

OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

12 March 2019 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Dingemans (Chairman), English (Vice-Chair), Mrs Bence, Blampied, Edwards, Hughes, Mrs Oakley, Oliver-Redgate, Mrs Rapnik, Warren, Dr Walsh and Wheal

Councillors T Bence, Charles, Clayden, Haymes and Wensley were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Apologies: Councillors Stanley and Mrs Brown

446. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of interest were made.

447. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 January 2019 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman subject to the following;

Attendance confirmation amendment that Councillors Wensley and Mrs Oakley (Part) were actually absent from Minute 382 and not 383 as recorded in the minutes.

448. RESCINDING OF ICM/058/310119 - REPORT TO CONSIDER APPROPRIATE ACTION REGARDING THE NON-PAYMENT OF A SECTION 106 AGREEMENT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING - LAND AT ST MICHAELS AND ALL ANGELS, QUEENS FIELD EAST, WEST MEAD, BOGNOR REGIS, WEST SUSSEX, PO21 5RN

The Chairman introduced this report to the Committee and explained that although Cabinet had already resolved this issue [Cabinet Minute 425], this item still required scrutiny.

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Charles, to update the Committee. At this point the Chairman proposed and the Committee agreed to a change in the order of the agenda that agenda *Item 7 - Cabinet Member Questions and Updates* would also be discussed during this item.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Charles started his update by answering the Chairman's question which was, *'In view of the aborted 'call in' on the s106 agreement for the development near West Meads what action has been taken or is proposed, to ensure such a situation does not happen again and to properly monitor and collect 106 payments in the future?'*

In responding Councillor Charles acknowledged that the monitoring processes were not satisfactory and that resources were insufficient to be able to adequately monitor planning obligations. This was recognised at that time by the Director of

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Planning & Economic Regeneration as changes were being considered to improve matters. It should also be recognised that there were around 650 planning obligations that either required obligations to be complied with or contributions spent. The task of monitoring all of these was huge. It was recognised in 2016 that resources needed to be directed to this area of work to significantly improve.

Discussions with the Cabinet Working Party in mid-2016 included directing more resources to the monitoring of strategic sites. Following this, Cabinet agreed in January 2017 to fund two delivery and monitoring posts within the Strategic Development Team. These were funded, in part, through the receipt of Planning Performance Agreement money (which the Council had sought in recent years). Further, as a result of the Group Head of Planning's restructure after his April 2017 appointment, there was now one post dedicated to s106 data and monitoring (where previously the post was also responsible for planning policy work as well). Therefore, such delays and oversights are less likely now.

The Chairman put forward a suggestion of placing bonds on developers to ensure that this would not happen again.

The Cabinet Member for Planning advised that he would need to take this suggestion away to investigate and report back in September 2019. The Chairman requested that an update also be given at this time.

The Committee were in support of the Chairman's suggestion and after some discussion the Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Residential Services, Councillor Bence to speak.

Councillor Bence made the following statement that outlined as the Ward Member involved and having liaised with the ward residents immediately affected by this. He had looked into the suggestion of a Performance Guaranteed Bond (PGB) and found that these are widely used by Councils. As they were of huge benefit should the Council consider adopting this option for the smaller developments as a condition to granting planning permission in order to protect the s106 commitments. Councillor Bence confirmed that as Ward Member he had passed the information regarding these PGB's to the Cabinet Member for Planning.

The Chairman confirmed that all Members were in agreement with this suggestion so that when the Cabinet Member for Planning would attend a meeting of the Committee in September 2019 that he would return with a report showing the results of the improvement implementation.

Councillor Dr Walsh suggested that the Audit and Governance Committee should also have sight of this and should consider adding it to their Work Programme for 2019/2020. This was supported by the Committee.

The Committee RESOLVED that;

- 1) The Cabinet Member will investigate and report back to the Overview Select Committee in September 2019 and;

- 2) a bi-annual report to be provided to the Committee until it is satisfied that the new process had been properly embedded.

449. FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2019

The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, Councillor Clayden updated the Committee on the meeting that took place on 1 February 2019. The next meeting of the panel will be on 26 April 2019.

At this meeting the Panel discussed the Police Precept for 2019/20. The Panel were all in agreement that the Precept would be increasing, and the extra funds this increase would generate, would be used in particular for extra community Policing presence.

It was also highlighted that Sussex Police would be offering Apprenticeships to PCSO Recruits and Degree Apprenticeships to PC Recruits later this year (2019).

