Sussex received some funding from West Sussex County Council (WSCC), which helped to fund their development team. The funding from Arun District Council would enable Community Transport Sussex to provide more transport themselves, and also to work with local groups to gather data to provide evidence of services required.

Members then took part in a question-and-answer session and the following points were made:

- Members thanked Community Transport Sussex for the presentation, and there was support for the project.
- Would data be provided on the number of people in the various need groups being helped under the Plan? The Chief Executive Officer of Community Transport Sussex confirmed that data for this could be provided.
- It was asked whether passengers had to be referred to use the service, or whether they could access these themselves. The Chief Executive Officer

of Community Transport Sussex explained that residents could become a member themselves, the requirement being a difficulty in accessing public transport, which could be due to mobility needs or due to the remote location which they may live.

- Could care homes use the service? The Chief Executive Officer of Community Transport Sussex explained individuals living in Care Homes could book the services, or care homes could become group members. They also worked with a number of care homes to provide excursions.
- Did they operate on Sundays? The Chief Executive Officer of Community Transport Sussex explained they did not routinely operate on Sundays, however if requests for group outings were made in advance, they would try to provide a service for this. They were working with the NHS to ensure services could be provided when weekend clinics were being run.
- The Thakeham case study was highlighted, and it was hoped that a similar trial could be run in Arun.

The recommendations were Proposed by Councillor Cooper and Seconded by Councillor Thurston.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Community Transport Plan for Arun be approved.
- 2) an increase to the budget for Community Transport from £6,930 to £11,500 to support an improvement in Community Transport across Arun District be approved.

340. AGE UK ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN ARUN

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Community Wellbeing presented the report to the Committee. He explained that last year funding had been agreed to support the ongoing work of Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove in the Arun area. Members had requested an in-year update on the use of the grant and to consider funding in subsequent years. The report from Age UK was on page 39 of the agenda. He highlighted that the funding had been used to supplement activities in the District and support the salaries of a development manager and a locality co-ordinator. Age UK had also mapped activities across the District and sought potential new areas to develop services. He then introduced Jo Clarke, Director of Partnerships and Localities at Age UK, Brighton and Hove who was in attendance to answer questions from Members.

Members thanked Age UK for their work.

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The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Cooper and Seconded by Councillor Thurston.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That they continue to grant fund Age UK West Sussex Brighton & Hove £50,000 from existing budgets in 2023/24 to support activities for older people in the Arun district.

341. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT UPDATE

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Communities & Wellbeing Manager presented the report to the Committee. She explained that the Arun Community Engagement Project recognised the need to work with and alongside communities in the heart of their neighbourhoods to tackle health inequalities. The project had focussed activity in two areas of greatest health needs using repurposed existing Council buildings, Bersted Green Hub in Bognor Regis and Chilgrove House Littlehampton. The report set out the progress to date, including rejuvenating the spaces, community launch events in April and ongoing development. Fundamentally the project was about partnership with the local community and a wide range of agencies, working together to improve the health and wellbeing of residents who lived in Bersted and Wick. She drew Members' attention to the case studies in Appendix A.

Members (and a non-Committee Member given permission to speak) then took part in a question and answer session as summarised below:

- The team were congratulated on the work they had done at Bersted Hub, and it was felt the transformation had been incredible.
- The case studies were very moving, and it was great for the Committee to see what a difference the project was making.
- It was asked when there would be an action plan showing targets, which was felt to be important particularly for obtaining funding going forwards. The Communities & Wellbeing Manager confirmed that a qualitative and quantitative action plan was currently in development. This would also include retrospective measurements.

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Cooper and Seconded by Councillor Gregory.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the approach and aims of the Arun Community Engagement Project as stated in paragraph 4.2 of the report be endorsed.

342. SAFER ARUN PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Upon the invitation of the Chair the Communities & Wellbeing Manager presented the report to the Committee. She explained that this was a standing item on the agenda which enabled the Council to fulfil the statutory function of scrutinising the performance of the Safer Arun Partnership (SAP). The report set out the progress of the SAP to date, including progress against the current Partnership Plan, as outlined in Appendix A; actions progressed since the last Committee report in June; the results of the Partnership's Community Safety Residents Survey, in Appendix B; and how the Partnership would review and refresh its priorities and plan for the next 12-18 months. Members were reminded that when undertaking scrutiny of the Safer Arun Partnership, the Committee had authority to make its own recommendations back to the partnership in relation to any performance and reporting elements it deemed appropriate.

