

CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE

27 June 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Oppler (Chair), Tandy (Vice-Chair), Blanchard-Cooper (Substitute for Jones), Bower, Brooks, J English, Lawrence, Lloyd, O'Neill, Turner and Warr

112. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillor Jones who was being substituted by Councillor Blanchard-Cooper. Councillor Turner also advised that Councillor Lloyd was currently stuck in traffic but was on route to the meeting.

113. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Councillor Lloyd arrived at the meeting at approximately 18:04pm)

Councillor Blanchard-Cooper declared a personal interest in Item 7 [Key Performance Indicators 2022-2026 - Quarter 4 End of year performance report for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.] as he had a family member who worked within the Customer Services Team.

114. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 January 2023 were approved by the committee and signed by the Chair.

115. 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

There were no urgent items to be discussed at the meeting.

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116. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that there was 1 public question from a member of the public who had submitted their question in advance of the meeting in accordance with the Council's Constitution. He invited the Committee Manager to read out the question received on behalf of the questioner.

The Chair provided a response to the question received and then drew Public Question Time to a close.

(A schedule of the full questions asked and the responses provided can be found on the meeting's webpage at: [Arun District Council](#))

117. MEETING START TIMES 2023/24

The Chair proposed that the start times for the meeting of the Committee for the remaining year be at 6pm, this was seconded by the Vice Chair.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the start times for 2023/24 be 6pm.

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

*(Councillor Blanchard-Cooper redeclared his personal interest in this item, specifically relating to KPI CP7)*

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, therefore no comparison was available for these and that these had been noted in the report. Each committee had its own indicators which were shown in the appendix, specifically there were 10 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 invited members to make comments and ask questions, he requested that all questions for the KPIs detailed on the first page (CP1, CP2, CP3 and

CP4) were asked first and once those had been dealt with the KPIs on the following page could be put for discussion.

Clarification was sought by one member who was querying if complaints for Housing were fed into this committee as he wanted to check on the status of a report that had been requested at a previous Audit & Governance Committee relating to a Housing Complaint where the Ombudsman had disapproved of the action taken by the council. The Chair confirmed he understood what report the member was referencing, however he suggested that this update was provided outside of this committee.

It was asked about CP4 why there were no targets set and was the 2.2% referenced the target for future years. It was confirmed that yes, 2.2% would become the future target and therefore the target that was currently being worked towards.

Finally, it was asked about CP6 that the Compliance for Health and Safety seemed low and why was this. The Group Head for Organisational Excellence confirmed that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) were also concerned about this indicator, they had now agreed for this indicator to be reported to them annually in order for them to review.

There were no other questions asked for this item.

#### 119. COUNCIL VISION 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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

The Chair then invited discussion on the vision document first and once all comments had been made on that discussion would move on to the appendix. Members discussed the picture on page 25 of the vision document of West Beach in Littlehampton. Discussion was centre around providing access for all to the beaches in the district. Reference was made to the Beach Access Working Party meetings that had taken place throughout the year alongside comments from one member who advised that there was a group in East Preston who had recently met with a design engineer who had presented a modular design that may be useable to get wheelchair users on to the beach. Final comments from members were to give thanks to those who had worked on the vision document. The Group Head of Organisational Excellence confirmed that reviews of the indicators were ongoing, whilst the vision had been agreed and set for the four-year period, there was a degree of flexibility within the indicators that may see changes should that be decided by members.

