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CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

1 September 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Gunner (Chair), Pendleton (Vice-Chair), Cooper, Dixon, Oppler, Roberts, Stanley and Dr Walsh

219. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to what was the first physical meeting of the Corporate Policy & Performance Committee.

220. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Walsh declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 8 [Update on the Future of Joint Arun Area Committees] in his capacity as a Member of West Sussex County Council.

Councillors Oppler and Pendleton then declared their Personal Interests in Agenda Item 8 as Members of West Sussex County Council.

221. MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting of the Corporate Policy & Performance Committee held on 17 June 2021, were approved by the Committee and were signed by the Chair.

222. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

223. REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN EXPENDITURE 2020/21 [30 MINUTES]

The Interim Group Head of Corporate Support & Section 151 Officer presented this report outlining that 2020/2021 had been an exceptional year due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Unfortunately, the audit of the Council's financial statements had been delayed until November 2021. The report before the Committee was the draft Outturn report and no further changes were envisaged. It was anticipated that the audit would be completed in November 2021 with the Audit & Governance Committee signing off the accounts at a Special Meeting to be held in January 2022.

As already mentioned, 2020/21 has been a challenging year with much uncertainty and additional costs to the Council, yet it had managed to achieve a very positive financial outturn. The Council had received significant Covid-19 funding in addition to the sales of fees and charges compensation scheme which had helped to back up the Council's additional expenditure accrued mainly in areas such as homelessness, rough sleepers, supporting the leisure contract and areas of central

support such as office buildings, rapid reception area adjustments to support homelessness cases and areas such as IT to allow all staff to work from home. Support had also been given in reaction to the need for additional cleaning in the Civic Centre and to areas such as Environmental Health. There had been some positive income streams in areas such as Planning whose income was above budget as the lockdown had led to a surge in planning applications being submitted. During the year the Council had approved supplementary estimates totalling £1.6 m which included the worst case support scenario for the leisure contract which had not been required and so the Council had managed to absorb this into its general outturn.

In reaction to the report, praise was given to the Interim Group Head of Corporate Support and her team for their work during the past year and for meeting the challenges that had been set. It was very pleasing to be told that despite the challenges highlighted, the Council had managed to maintain a favourable balance and had not needed to raid the Council's reserves which had been an extraordinary achievement.

The Interim Group Head of Corporate Support then drew Committee's attention to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outturn which was under budget and to Recommendation 3 of the report which was asking approval to carry forward £1m Housing Capital spending from 202/21 to 2021/22 to support and complete a number of projects that had been unavoidably delayed due to the pandemic.

In response to this, it was felt important that the Council's share of the capital receipts which it could spend should only be spent on new social housing. There was reference made in the report that the phasing of the programme would be a key factor. Councillor Walsh confirmed that he wished to suggest that the Committee made a strong recommendation to the appropriate Service Committee that the housing capital revenue programme would take account of that and would make sure that the Council would spend this money only on social housing and be sure that none of these funds would be returned to Central Government.

In addition to this, Councillor Walsh commented on developer contributions as outlined in Paragraph 7 [Section 106 Receipts] and the amount that the Council held which was £9.122m. His concern related to past experiences where other external bodies who had been responsible for the spend of some of these monies had not successfully spent this funding. Councillor Walsh confirmed that he was referring to the National Health Service [NHS] and given the pressures that the District was facing in these areas it was essential for the Council to insist that the NHS met its obligations on spending such funding on capital projects rather than on further unnecessary studies as to how the money should be spent.

In response, the Chair sought confirmation as to whether Councillor Walsh had a seconder for his two proposals and whether he wished to amend any of the recommendations listed 1 to 7. Councillor Walsh confirmed that he wished to add these proposals as new recommendations.

To assist with the debate, the Chief Executive confirmed that in strengthening the Council's handling of Section 106 spending and other parties and their spending, the Council had created a post in Planning which monitored the spend of Section 106 funding to ensure that none of the funding was misused. He confirmed that since an Officer had been in post, he was not aware of any funding not being spent as it should. He was happy for the request on Section 106 funding to be fed back to the relevant Service Committee.

Councillor Stanley then seconded Councillor Walsh's proposals. On these being put to the vote, they were declared CARRIED.

The Chair then returned to the substantive recommendations as amended, which he duly proposed, and these were seconded by Councillor Pendleton.

The Committee

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The Outturn Report at Appendix 1 be noted;
- (2) The revenue and capital outturn expenditure for 2020/21, subject to audit be noted;
- (3) The carry forward of £1m Housing Capital spending from 202/21 to 2021/22 as outlined in Paragraph 4.5 of the report be approved;
- (4) The level of balances and unused Section 106 sums at 31 March 2021 be approved noting the reasons explained for the increase in reserve balances;
- (5) The additional £0.833m contribution to the Funding Reserve be noted; and
- (6) The transfer of £0.538m to the Covid Contingency Reserve be noted;
- (7) The Residential & Wellbeing Services Committee be asked to ensure that the housing capital revenue programme would ensure that capital receipts will only be spent on social housing and that none of these funds would be returned to Central Government; and
- (8) The Planning Policy Committee be asked to ensure that all Section 106 spending is administered in line with requirements.