Members (and a non-Committee Member given permission to speak) then took part in a question and answer session as summarised below:

- It was noted that there had been 437 responses and it was asked how many people had been asked to participate. The Communities & Wellbeing Manager explained it had been open to all residents of Arun and was well promoted. Members felt this was a good number of responses.
- It was suggested there could be a link between those that had been a victim of crime, and those that had heard of the SAP, and felt that more should be done to raise awareness of the SAP
- It was noted that the public had picked up on anti-social driving as being an issue.
- Could geographic areas be identified? The Communities & Wellbeing Manager confirmed this data had been gathered and could be broken down further for Members. This would be circulated to Members outside of the meeting.
- Would the survey be repeated, so that Members could see if achievements were being made? The Communities & Wellbeing Manager explained there was a requirement to complete the survey annually. More targeted surveys were also being considered.
- It was felt positive that attention was being focussed on youth outreach work (shown on Page 70), however it was asked why there was no mention of county lines – the distribution of drugs. The Communities & Wellbeing Manager explained that the plan was to make this much clearer going forward, and she hoped the partners would agree this should have a

much clearer focus. As part of the partnership plan, Arun wanted to reduce drug-related harm, working in partnership with Sussex Police to achieve this. A written update had been requested from Sussex Police

- Some of the information was worrying, including that the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team had specific targets to meet, but there did not appear to be similar targets for Sussex Police; the perception of crime was substantially higher than those experiencing it; residents of Bognor were three times more likely to experience crime than those living in Burgess Hill; it was felt some partners could be doing more to achieve better outcomes. The Chair explained that it was normal for the perception of crime to be greater than the reality.
- Sussex Police currently had a campaign to try and reassure residents and ensure they felt they were being heard.
- There would be a SAP workshop on Monday 10 October 2022.
- It was suggested that in the future the question of how well the resident was able to communicate with the Police and how easy this was, be added to the survey.

The Communities & Wellbeing Manager would feed in concerns and issues raised by the Committee to the SAP for them to consider.

The Committee noted the update received.

343. BUDGET PROCESS REPORT 2023/24

Upon the invitation of the Chair the Group Accountant presented the report to the Committee. The report provided a summary of the budget process for 2023/24. He drew Members' attention to the flowchart in Appendix A which highlighted the key dates and timeline for the process. It was the same process as last year.

There were no questions from Members regarding the budget process.

The Committee noted the Budget Process Report 2023/24.

344. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2022-2025 - QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Upon the invitation of the Chair the Director of Environment and Communities presented the report to the Committee. This report set out the performance of the Key Performance indicators (KPIs) at Quarter 1 for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2022. The KPIs were set out in a table on Page 99.

Members then took part in a question and answer session as summarised below:

- CP11 (number of visits to Council leisure centres) and CP15 (time taken to process housing/council tax benefits) – it was good to note these were fully achieving.
- CP16 – these were very poor turnaround times. What were the numbers of properties currently void and the numbers of households currently living in temporary accommodation? The Interim Head of Housing explained that the number of voids fluctuated, however this number had recently been around 35. Those living in temporary accommodation had recently increased and was around 100.
- CP17 (homeless cases successfully resolved) – although not fully achieving the targets, but within the 15% range, it was noted that new strategies and approaches should assist this. Would there be sufficient money to support this after 3 years? The Interim Head of Housing explained that previously funding had been for 1 year, so the 3 year funding gave more predictability than in previous periods.
- CP21 (percentage of non-emergency repairs completed within 20 working days) – This was just 24%, what was the reason for this? The Interim Head of Housing explained that this was a result of efforts to reduce a backlog of overdue cases, which was now reducing. This had meant a large proportion of recently completed repair cases had gone out of time.
- CP19 (number of Housing Register applications activated 'live' within 15 working days) – as no information could be provided, could customer satisfaction be put in its place. The Interim Head of Housing explained that this information could soon be provided when new systems were put in place in early next year. Officers would be open to the possibility of reviewing KPIs to ensure they were aligned with Housing Strategy objectives, Transformation Plan objectives and regulatory requirements.