There was some discussion regarding the significant decrease in numbers of PCSO's and PC's potentially leading to a rise in petty crimes' inclusive of vandalism and that the news of recruitment for PCSO's and PC's was welcomed. However, Councillor Dr Walsh raised a significant concern that was supported by Committee Members regarding Police response time in relation to reported incidents along with the suggestion that members of the public were advised to report crimes online. Councillor Dr Walsh highlighted that online reporting was not always an option for all members of the public nor would it be the best option in an emergency. The 101 number still reported to have long waiting times before calls are answered. Councillor Dr Walsh then asked the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing to hold the Police Commissioner to account regarding faster response times to incidents and reduced waiting times on the 101 line.

The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing responded stating that he had not been made aware of these points prior to this meeting. He reiterated that the meeting had been a positive one and that all in attendance were in favour of the precept increase and the promises that had been made in that an improvement in the visibility of local policing in the area would be seen. Councillor Clayden also advised the Committee that recruitment on this level would take some time; recruitment had already started and was ongoing but there would not be an overnight resolution. Inclusive of this recruitment there was also a focus on recruiting for 101 call handlers to ensure that the waiting times and other response times on this contact channel would also be improved.

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Councillor Edwards provided further input stating that Sussex Police had tweeted recently that they had recruited 72 new PC's and this was a really positive news story so early on in the recruitment process.

As part of the debate Councillor Wheal asked the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing what had actually been achieved in the last year.

The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing responded stating that while he did not have the exact numbers to hand, approximately 200 Police Officers had been recruited over the last year. This year's increase was for extra PCSO's and PC's so there will be even higher numbers of visibility.

The Committee noted the contents of the feedback report.

#### 450. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS AND UPDATES

The Cabinet Member for Residential Services was invited to give an update to the Committee. He advised the Committee that Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (HRABP) had recently been reviewed for the forthcoming year and that it now allowed for 275 houses to be purchased or built during the life of the plan. In achieving this assurance was given that the required borrowings would not exceed the original borrowing figures prior to the borrowing cap being removed.

In relation to the Council House Fraud initiative the Arun Fraud Officer had now returned a total of 42 properties over the last 2.5 years. Fifteen of which had been returned to legal occupation in the last year representing a total value of £1.4 million. The Cabinet Member for Residential Services outlined that this officer had worked tirelessly in liaison with other Councils and her achievements had been remarkable. In view of this the Cabinet Member suggested to the Committee that it added this to its Work Programme for 19/20.

Finally the Cabinet Member confirmed the Council's Local Plan also allowed for a further 5000 plus affordable properties to be built within the Arun district.

Councillor English (Vice Chairman) asked The Cabinet Member for Residential Services if an update on the HRA could be provided at the September meeting of the Committee to allow it to address some of the outstanding issues surrounding Homelessness in the area.

The Cabinet Member for Residential Services confirmed he would do this.

The Committee therefore RESOLVED that:

- 1) An HRA update report be submitted to the September 2019 meeting of the Committee

#### 451. IDEAS FOR WORK PROGRAMME - 2019/2020

The Group Head of Policy reminded the Committee that the Councils Constitution required it to report annually on its future work programme to Full Council for approval. This would take place at the Full Council meeting in June 2019.

The Committee was asked to consider its work programme for 2019/2020 year identifying any issues to develop or review, whilst working to the key themes of the Committee's responsibilities, so that these could be included within a draft work programme.

In discussing the possible topics that Members might wish to review, the following observations were made:

- Overpaid Housing Benefit Policy
- Homelessness Reduction Act
- Empty Homes Officer update – tying in with the discussion the Committee had previously discussing the HRA

The Work Programme 2018/19 was then noted by the Committee.

#### 452. VOTE OF THANKS

The Chairman Councillor Dingemans thanked the Members for their contributions to this Committee over the last year.

As this was the last meeting of the Committee in this Municipal Year, as Vice-Chairman, Councillor English stated that he wished to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman, Councillor Dingemans, for all his work and mentorship over the years, as he would not be standing for re-election at the District Elections on 2 May 2019.

He thanked the Chairman for his 24 years of continuous service as a District Councillor, including the four years he had spent as Leader of the Council which was from 2002 – 2006. Alongside his role as a District Councillor, Councillor Dingemans had taken on the roles of Chairman for the Licensing and Enforcement Committee in 2016/17 and was currently Chairman for this Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Littlehampton Regeneration Sub-Committee as well as the Council's nominated Outside Body representative on the South Downs National Park Authority and the Leader-South Downs and Coastal Plain Action Group.

(The meeting concluded at 7.05 pm)