

HOUSING AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

20 June 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Birch (Chair), Haywood (Vice-Chair), Batley, Bence, Bicknell, Butcher, Gunner (Substitute for J English), Needs, Pendleton, Wiltshire and Yeates

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

80. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor English who was substituted by Councillor Gunner.

81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made.

82. MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 25 January 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair.

83. 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 was one urgent report to be presented to the Committee tonight regarding the acquisition and development of 12 new Council housings and 2 flats. As this report was an exempt report the Chair confirmed that this would be heard after agenda item 17, in exempt business.

84. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that there were no public questions submitted for this meeting.

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85. MEETING START TIMES 2023/24

The Chair confirmed that the Committee were required to agree their future meeting start times for the remainder of the municipal year. She then proposed that meeting start times remained at 6pm and this was seconded by Councillor Haywood.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Committee meeting start times be 6pm.

86. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2022-2026 - QUARTER 4 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 MARCH 2023.

The Group Head of Organisational Excellence was invited by the Chair to present her report to members. She explained for newer members that the council had a number of key performance indicators that measured the operational performance for the period 2022-2026 which allowed the council to measure trends. She confirmed that there were new indicators and that this has been noted in the report. Each committee had its own indicators which are shown in the appendix, specifically there were 7 indicators reporting to this committee. In summing up she explained that Policy and Finance Committee had responsibility for overseeing performance across the council, which is why they received all the indicators within their report.

The Chair then asked members for their comments and questions a summary of the points raised is below;

- CP20 it was requested that members were supplied with an additional appendix that explained the financial breakdown for this indicator.
- CP16 more detail on this process was requested, with a particular interest being expressed by members to be involved in the work being completed by officers to review and improve the process.
- CP16 and CP21 as both these indicators had deteriorated in quarter 4, more detail was requested, so members could understand what the contractor issues as mentioned in the report. It was confirmed that a new approach to the procurement process had been implemented and improvements were expected to be seen in quarter 3.

Members had a more detailed discussion was had on CP16 where they expressed their concern at the current reporting figures for this area. It was requested that a briefing or workshop was to be held with officers and members of the committee which would allow for a more detailed and focused discussion on the indicator as well as providing members with the opportunity to input into improvements. It was proposed

by Councillor Pendleton and seconded by Councillor Bicknell that an officer and member briefing/workshop be arranged. All members of the committee were in support of this proposal therefore;

The Committee

RESOLVED that

officers are to arrange a briefing/workshop for members to review and look at the key performance indicator CP16 in more detail.

Members then noted the report update provided.

87. COUNCIL VISION 2022-2026 ANNUAL REPORT

The Group Head of Organisational Excellence was invited by the Chair to present her report to members. Where she advised that the council's vision was set by members and agreed at Full Council in 2022. She confirmed that the report was reported to all Committees and was grouped by council vision theme rather than specific committee responsibility. The purpose of the report before members at this meeting was to allow for a focused discussion on those areas pertinent to the Housing and Wellbeing committee.

The Chair then invited comments and questions from members. It was first highlighted that a review of the vision was undertaken urgently due to the changes in the current climate, specifically relating to rates/costs increases due to the impact of the increased inflation currently being felt by all. It was commented that given these changes it may mean that many of the areas feeding into the overall vision theme may need to be changed, put on hold or even removed as it may now not be achievable and the opportunity to review and add new areas of focus to correctly reflect the current national position. The Group Head of Operational Excellence responded by confirming that officers would be directed by members on the direction they want to take. If the view from members was a full review was needed, this could be done. However, the current document had a very broad remit and maybe members needed to ascertain if what they want to achieve could be done without the need for a full review.

There was support from across the membership of the committee for a review to be undertaken. The Legal Services Manager explained that the committee was being asked to look at the vision document with a specific focus on those matters and measures that impact the Housing and Wellbeing committee remit as delegated by Full Council. Members had the ability to make a recommendation to the Policy and Finance Committee to ask for a full review, but they should consider that other committees may not agree that a full review was required. As member debate continued there were many suggestions considered including the option for this item to be brought back to the committee at its September meeting to provide time for the committee to meet and complete their own review of the 'aims' that specifically impact their committee. The

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need for clarity was urged by the Leader of the Opposition, where it was then agreed that the review should focus on the elements that impact the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). After further discussion the Chair confirmed that it was important for members to review the current actions against the current economic climate and requested that officers organise a date for members and officers to meet to complete this review, this was unanimously agreed by the committee.

Members then noted the report update provided.

