

Public Document Pack

Subject to approval at the next Housing and Wellbeing Committee meeting

395

HOUSING AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

24 January 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Pendleton (Chair), Gregory (Vice-Chair), Mrs Cooper, Mrs English, Hughes, Yeates, Goodheart (Substitute for Daniells), Madeley (Substitute for Rhodes) and Yeates

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

Apologies: Councillors Daniells, Hamilton, Needs and Rhodes

584. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

585. MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 December 2021 were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

586. 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 Committee

RESOLVED

That Agenda Item 12 [Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund] be heard after Agenda Item 6 [Joint Working Protocol for Care Leavers] due to the report author joining the meeting virtually.

587. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

588. JOINT WORKING PROTOCOL FOR CARE LEAVERS

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Housing Options Manager presented the report which explained that West Sussex County Council and the seven Districts and Boroughs within West Sussex had developed a joint working Protocol for Care Leavers to ensure that the accommodation needs and associated support in the community for young people leaving care were identified and procedures for agencies to work in partnership were put in place to give Care Leavers the best possible start to their adult lives.

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 24.01.22

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

- confirmation was sought on what care leavers were covered by the protocol
- the need for ongoing support to be available for those who find themselves in difficulty with accommodation subsequently
- the number and age of care leavers this protocol applied to
- the availability and suitability of social housing stock
- confirmation of the definition of 'suitable accommodation'
- whether other support was also made available, e.g. budgeting, financial etc.

The Housing Options Manager provided Members with responses to all points raised during the debate. It was confirmed that the protocol applied to care leavers aged between 18 and 25 in need of accommodation support for the first time (with other policies covering other situations), that there were 279 care leavers recorded across West Sussex and of the 51 housed in social housing 10 of those were in Arun, and that Arun worked with a range of partners to support young people identify their needs (educational, training, employment, budgeting advice etc.) to get the best outcome for their accommodation needs and ensure they could maintain their tenancy.

The recommendation was then proposed by Councillor Gregory and seconded by Councillor Mrs Cooper. By unanimous vote,

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Joint Working Protocol for Care Leavers be adopted.

589. COVID-19 ADDITIONAL RELIEF FUND

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Revenues and Benefits Manager presented the report which sought Committee support for delivery of a new Discretionary Business Grant Scheme for Arun businesses based on the agreed West Sussex Councils' Guidelines.

The recommendation was then proposed by Councillor Mrs Cooper and seconded by Councillor Gregory. By unanimous vote,

The Committee

RESOLVED - That

1. The delivery of the latest COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund for businesses as set out in the West Sussex Councils' guidelines, attached as Appendix A, be agreed
2. Authority be given to the Director of Services to agree any future Covid related business support grant schemes.

590. COMMITTEE GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2022/23 AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETS 2022/23

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Interim Group Head of Corporate Support and Section 151 Officer presented the report which asked the Committee to consider and recommend its revenue budget for inclusion in the 2022/23 revenue budget and draft capital budget for inclusion in the overall capital programme, which would be submitted to the Policy and Finance Committee on 10 February 2022. It was explained that Policy and Finance Committee would consider the overall revenue budget and overall capital programme for 2022/23 to make recommendations to Full Council on 23 February 2022 on the budget to be set and level of Council Tax for the District for 2022/23 and on the overall capital programme to be set for 2022/23.

It was further explained that this Committee must also consider and recommend its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue budget and draft Housing Revenue Account Capital budget for inclusion in the overall capital programme, both of which would also be submitted to the Policy and Finance Committee on 10 February 2022 with the intention of a recommendation going to Full Council on 23 February 2022 on the budget to be set and level of rents to be charged for 2022/23.

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

- whether housing and garage rent figures included agreed rent increases
- future investment in Arun's properties
- grants and contributions within the Housing Strategy
- sheltered accommodation provision
- the increasing costs for the IT system
- investment in the Arun Leisure Centre

The Interim Group Head of Corporate Support and Section 151 Officer provided Members with responses to all points raised during the debate. It was confirmed that the rent figures did include the rent increase and for housing this would be CPI + 1% (i.e. 4.1%) and that stock development was included in the capital budget. The Group Head of Residential Services confirmed that reports would be coming to future meetings of the Committee on a number of the points raised.

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 24.01.22

The recommendation was then proposed by Councillor Pendleton and seconded by Councillor Gregory. By unanimous vote,

The Committee

RESOLVED - To

- a) Agree on the 2022/23 General Fund Revenue Budget as illustrated in Appendix A of this report;
- b) Agree on the 2022/23 list of uncommitted growth items as illustrated in Appendix B of this report;
- c) Agree on the 2022/23 HRA Revenue Budget set out in Appendix C of this report;
- d) Recommend HRA rents for 2022/23 are increased by 4.1% (CPI plus 1%) in accordance with the provisions of the rent standard;
- e) Recommend that HRA garage rents are increased by 5% to give a standard charge of £13.58 per week (excluding VAT) and heating and water/sewerage charges be increased on a scheme by scheme basis, with the aim of balancing costs with income;
- f) Agree on the General Fund Capital Programme as illustrated in Appendix D of this report;
- g) Agree on the 2022/23 HRA Capital Programme as illustrated in Appendix E of this report; and

RECOMMEND TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

- h) That the General Fund Revenue Budget, list of growth items, General Fund Capital Programme, HRA Revenue Budget and HRA Capital Programme be included in the overall General Fund Budget when considering the overall budgets on 10 February 2022.

591. LITTLEHAMPTON COMMUNITY WARDENS PROJECT UPDATE

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Community Safety Officer presented the report which provided an update on first seven months of the 18 month Littlehampton Community Wardens project.