The Committee noted the Quarter 1 performance report.

345. RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Upon the invitation of the Chair the Resident Engagement Officer presented the report to the Committee. She explained that the report sought approval for the 4 year Resident Engagement Strategy. The strategy had been developed in response to changes in the Social Housing White Paper. It set out 5 key aims to ensure any current and future regulatory requirements were met. It also ensured residents had every opportunity to engage in ways that suited them.

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Members then took part in a question and answer session as summarised below:

- The strategy was praised and was felt to be very informative.
- The Budget Growth request had been made to appoint another member of staff and to meet Government legislation. Clarification was sought around the funding for this. The Interim Head of Housing explained there was a growth bid for the additional money, which was being looked at as part of the overall Housing Revenue Account budget setting.
- There was concern that some telephone numbers may not be correct on the Arun website, making it difficult for residents to get hold of the right Officers. The Resident Engagement Officer agreed to carry out an exercise to ensure these numbers were correct.
- Clarification was requested around the charges for joining TPAS, which was provided by the Resident Engagement Officer.

The recommendations were Proposed by Councillor Cooper and Seconded by Councillor Gregory.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Resident Engagement Strategy be approved.
- 2) authority be delegated to the Head of Housing to make minor changes to the strategy and any amendments necessary to reflect legislative and regulatory changes.
- 3) the submission of budget growth bids of £47,557 revenue costs and £50,000 capital costs for the Council's 2023/24 budget preparation exercise, be approved.

346. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Interim Head of Housing presented the report to the Committee. He explained the current Homelessness Strategy expired in 2021. All Local Authorities were legally required to have an up-to-date Homelessness Strategy in place and to ensure compliance with the Homelessness Act 2002 (as amended). This report sought agreement to extend the current strategy until the new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 - 2028 was adopted.

Members (and a non-Committee Member given permission to speak) then took part in a question and answer session as summarised below:

- It was noted that as the existing Strategy had expired, the Council were currently not complying with its statutory duties, and it was asked how this had happened. The Interim Head of Housing was unsure why there had

no trigger for this to be reviewed, however this situation was not unique to Arun, other local authorities were in the same situation.

- It was felt robust triggers were required to ensure policies and strategies were reviewed at the correct times. The Interim Head of Housing confirmed that this would be embedded in the documents in future to ensure this did not happen again.
- It was suggested the policies and strategies could be put on the Work Programme for review, to ensure Committee took responsibility for these. The Director of Environment and Communities felt this was better managed within the departments as would be a huge list.
- It was asked whether there was likely to be an increase in homelessness over the next year. The Interim Head of Housing explained this was a likely scenario and they were preparing for the possibility.

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Thurston and Seconded by Councillor Gregory.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That approval be given for the extension of our current Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2019-2021 until the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been adopted in 2023.

347. HOMELESSNESS GRANT FUNDING

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Interim Head of Housing presented the report to the Committee. It detailed the expenditure in relation to Government grants, and funding received in respect of tackling and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, and to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on those who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Members then took part in a question and answer session as summarised below:

- It was asked whether it was likely Government funding would continue after 3 years or not. The Interim Head of Housing explained that there had recently been an emphasis on trying to build schemes to provide accommodation and there may be no further funding after 3 years.
- It was asked what would happen to the money from the underspend of the Covid-19 fund. The Interim Head of Housing explained the fund was limited to dealing with Covid-19 issues, so they needed to wait for Government guidance.

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The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Gregory and Seconded by Councillor Lury.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the grant related expenditure in respect of homelessness, the prevention of homelessness, rough sleeping and mitigating the impact of COVID-19, be noted and approved.