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Moving discussion on to the appendix that contained the indicators, Councillor Turner advised members that he had raised a question outside of the meeting about the fact that there was no obvious mention of veterans or armed forces covenant throughout the Council Vision, he specifically listed CV6, CV7, CV8, CV13, CV34 and CV36 where he believed mention could or should have been made. He asked for his question and answer to be added to the minutes ([\(\(Public Pack\)Question and Answer from Councillor Turner - Corporate Support Committee 27 June 2023\)](#)) He stated in response to the answers he had received and thanked the Group Head of Organisational Excellence for her detailed response. He continued to advise that veteran's and their families were a significant part of the community, stating over 10% of the Council chamber having veterans in their own families. There were many initiatives available to the veterans of the armed forces, most at no cost to the council. To raise awareness, he advised that some of the initiatives were Op Courage, The Veterans Trauma Network, Op Chavasse which was a clinic in Brighton available to people with musculoskeletal issues. The Armed Forces covenant was a positive not a negative and he hoped that people who were drafting the detail would now have the awareness to bring forward veterans' issues. He then advised that he would share the veterans information pack he had would be shared with all members of the council. The Group head of Organisational Excellence confirmed that officers would work with Councillor Turner in assisting him with the best way to share information on this topic.

Concerns were raised about CV10 and CV11 considering the rises in rents and mortgages with the current economic situation, where this could see a rise in demand for temporary and emergency accommodation required for the council to react to.

It was asked if the Council had a disability and dementia strategy, where it was confirmed that it was believed there was, however more detail would be provided outside of the meeting.

Clarity was sought regarding CV4 – Wayfaring Strategy and when it would be presented to members at Committee for review. Concern was made given that work was being undertaken in Bognor Regis now without member consultation. The Committee Manager confirmed an update would be provided outside of the meeting as the relevant Officer was not in attendance to answer.

A final request was made for the Committee Manager to obtain an update in relation to CV29 as it was commented that there had been a breakdown in communication reported between the Council, the Bognor Regis Fishermen's Association and other concessions regarding opportunities to improve their facilities.

As there were no further questions, the Chair concluded that the item was finished.

120. REVIEW OF THE ELECTIONS HELD ON 4 MAY 2023

In introducing this item, the Chair reminded members that should anyone want to make any comments regarding Voter ID, it was important that members kept those comments related to management of the process which was what the Council had control and influence over, rather than any discussion on opinion of the change implemented by Central Government. The Chair then invited the Electoral Services Manager to present the report. She confirmed that the report provided members with a review of the Arun District and Parish elections that took place on 4 May 2023, it included static information about the elections and feedback that had been collated. Feedback had been sought from a large number of people who were involved in the election process and confirmed that the feedback was still being collated currently.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and stated that it was important to recognise the incredible amount of work undertaken by the election team and the wider individuals who also helped ensure the execution of the election. He then took questions and comments from members where feedback for the location of the Poling Station for Hotham Ward was given, it was stated that the location was unsuitable for disabled access, it was cold for those who worked in the station all day. It was requested that the station location was reviewed prior to any further election taking place. The Chair also stated that the other Poling Station in Hotham was at the University, but he found that there was only 30 minutes of free parking before individuals were issued with a parking ticket, he requested that the arrangements for this was also reviewed.

Councillor Lloyd was then invited to speak where she stated that she felt the feedback felt a bit unbalanced. She explained that although problems would come up throughout the day, she thought the staff that she interacted with worked incredibly hard, were as professional and engaging at the start of the day as they were at the end of the day. She expressed her thanks to all involved. Other members of the committee were supportive and in agreement with the comments made by Councillor Lloyd.

The comment in the report at paragraph 4.12, that stated large enough venues to allow for in-person appointments could not be booked, was queried given that there were large areas of the Civic Centre building that were thought not to be being used during this time.

Regarding paragraph 4.22, it was acknowledged that staffing the election had its difficulties, and therefore what preparation was being undertaken now to ensure that this issue was not repeated when the next election arrived. The Electoral Services Manager advised that in 2021 a lot of staff that had been on the staffing database requested to be removed from the database, staff were put off by the introduction of voter ID. However, a lot of feedback has been received from a lot of the new staff found for the election had been positive. She confirmed that contact will be made in September 2023 with those on the staffing database to obtain their commitment to the

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next election that was expected in May 2024 and that work was always being undertaken to recruit new people into the roles available in the run up to an election.