The Chair spoke in support of the project following time spent with wardens out and about in Littlehampton. Members then took part in a full debate on the item where a number of points were raised and responded to by Officers, including:

- relations between the wardens and the police and how these could be developed further throughout the District
- relations between the wardens and local schools
- the specific issue of women's safety
- drop-in sessions in the community and how these had been received

The Committee then noted the report.

592. CONSULTATION ON THE SUSSEX POLICE PRECEPT 2022-2023

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Community Wellbeing presented the report which provided Committee Members the opportunity to express their views on the proposed uplift to the Sussex Police precept going to the Sussex Police and Crime Panel meeting on the 28 January 2022. This precept was unrelated to the Council's own precept but discussion at this meeting afforded an opportunity for the Committee to provide feedback to the Chair who would be attending the Sussex Police and Crime Panel meeting at which the precept was to be considered.

The precept would support the following priorities:

- Strengthen Local Policing
- Relentless Disruption of Serious & Organised Crime
- Support Victims & Safeguard the Vulnerable

The Group Head of Community Wellbeing explained that it was proposed to increase the Band D precept by £10 from £214.91 to £224.91 for 2022/23, equivalent to 19p per week or 83p per month. The report referred to the consultation undertaken by Sussex Police over the course of a year with some 9,800 public responses (representing 0.6% of the population) with 81 Town and Parish Councils participating in focus groups. Of the 2,148 who participated in the Priorities and Precept survey, 67% supported an 83p a month increase in the precept as did 60% of the participating Town and Parish Councils.

The Police and Crime Commissioner stated in her report, circulated as a supplementary pack to the Committee, that a £10 precept uplift would be essential so that Sussex Police could meet the increased costs of inflation, pay, the pandemic and preserve the improvements in capacity, visibility and accessibility built up since 2018, and to meet the target to recruit an extra 250 police officers by 2022/23.

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 24.01.22

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

- the lack of police visibility and the need to increase this and communication with the public across the District
- changes to the crime landscape and the need to change how this was reported, with implications for and relations to policing levels
- the benefits of community-based focus groups
- the limited response of the consultation and whether more needed to be done to engage with the community
- figures relating to wait times when calling the police and the resourcing of this service
- support for the 101 service and positive experiences with it

The Committee then noted the report.

593. ARUN COVID COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS PROJECT UPDATE

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Coordinator of the Community Champions Project presented the report which provided an update on the progress of the Covid Community Champions project. The purpose of the programme was to reach residents and communities across Arun to communicate the official information and national guidance relating to all aspects of Covid-19, in accessible and appropriate formats for all and in particular those that were thought to be underserved or most at risk. Initial work leading up to this programme was via a Covid-19 sub-group developed due to rising case rates locally in Autumn 2020. The intention was to maximise the reach, accessibility and clarity of Government and NHS guidance and messaging to encourage safer behaviours, and in more recent months enable residents to be able to access the right information to be able to make an informed decision on vaccine take up. This initial sub-group was made up of Local Authority Officers and Departments and a range of District and County level partners and stakeholders.

The Coordinator of the Community Champions Project explained that receiving the Community Champions funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in early February 2021 enabled the team to increase the reach and scale of this work. This allowed the funding of two trusted community and voluntary sector organisations as delivery partners - Age UK and Citizens Advice. Among many other things, the team developed targeted community engagement, recruited volunteers (residents and organisational), created and distributed tailored communications including translated materials and British Sign Language assets, and delivered a Covid-related recovery community event in partnership with a local GP. This unique piece of work led to creating firm relationships with partners, statutory organisations, residents and developing new relationships with initiatives such as the Vaccine Community Champions and Doctors of The World.

The Coordinator of the Community Champions Project concluded that despite the challenges of lockdowns and the Tier system, joint working and information and experience sharing with local and countrywide partners had allowed the team to reach a wide and varied audience, including those that were previously classed as 'hard to reach'. Residents had come back when they needed translations or more information for themselves and their local communities. The power of informal peer to peer information sharing had been invaluable throughout the project. Looking forward, it was hoped that the team would continue to sustain community engagement in relation to health, wellbeing, and wider inequalities, triggered or exacerbated by the pandemic, through the new Arun Community Engagement project.

The Chair commented that the Arun Covid Community Champions was a real life example of how the Council had worked with our local partnerships to create a team that had successfully relayed Covid messaging throughout 2021 directly into our local communities, helping and supporting them to stay safe and well during the pandemic. She continued that this project highlighted the best elements of partnership working and that it was a powerful testimony to the positive impact that this way of working achieved. Members further praised the project and its successes, and then noted the report.

594. ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Upon the invitation of the Chair, the Group Head of Community Wellbeing presented the report which reviewed the grant Age UK (formerly Age Concern) received for providing a range of activities and services to older members of the community east of the river Arun.

Members spoke in support of the services provided by Age UK. The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Mrs Cooper and seconded by Councillor Hughes. By unanimous vote,

The Committee

RESOLVED - That

1. Approval be given for the grant application of £50,000 from existing budgets for one year to commence in April 2022; and
2. Future funding of enhanced support for older people's activities be reviewed in 2022/23 by the Housing and Wellbeing Committee.

595. OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillors Pendleton and Mrs Cooper provided a verbal update on the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC). A written version was made available on the meeting's webpage after the meeting.

Subject to approval at the next Housing and Wellbeing Committee meeting

402

Housing and Wellbeing Committee - 24.01.22

596. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

(The meeting concluded at 7.45 pm)