

**Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Leader,  
Resources and Economic Growth on 13 June 2017  
from 7:00 p.m. to 8:39 p.m.**

**Present:**

Edward Belsey  
Margaret Belsey\*  
John Belsey\*  
Richard Cherry  
Rod Clarke

Ruth de Mierre  
Tony Dorey  
Andrew Lea  
Judy Llewellyn-Burke  
Bob Mainstone

Gordon Marples\*  
Norman Mockford  
Geoff Rawlinson\*  
Peter Reed  
Linda Stockwell

\* Absent

**Also present (as nominated substitute):**

**Also present:** Councillors Neville Walker, Jonathan Ash-Edwards and Garry Wall.

**1. SUBSTITUTES AT MEETINGS OF COMMITTEE – COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 4**

Councillor Anne Jones was substituting for Councillor Geoff Rawlinson.  
Councillor Barrett-Miles was substituting for Councillor Margaret Belsey and Councillor Phillip Coote for Councillor Gordon Marples.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Margaret Belsey, John Belsey, Gordon Marples and Geoff Rawlinson.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**4. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman after an update had been received in relation to the recycling figures and tenancy negotiator.

The Tabled Minutes of 10<sup>th</sup> May Annual Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Resources and Economic Growth were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**5. URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**6. PERFORMANCE OUTTURN 2016/17**

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Resources, introduced the Report and stated that the direction of travel is encouraging. He drew attention to Flagship Activities which are being set out for the first time. He further informed Members that the September meeting will include the use of the new Key Performance Indicators.

A Member agreed that the direction of travel is encouraging. He asked for more detail on the "Make a Difference Award" which had been introduced. In relation to the increased level of planning applications being received he asked if headcount had increased. He also wished to congratulate the Customer Service team on their success in reducing the call waiting times to 20 seconds.

The Head of Corporate Resources confirmed that in relation the "Make a Difference Award" an Amazon Gift Voucher for £25 is presented usually by the Cabinet Member responsible for the work stream and by the Cabinet Member for Customer Services.

The Leader was encouraged that staff are being recognised for their work.

Sally Blomfield, Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy, stated that the headcount of the planning team had not been increased; however, staffing levels are being reviewed currently. The whole team had worked hard to achieve this performance.

A Member welcomed that staff are being recognised for their good work. She further noted the pressures on temporary accommodation and welcomed the review of staffing in Housing Services to meet these challenges. In relation to "Think Family" she was concerned that there are a number of families that are not getting the help they need and that she would like to see the Council do more.

A further Member welcomed the improvement across the board; however, he noted that against staff turnover performance was below target. He further noted the speed of Council Tax processing. On a final point he was concerned that the move to self-service modules may lead to an increase in fraud.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Growth stated that there are challenges around the error rate when processing is sped up, it was important to ensure that work was completed accurately. He further advised that change of circumstances cases were being prioritised. In relation to self-service he was not aware of any evidence of fraud, but it has helped in reducing errors at those authorities that have implemented it.

The Head of Corporate Resources confirmed that staff are appointed on merit and staff turnover could be attributed to increased economic activity.

A Member noted that crime rates appeared to be rising and he wondered if there was a correlation with a reduction in police officers.

The Leader stated that this came under the Cabinet Member for Community's portfolio; however the Council is aware of increased activity. It is important to be cautious in speculating but the matter is taken seriously and it was important to encourage proper reporting and logging of incidents.

The Member accepted that a correlation may be a moot point; however, it would be interesting to establish if there is a correlation.

A Member noted the direction of travel and was particularly pleased to note the performance of the leisure centres. He noted that in relation to staff turnover opportunities for promotion were considered to be limited.

A Member stated that there used to be a police officer for each village, however, now there was rarely even a PCSO. He had recently been informed that on one Saturday

night there was 2 police officers covering Haywards Heath to Crawley Down and that the police are now reactive. He had concerns in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour and also how the police service would cope with a major incident. He asked that this was raised with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Chairman noted that police matters were better placed to be dealt with by the Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning.

The Member agreed that he would like that Scrutiny Committee to consider this topic.

A Member asked how the staff sickness rate compares to other authorities.

Neal Barton, Policy and Performance Manager, noted that comparisons used to be made but currently are not. As such he would get back to the committee with a response in due course.

Another Member was concerned with the increase in Anti-Social Behaviour which affects communities and she wondered if more needed to be done in relation to youth work.

The Head of Corporate Resources stated there may be scope to in relation to youth facilities and this is something that can be consider by the Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning.

The Leader recommended that the Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning looked in more detail in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour and youth facilities. He noted that Members are aware of the police model and that there had been some success in policing. He further suggested that Members were the eyes and ears of the community. In relation to major incidents he advised that the Council are in constant contact with the police and relevant agencies.

A Member noted that Health and Wellbeing and Youth Services are funded by West Sussex County Council and he asked if provision could be increased with Mid Sussex resources.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Growth confirmed that there is a willingness to invest on a case by case basis; he would urge caution, however, not to underwrite other public services.

A Member stated that he was concerned that the recent spike in anti-social behaviour could become a trend.