88. HOUSING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PROGRAMME UPDATE

Upon invitation by the Chair the Business Development Manager presented the report to members and highlighted that the report provided members with an update on the progress made with the implementation of the housing management system since the last update in July 2022.

The Chair invited members to make comments or ask any questions where it was asked how and why the council had ended up spending so much money on this project that had originally been predicted to cost significantly less. The Head of Housing advised members that when he arrived at the council, he had serious concerns over the planned timescales of delivery and the predicted costings. Given his previous experience of implementing the system elsewhere. He then brought a revised report update to the committee that set out revised timescales, resourcing, and costings to ensure that a fuller more robust evaluation of all the projects parameters could be undertaken and included in the project delivery. Clarity was sought on the total costs associated with the software in relation to external contractors and would there be a need for sub-contract fees. It was explained by the Business Development Manager that the software had built within it as contractor portal that would be used by any contractors used by the council, and this had been included in the total costing of the software. Additional questions were asked in relation to how residents would be able to use or interact with the new system. It was explained that there were two elements to the system that would provide residents with a registration portal and a customer portal due to be implement in May 2024, where they would be able to complete many tasks including, but not limited to bidding for properties and register complaints.

Members noted the report update provided.

89. AMENDMENTS TO NEW ALLOCATIONS POLICY

(Councillor Bence and Pendleton declared personal interests in this item as members of West Sussex County Council.

Councillor Birch declared a personal interest in this item as she works for Hyde Housing)

The Housing Options Manager was invited by the Chair to present the report to members, she confirmed that the council was required by law to have an up-to-date allocations policy, which sets out how housing allocations are assessed, and housing is allocated. The policy is used to support the council's objective of delivering the right homes in the right places. She also advised that having attended a meeting with West Sussex County Council last week she had a further update to present to members which was that WSCC are introducing a scheme for care leavers called the 'House Project' scheme which involved identifying young care leavers who would be suitable to partake in pre tenancy training, to enable them to be ready to hold a tenancy. This would also provide support when tenancies were granted to ensure that the young person's sustain their tenancy after they move in. WSCC are requesting support from Districts and Boroughs to provide with social housing tenancies for the young people on the scheme. The allocations policy already has a B10 additional preference category for young care leavers, leaving local authority care. Within this banding she was requesting that the Council may make a reasonable direct allocation of social accommodation to fulfil its obligations to West Sussex Care leavers, under the House Project Scheme and to remove the option of refusal on the expectation of better offer being made.

Members were supportive of the report and the verbal update with Councillor Pendleton expressing the importance of looking after the councils most vulnerable residents. She also asked the officer to review a number of typos she found on the following pages of the policy, 75,76,82 and 87.

The recommendation was then duly proposed and seconded and put to the vote.

The Committee

RESOLVED

2.1) To approve the changes to the Allocation Policy set out in this report and to give delegated authority to the Group Head of Housing Services to make minor changes to the policy and any amendments necessary to reflect legislative changes.

90. SAFER ARUN PARTNERSHIP (SCRUTINY)

(Councillor Bence and Pendleton declared personal interests in this item as members of Fire and Rescue Select Committee at WSCC.)

The Community Safety Officer was invited to present his report to members where he advised members the Safer Arun Partnership was a collective partnership bringing together relevant agencies that shared knowledge and resources to tackle anti-social behaviour. The report shared with members the adopted 3-year partnership plan which give a greater scope with better transparency and scrutiny over this timeframe, he explained previously that the plans had run over a 1-year timeframe, as this was found to be very limiting.

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The Chair invited members to make any comments and ask questions. There were a number of supportive comments made by members and expressions of thanks made directly to those involved in the Safer Arun Partnership for the work they undertake.

A series of questions were then asked of the chair specifically in relation to the work undertaken by the Arun District Council Community wardens and if this work would continue to be supported by the new administration. The chair confirmed that the group were very supportive of the work undertaken by the Community Wardens and no changes were expected to be made.

Members then noted the update provided.

91. PERFORMANCE MEASURES HOUSING SERVICES

Upon invitation of the chair the Business Development Manager advised members that there had been a lot of changes made by the regulator for social housing. The new consumer regulation will be implemented in 2024 and the regulator expects members to know and be engaged with the legislative changes, as explained in the report detail it sets out the key areas that will be measured by these new additional performance measures, it will ensure that members will be provided with regular assurance surrounding performance as well as allowing the residents of Arun District Council being able to hold the council to account more easily.