224. BUDGET 2022/23 - PROCESS [15 MINUTES]

The Interim Head of Corporate Support and Section 151 Officer presented this report outlining that its purpose was to ensure that Members were fully informed of the budget process for 2022/23 under the new Committee system.

It was explained that each Committee would receive a similar report as the relevant budget would have to be considered by each Service Committee before the full Budget would be considered by this Committee on 10 February 2022 before approval by Special Council on 23 February 2022.

In considering the report, a request was made for a Members' Seminar to be organised as this had formed a very helpful part of the process in considering and understanding the budget for last year. The Interim Group Head of Corporate Support conformed that she would investigate organising this.

Following a brief discussion, Councillor Gunner then formally proposed that the Budget process for 2022/23 be approved and this was seconded by Councillor Pendleton.

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the Budget process for 2022/23 be approved.

225. UPDATE ON THE FUTURE OF JOINT ARUN AREA COMMITTEES [10 MINUTES]

The Chair referred the Committee to the update report informing Councillors of the decision made by West Sussex County Council to establish a new informal District/Borough based forum to replace the Joint Arun Area Committees.

226. FEEDBACK FROM A MEETING OF THE GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD HELD ON 20 JULY 2021 [10 MINUTES]

The Chair confirmed that he had attended, with the Chief Executive, the meeting of the Greater Brighton Economic Board held on 20 July 2021 and so would be happy to respond to any questions asked.

A range of questions were asked. The first was around the need for the Board to address the very low wage levels in the Arun District as well as deprivation levels. Had this message been put across to the Board? The Chair reassured the Committee that he had robustly defended Arun and had argued the need for greater support. Councillor Gunner outlined that there had been a change in Chair of the Board with the new Chair wishing to refocus the Board's priorities. The Committee was reassured that further pledges would continue to push for inward investment into Arun.

Secondly, from the long list of Board initiatives, had any greatly benefited Arun over the time of its membership? The Chief Executive confirmed that one had been decarbonising council housing stock and that a Working Party had been established to see how this could be taken forward. He reminded Members of the report that had been taken to Cabinet in 2020 which had provided a detailed presentation outlining the Board's 10 main pledges focusing on the sustainable growth agenda and superfast broadband. It was hoped that Arun would benefit from future Government funding in the future.

The Chair added to this by outlining that the Board did have a list of major build projects, but these were predominantly earmarked towards the Greater Brighton and nearby area. He had made his displeasure clear around the need to see some of this investment being injected into Arun and had met with the Officer team to prompt the Board to commence a greater focus on areas outside of Brighton.

Mention was made of the reintroduction of the kelp forest off the Sussex coast and the investment in hydrogen power plant at Shoreham harbour and input from nearby engineering firms that were progressing the use of hydrogen powered engines in some buses. It was hoped that this would be rolled out to Stagecoach soon which would benefit the District. A request made for the Council to undertake a review of all its corporate partnerships to assess what value they brought to the Council and its residents as it was essential to see that the Council was getting value for its investments. In relation to this, the importance of railway infrastructure and the progression of the Arundel Chord was raised and was this on the agenda for future meetings of the Board. Reassurance was provided that the Arundel Chord was and had been regularly mentioned at meetings. It was noted that the Arundel Chord was not mentioned in WSCC's Transport Draft Plan and that this needed to be addressed.

227. JOINT CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD [5 MINUTES]

The Chair confirmed that this item formed two parts. Firstly, the Committee was being asked to confirm Councillor Staniforth as the Council's nominated representative on the Joint Climate Change Board and secondly a feedback report had been provided by Councillor Staniforth for the Committee's information. Councillor Gunner then formally proposed Councillor Staniforth's nomination which was seconded by Councillor Pendleton.

In debating this proposal, Councillor Dixon confirmed that he wished to make an amendment which was to propose that Councillor Thurston be the Council's nominated representative, and this was seconded by Councillor Oppler.

The Chair then invited debate on this amendment and reasons for proposing Councillor Thurston for this role were explained. On putting this to the vote, 4 Councillors voted for the amendment and 4 voted against it. As this was a tied vote, the Chair used his casting vote and voted against the amendment.

The Chair then returned to the substantive proposal and on this being put to the vote it was CARREID.

The Committee therefore

RESOLVED

That Councillor Staniforth be this Council's nominated representative on West Sussex County Council's Joint Climate Change Board.

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The Chair then returned to the feedback report that had been submitted by Councillor Staniforth and invited questions. As she had not been able to be present at the meeting, he confirmed that any detailed questions could be responded to outside of the meeting.

Following some further discussion, the Committee noted the report.

228. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive introduced the Committee's draft Work Programme for the remainder of 2021-22 and provided an update on the Corporate Plan in terms of how this was developing and the timetable that was in place for an April 2022 start.

Having received no further suggestions or questions, the Chair thanked Members for their input.

(The meeting concluded at 6.44 pm)