Another Member asked if there are other ways the Council can be proactive in supporting business other than just paying invoices quickly.

A further Member asked if the Council is working to deliver new business parks across the District.

Sally Blomfield, Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy confirmed that the Council is working District wide to support the economy.

The Chair noted that she often hears that premises are not large enough and asked if this is being taken into account.

The Assistant Chief Executive, Judy Holmes, confirmed that this is being addressed in the Economic Refresh.

The Chairman moved to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) To note the Council's performance throughout the year and identify any areas where it requires further reporting or information;
- (ii) Advise the Cabinet of any issues that it advises should be given particular consideration when it considers the report at its meeting on 10 July 2017; and
- (iii) Note monitoring arrangements and progress with the Council's flagship activities for 2017/18.

## **7. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING**

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Resources introduced the Report and as no Members wished to speak the Chairman moved to the Recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

## **RESOLVED**

To note the Report and its contents.

## **8. UPDATE ON THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY REFRESH**

Sally Blomfield, Divisional Leader for Planning and economy introduced the Report by stating that the Member Working Group has been leading on this work and that two stakeholder workshops have taken place. The evidence base now needs to be finalised and the next steps set out.

A Member noted that a lot of the businesses invited to the workshop are large business and that she would like smaller businesses to also be included. She also noted that property rents had been increasing and this impacted on small businesses in particular. A further area of concern is in relation to the loss of employment land for example with the conversion into housing.

Sally Blomfield confirmed that the Council has also been meeting with small businesses and that Gordon Reay the Business Liaison Officer meets with a number of them regularly. In relation to office to residential conversions this is something outside of the control of the Local Planning Authority, there may be scope, however, to look to introduce an Article 4 Direction.

Another Member asked that Capital be included under the theme of Premises and Secondary and Tertiary Education under the theme of People. He further wanted to see designated areas in each of the three towns for businesses to locate.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Growth stated that this is very much an area of work in progress but that it was also important to be disciplined in what actions are taken. A lot has already been achieved around capital for example the Basepoint Centre, the buying back of long leases and there may be opportunities for modernising existing stock and making better use of the Council's land assets.

A Member asked about Central Sussex College and also asked if the Open 4 Business Event is successful.

The Deputy Leader stated that in relation to the college things remain uncertain at this time.

The Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy confirmed that the Mid Sussex hosted Open 4 Business event is successful and well regarded in addition the Council has been supporting local business through Economic Development Grants.

A Member welcomed the approach which is based on evidence. He further informed Members that the Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan does in fact encourage conversion from employment to residential in suitable areas for example along Victoria Road.

A further Member asked if it was possible to keep overheads low and reduce risk by partnership working with the private sector.

The Deputy Leader agreed that the Council has done this previously for example with Basepoint.

A Member stated that a number of Neighbourhood Plans contained sections on economic development and he asked if these would need to be refreshed.

The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that account has been taken of Neighbourhood Plans and also of the Local Enterprise Partnership as there is no desire to duplicate unnecessarily. She reiterated that there was no intention of undercutting Neighbourhood Plans.

A Member was concerned that the Council should look at what is desirable for businesses and housing and she asked if Neighbourhood Plans could be refreshed.

The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that Neighbourhood Plan groups can review their Neighbourhood Plans and the review options would need to be looked at as there may be possible changes to the system.

A Member asked what else can be done to support business and that he would also like to see some analysis of shutdowns and the reasons why.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Growth stated that the business survival rate in Mid Sussex is relatively good. The Council needed to listen to the business community and make it easy for the private sector to work with the Council. There is also scope through the planning system to support business growth.

The Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy stated that the Business Survival Rate for Businesses in the first five years in Mid Sussex is 43.5% which is higher than the national average.

The Vice Chairman stated that an Economic Strategy is important and that businesses want and need security. She did note that Leisure, Tourism and retail appeared to be missing from the strategy.

The Leader stated that this work is based on a strong structure and as these are challenging times it was very important to have an economic strategy. Until relatively recently there was no capacity for the Council to make investments. He further acknowledged that engaging with business can be difficult at times but it was important that economic growth takes place and tourism and retail is integral to that. Grants are made to support local businesses and are as a direct result of the Council engaging with business. It was important to acknowledge that for Mid Sussex to be successful the region needs to be successful and that the M23 corridor is potentially the largest growth corridor in the region.

As there were no further questions from Members the Chairman moved to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

### **RESOLVED**

- 1) To Note progress made to date in refreshing the Economic Development Strategy
- 2) Provide comments on the draft vision and priority themes set out in Annex D; and
- 3) Note the next steps detailed in paragraph 11 of the Report.

### **9. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LEADER, RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18**

Tom Clark, Head of Regulatory Services introduced the Report and it was confirmed that the Work Programme will include a Commercial Property Update in November.

The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that an action plan on the Economic Strategy can come to the meeting on a quarterly basis.

### **RESOLVED**

To agree to the work Programme plus the inclusion of a Commercial Property Update in November and Economic Strategy Action Plan quarterly.

Chairman.