348. FIRE SAFETY POLICY

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Compliance Manager presented the report to the Committee. He explained there had been a change in legislation which came into effect in April, the underlying purpose of which was to ensure all social landlords understand their block buildings and the fire safety measures they must take regarding this. He explained a new Fire Safety Policy was required as a result of this. He reassured Members their processes had been amended and new legislation had been followed correctly. They had also been liaising with the Fire Service and had support from an external company, who were experts in health and safety compliance to social housing providers.

Members (and a non-Committee Member given permission to speak) then took part in a question and answer session as summarised below:

- It was asked whether f) on 4.3, Page 163 should be incorporated into e). It was confirmed this was the case.
- Page 175, under Statement of Intent, explains there would be a requirement for communication with residents. It was asked whether this could be weaved into the Residents Communication Strategy. The Interim Head of Housing explained the Resident Engagement Officer would be involved with this work. The Compliance Manager explained that individual requirements of each resident would need to be looked at.
- Would any of the existing contracts need amending? The Compliance Manager explained the Fire Risk Assessment contract would be affected. There would be no cost implication for this. Most changes required were already covered by current contractors. Although most of the changes were quite small, the collective effect of those could be quite large.
- Following individual assessments of residents, could it be decided that some blocks were not suitable homes for some of the residents currently living there? The Compliance Manager confirmed that this was a possibility, however it depended on the wish of the residents.

It was then asked whether the Officer recommendation was correct, as it was unclear whether Committee were being asked to adopt the new strategy or not.

Following a discussion, Officers confirmed that they wanted Committee to adopt the new Strategy, and the wording should be amended.

Councillor Pendleton then Proposed an amendment to the recommendation which was as follows:

- 1) the Housing and Wellbeing Committee adopt the new Fire Safety Policy as attached to the report
- 2) authority be delegated to the Head of Housing to make minor changes to the strategy and any amendments necessary to reflect legislative and regulatory changes.

This amendment was Seconded by Councillor Cooper and following a vote, the amendment was confirmed as CARRIED.

The substantive recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Cooper and Seconded by Councillor Gregory.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1) the new Fire Safety Policy, as attached to the report, be adopted
- 2) authority be delegated to the Head of Housing to make minor changes to the strategy and any amendments necessary to reflect legislative and regulatory changes.

349. OUTSIDE BODIES - FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS

Councillor Cooper presented an update to the Committee on the Arun Local Community Network. A copy of her report would be uploaded to the website.

Councillor Pendleton would provide written update reports regarding the West Sussex County Council Health and Social Care Committee and the Police and Crime Panel, both of which would be uploaded to the website.

Councillor Pendleton also updated the Committee that she had recently visited both the Sussex Police Call Centre and the Sussex Police Firearms Training College.

350. WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The Chair updated the Committee that Council Officers had been working closely with the local voluntary and community sector partners to scope and assess the risk and impact of cost of living pressures in the local communities. This had been under the umbrella of the Arun Local Community Network. The outcome of this partnership work,

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potential and current responses would be brought to this Committee on 6 December 2022. Pivotal to taking this work forward would be appointing a Cost of Living Co-ordinator who would lead on developing and implementing the Council's organisational response and integrating this with local voluntary and community sector responses. A clear response was vital, and if need be, there would be a Special Meeting for this due to the urgency.

It was asked whether there could be a regular update provided regarding the Wave Leisure Centre, which currently had a problem. The Director of Environment and Communities explained that this situation was already being dealt with and an update was being sent to Members of the Committee.

The Committee noted the work programme items for the remainder of the municipal year.

351. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee

RESOLVED

That under Section 100a (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the items.

352. COUNCIL TAX - DECEASED

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Yeates and Seconded by Councillor Madeley.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the outstanding council tax charges totalling £12,619.52 where the debtor has died and there are no funds in the estate, be written off.

353. COUNCIL TAX INSOLVENCY WRITE OFFS

The recommendation was Proposed by Councillor Yeates and Seconded by Councillor Madeley.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the outstanding council tax charges totalling £ 25,214.52 which are subject to insolvency action, preventing the Council from pursuing the debtor for payment, be written off.

354. BUSINESS RATES INSOLVENCY

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the outstanding business rates charges totalling £24,594.66 which the Council has been unable to recover due to the liable party being subject to insolvency action, be written off.

(The meeting concluded at 8.27 pm)