The Chair then invited members to make comments or ask questions, where it was queried how regularly members will receive these updates. It was confirmed that it was planned to bring a report every 6 months to the committee as they will also feed into the other performance reports. It was commented that 6 monthly was too infrequent, and it would be preferred for monthly reports.

It was then proposed by Councillor Pendleton and seconded by Councillor Batley that the committee receive quarterly updates to fall in line with reporting to the Policy and Finance Committee

Moving on to debating the proposal it was discussed that as the data source as noted in appendix 2 was reported monthly, the updates should therefore be completed monthly. The officer explained that data source in the report was a dummy source, not all data was received monthly. In response it was commented that these updates could be provided by email to members. Councillor Pendleton then made a request to add to her proposal the following; the committee receive quarterly updates to fall in line with reporting to the Policy and Finance Committee on the performance measures outlined in the report **with any concerning data being reported by email to the committee as soon as it was known**. Councillor Batley as seconder was happy with this addition.

Further support for monthly reporting was heard, with the opportunity to ensure that early intervention was available to the council should there be fall in performance across any particular area. The Head of Housing then explained that it was very infrequent that performance would decline and show as a trend over the time period of a month. And whilst quarterly reporting was a more frequent reporting time period it would be sufficient for the purpose of seeing trends.

The Chair then moved to the vote on the proposal and;

The Committee

RESOLVED that

It was to receive quarterly updates to fall in line with reporting to the Policy and Finance Committee on the performance measures outlined in the report with any concerning data being reported by email to the committee as soon as it was known.

Continuing with the debate members moved on to discuss the satisfaction levels to be reported, it was asked if the officer could provide more information on what and how these satisfaction levels were arrived at. The Business Development Manager confirmed that residents were regularly surveyed, and the satisfaction levels were derived directly from these surveys, it was confirmed that the surveys were completed by telephone after a resident has received a service or job completion from the council. It also helped to highlight where processes or service had been less than satisfactory enabling the council to intervene and follow up where necessary. A further query was raised regarding the layout of the template where it was confirmed that the template had been provided by House Smart and works with the data that would be supplied.

In turning to the vote, it was requested that the recommendations were taken and voted on separately.

Recommendation 2.1 was proposed by Councillor Haywood and seconded by Councillor Yeates.

Recommendation 2.2 was proposed by Councillor Haywood and seconded by Councillor Batley

The Committee

RESOLVED

- 2.1) Approve the suite of performance measures for housing services set out in appendix 1.
- 2.2) Approve the reporting template set out in Appendix P

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92. LEISURE OPERATING CONTRACT

(Councillors Bence, Batley, Bicknell and Wiltshire declared personal interests as members and users of Freedom Leisure and both its facilities in the district.)

The Chair invited the Environmental and Strategy Manager to present the report to members where he first introduced Ivan Horsfall Turner from Freedom Leisure and Fraser Kidd who was the councils new Wellbeing and Communities Business Manager. In turning to the report, he explained that it followed on from the report presented at the December meeting of the committee which provided further insight into the financial pressures impacting the Leisure operating contract due to the global energy crisis. Since December Freedom have closely monitored the utility market and negotiated new contracts which had improved the financial position. However, it should still be noted that these costs were still significantly higher than prior to the pre-energy crisis levels. It should also be noted that the council and freedom leisure are exploring all opportunities to reduce future costs, improve efficiencies and decarbonisation of its leisure centres. Work has been undertaken by the Sports Consultancy who have reviewed and recommended an appropriate level of one-off financial support to be made to Freedom Leisure.

The Chair then invited members to make comment or ask any questions with a reminder to be cautious if wanting to discuss any information detailed in the exempt appendix. It was asked when the applications for additional financial assistance would be applied for as detailed on page 135 of the report. It was confirmed that the Swimming Pool Support fund was expected by the end of June 2023 and in terms of phase 2 of that fund it was believed to be published in the Autumn of 2023.

Support for Freedom Leisure was heard from one member who said he had found them to be a wonderful asset for the district and he urged members to support the recommendations before the committee.

The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Yeates and Seconded by councillor Bence.

The Committee

RESOLVED

1.2. Note the contents of this report in relation to work undertaken by officers and our external consultants The Sports Consultancy, who have reviewed the current operating cost pressures faced by Freedom Leisure, linked to the global energy crisis.

1.3. Note the work undertaken by Freedom Leisure to secure a better energy deal to improve the financial outlook for 23/24 and therefore reduce the level of support recommended.