The Head of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer then advised members that for the nominations process, the report did state that the in-person appointments would be reintroduced for future elections. He asked for clarity on the 'other areas' of the building that was thought could be used, as all the available areas were used where they could be. The member who raised the point, stated that there were now less employees employed at the council than previously and a lot of officers were working from home, therefore it was assumed that more office space could have been utilised better. It was confirmed by the Head of Law and Governance that full time equivalent figures were higher and in terms of using office space, although it may appear that this space was underutilised, he could not confirm for future elections that this space would be available due to the ongoing culture change work that was being undertaken corporately where many staff had expressed a desire in returning to the working from the office on a more regular basis.

Additional feedback was received that there was some confusion at the Poling Stations in East Preston as some voters were being sent to the wrong Poling Stations when arriving at their assumed Poling Station. It was suggested that detailed maps could be provided so that staff ensure that they can direct voters to the correct station when needed. It was also commented that prior to the election there had been a lot of 'unfounded' hype that caused a lot of additional work for the council to overcome ahead of the election. Feedback was then provided by the Chair in relation to submitting candidate documents online, however, he was surprised to find that the checking process was not also automated, as an officer had to manually check each form and then provide feedback. He also advised that there had been a number of questions and queries emailed and or telephone messages left where there was quite a considerable amount of delay in receiving answers to those, which as an agent was daunting enough, but for those candidates who did not have an agent this would be quite confusing. He suggested that moving forward a specific officer should be dedicated to this work as it would be more helpful for candidates. He also stated that standing for election was a matter of choice for candidates and it must be recognised the enormous amount of work completed by officers.

The Electoral Services Manager agreed that there had been a few issues throughout the nominations process. She confirmed that the plan was to trial an all-online form that would provide a much simpler process for all to execute. She also confirmed that the delays seen in responding to questions and queries was due to being understaffed, however this was also recognised by officers as a service that needed to be improved and there would be one lead officer for future elections who will work to providing responses within a 48-hour timeframe.

The Group Head of Law and Governance was then invited to speak to the comments made on the vote ID, he agreed that there was a lot of noise around the voter ID and this had created a significant increase in workload. He then provided feedback from the Electoral Commission findings after the elections had been completed. In summing up he stated that actually the overall experience of the

introduction of the voter ID process was not received as negatively as it was initially thought it may be and he hoped that that provided reassurance to anyone who wanted to come back to working elections or indeed anyone who hadn't considered this work previously and may be interested in future elections.

Specifically focusing on the feedback that had been received regarding the length of time taken at the count to count each ward, what reassurance could be given to ensure that this would be reviewed and what other arrangements were being considered. It was also asked if staff were asked to provide feedback. It was confirmed that staffing feedback had been included in the appendices, it was also still being collated and would be updated to ensure any questions or points raised could be addressed, the Electoral Services Manager explained that the service is legislation led and sometimes where questions are raised or suggestions are made for improvements it needs to be explained where legislation would not allow for changes or why a task is completed in the way it is. She went on to explain that there had already been officer discussions held on what improvements could be implemented for future elections. Throughout the count staffing breaks were staggered, however the verification did take longer than expected due to various reasons, one being votes being placed in the wrong ballot boxes at double or triple stations another reason being the number of new staff who were assisting at the count. Consideration had been given to increasing the number of count teams for future elections from 7 to 8 as well as later start times, not using the same staff who have completed polling day duties. A full document would be provided and shared with members that answers all questions, feedback and plans for future elections.

Final feedback received was that communication at the count could have been improved if there had been people whose role it was to keep candidates and agents updated on what was happening and when.

The Chair thanked members for their feedback and the officers for the answers provided.

121. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

The work programme for 2023/24 was received by the committee and noted.

122. OUTSIDE BODIES UPDATE REPORT

The Chair confirmed that there were no update reports for this meeting.

(The meeting concluded at 7.11 pm)

Subject to approval at the next Corporate Support Committee meeting