1.4. Support the use of £205,255, which has been included in the 2023/24 budget to support Freedom Leisure's continued operation of the Leisure Operating Contract as a one off non-contractual financial assistance.

93. OUTSIDE BODIES UPDATED

The Chair confirmed that there were no report updates for the meeting and members noted the outside bodies list.

94. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

The Chair advised members that the work programme for 2023/24 was for information and asked members if they had any questions or comments.

Members had a full discussion on items they would like to see added to the work programme alongside previous requests that had yet to be fulfilled. The following items were agreed to be added to the work programme;

- Review of Pets Policy requested for September meeting
- Members would like a list of all Policies that sit with Housing & Wellbeing and their expiry/review dates
- Members would like a schedule of meetings for all outside bodies that report into the Committee
- Request for Budget, Community Warden, VACC, Arts Work, Council Tax Reduction Scheme reports to be added to the work programme, including any others that may have been missed
- Request for an update on HRA
- Request for an update on Reactive and Planned maintenance work
- Invitation to Stone pillow to come and update the committee to be organised

Members then noted the work programme for 2023/24

95. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The recommendation was proposed by Cllr Gunner proposed and seconded by Councillor Batley

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

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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 item.

96. INSOLVENCY COUNCIL TAX WRITE OFFS

The recommendation was proposed by the Councillor Pendleton proposed and seconded by Councillor Gunner

The Committee

RESOLVED

1.2 To write off the outstanding council tax charges totalling £49,768.55 which are subject to insolvency action, preventing the Council from pursuing the debtor for payment.

97. COUNCIL TAX BUSINESS RATES

The recommendation was proposed by the Councillor Batley proposed and seconded by Councillor Pendleton

The Committee

RESOLVED

1 To write off the outstanding business rates charges totalling £87,746.88 which are subject to insolvency action, preventing the Council from pursuing the debtor for payment.

98. ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW COUNCIL HOUSES AT WARWICK NURSERIES AND BOWERIES BARNHAM AND EASTERGATE

(Councillor Bence declared a personal interest in this item as a member of WSCC.)

Upon invitation by the Chair the Head of Housing presented the report to members where he advised that the request for members was to give approval to enter into a Golden Brick Land Contract and Development Agreement to purchase 12 houses and 2 flats on adjacent sites in Barnham and Eastergate. He also requested approval

for the allocation of Section 106 contributions (commuted sums) to partly fund the two schemes, he explained that the contributions had to be used specifically towards new build developments within the district and were time limited.

Members took part in a full and detailed debate; they scrutinised the financial information provided to them with the report and challenged where additional information could have been provided in order to further assist them with their decision making. A full and frank discussion was had weighing up the risks of agreeing to enter into a Golden Brick Land Agreement and Development Agreement given the current economic climate versus the need and want to provide good quality homes in the right places in the district.

The Committee Manager advised members that the meeting guillotine was due to come into force and so it was proposed by Councillor Bicknell and seconded by Councillor Bence that the meeting continue for a further 30 minutes to give members the time needed finish this item of business.

All questions asked received full and detailed responses from officers and all members of the committee were invited to make comment based on the answers that had been received from officers during the debate and one non-member of the committee was invited to offer his comments and advice to the committee.

It was proposed that an amendment be made to recommendation 2.1 with the following wording to be insert at the start '**Subject to the s106 agreement list being shared with members and the investigation into right to buy ringfencing**' which was unanimously agreed by all members.

As discussion moved on, members believed the concerns they had, had at the beginning of this item had been alleviated and addressed by officers. The Chair then asked members for a proposer and seconder of the recommendations.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Bence and seconded by Councillor Needs.

The Committee

RESOLVED

- 1.1 Subject to the s106 agreement list being shared with members and the investigation into right to buy ringfencing, it approves Arun District Council enter into a Golden Brick Land Agreement and a Development Agreement for £3,495,000 with Elivia Homes to build 12 houses and 2 flats for the Council, details set out below subject to the following:

- 2.1.1 Report on Title and Confirmation from solicitors that the land offers a good and marketable title.

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2.1.2 Report and Confirmation by an independent Employers Agent that the Development Agreement negotiated protects the position of the Authority and will result in homes of the appropriate standard being delivered.

1.2 Approve Fees payable, including development interest, of £285,000.

1.3 Approve allocation and draw down of £2,147,370 from the identified Section 106 contributions.

2.4 Recommend to Policy & Finance Committee they approve the inclusion of the scheme in the Council's HRA Capital Programme, to be funded from borrowing and section 106 receipts.

(The meeting concluded at 9.23 pm)