Minutes of a meeting of Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance held on Wednesday, 10th March, 2021 from 5.00 - 6.23 pm

Present: J Knight (Chair)
M Pulfer (Vice-Chair)

A Bennett	A Eves	C Phillips
R Cartwright	S Hicks	L Stockwell
P Coote	R Jackson	C Trumble
R Cromie	Andrew Lea	R Whittaker

Absent: Councillors H Brunsdon

Also Present: Councillors R Clarke, R de Mierre, I Gibson, S Hatton, J Henwood, A MacNaughton and R Salisbury

Also Present (As Cabinet Members): Councillors Ash-Edwards and Llewellyn-Burke

1 ROLL CALL AND VIRTUAL MEETINGS EXPLANATION.

The Chairman carried out a roll call to establish attendance at the meeting. The Solicitor to the Council provided information on the format of the virtual meeting.

2 TO NOTE SUBSTITUTES IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 4 - SUBSTITUTES AT MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES ETC.

None.

3 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillor Brunsdon.

4 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.

In relation to any discussion concerning West Sussex County Council, Councillor Andrew Lea declared that he is a West Sussex County Councillor.

5 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2021.

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record and electronically signed by the Chairman.

6 TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS.

None.

7 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT.

Judy Holmes, Assistant Chief Executive introduced the report, which covers progress made in 2020 on the implementation of the sustainability strategy as well as a forward look outlining the work that will be undertaken to combine economic development and sustainability workstreams into a single strategy.

Discussion was held on the remit and composition of the Member working group that will support the development of the new strategy. Some Members wished to involve Members who are not members of the Scrutiny Committee because they have expertise in the subject. It was confirmed that as it is a working group of this Scrutiny Committee, the Membership will be 8 Members drawn from the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance and external consultants will be engaged to advise. Other Members can provide input through contact with the working group. It is anticipated that meetings will be every two months over a 6-8 month period. However, the group will need to be agile with the potential for additional meetings to be scheduled if required.

Members discussed the potential scope of the work. Examples include clarifying the definition of the strategy and scoping which aspects of the current sustainability strategy will be taken forward, along with new initiatives. A Member welcomed the carbon baselining and a Member requested that biodiversity baselining be considered, as well as ensuring the Council and District are responding to the climate emergency as knowledge evolves. Discussion was held on how the Council awards contracts in terms of compliance with its sustainability and climate change policies, and how the Council can influence its partners to do the same.

Discussion was held on the impact of the District Plan review on the new strategy. The Assistant Chief Executive acknowledged the cross-cutting nature of the strategy and confirmed that it will influence the review of the District Plan and vice versa. She noted that the Council needs to focus on what can be measured and what it can directly influence such as housing and planning policy, procurement, work with partners and how the Council runs its estate.

Emma Sheridan, Business Unit Leader for Community Services, Policies and Performance provided a summary of the update report. Members discussed the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and it was noted that the first phase involves the three main towns, with work to be progressed over coming years to include villages as additional funding is secured. Councillor Andrew Lea requested that he be included as a stakeholder in any consultation on this work going forward.

Discussion was held on the type of electric charging points within the District, and those available on the Council's Campus for staff and the forthcoming parking fleet. It was confirmed that West Sussex County Council is leading on a new procurement process for a county-wide network of charging points, with input from project managers from across the Districts and Boroughs. Further information will be shared with Members in due course.

Members discussed a number of initiatives contained in the update and new items that they would like to see addressed. This included Terracycle, the water refill scheme, the Council's Bike-to-work scheme, car clubs, issues with air quality at the Burgess Hill recycling centre and potential food waste recycling. A Member noted that the 50% recycling target set in the Sustainability Strategy is not being met and queried how this is being addressed. It was confirmed that the Council reports

quarterly on waste as part of the performance report being presented to this committee, and the existing targets are proposed to be carried forward into next year.

Members discussed the need to focus on measurable outcomes. In response to two queries, it was agreed that a written answer would be provided on the rewilding schemes, particularly information on Coopers Close, information regarding consultation on whether people want rewilding, and how the Council will evaluate and measure its success.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations contained in the report, which were agreed with 11 in favour, one against and two abstentions.

RESOLVED

The Committee:

(i) Noted the progress of delivery of the implementation of the Council's Sustainability Strategy as outlined in Appendix A.
(ii) Noted the roadmap for the development of the new Sustainable Economy Strategy as outlined in paragraphs 9 to 14 including the establishment of a Member Working Group to oversee this work.

8 PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2020/21.

Neal Barton, Policy and Performance Manager introduced the report noting that 77% of indicators were on or above target. He acknowledged the continuing implication of the pandemic on the delivery of Council services, noting the increased demand on Environmental Health, Revenues and Benefits and Land Charges teams. The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that teams have managed well with existing capacity and the Council continues to monitor the impact to ensure it is agile and flexible in terms of supporting staff.

Members discussed the number of Freedom of Information requests received and the work carried out in order to pre-empt requests and provide information on the Council's website. Members also discussed the collection of rents, acknowledging the difficult time faced by businesses as a result of the pandemic. The Head of Corporate Resources confirmed that the Council is working with tenants to provide assistance where required and although there is a slight shortfall in collection, the focus is on supporting businesses so that they remain in place.

Discussion was held on waste collection, including issues around the collection of litter along country roads, and the impact of Christmas tree and electrical items collection on recycling performance. Further analysis is required on the effect that electrical items recycling may have on overall collection figures. Members noted the impact that the pandemic has had on the building control teams workload, and on wellbeing interventions. A Member highlighted the positive feedback received from those who have benefitted from wellbeing sessions.

Members commented on the footfall information collected in 3 towns and 5 of the largest villages, and at the Orchards shopping centre. It was noted that footfall was noticeably cyclical in line with the pandemic lockdowns, and that in some instances the villages were seeing higher footfall as people shopped locally. A Member commented that a comparison to other shopping centres may be useful for the Committee to consider.

Discussion was held on the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites within the District. The Assistant Chief Executive noted that the Council is working hard to bring forward sufficient provision to meet the need and will continue to do so through improving existing sites, and through the Northern Arc development and the District Plan review.

Discussion was also held on the full fibre project and connectivity issues faced by rural villages. It was agreed to provide a written answer to a query on the difference between the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) and Converged Fibre Connectivity Project. The Leader noted that work continues to lay over 2500m of cable each week to create a dark fibre network backbone which will allow service providers to offer full fibre to businesses and home users. The Council has secured LEP funding for branches out of this main spur and the aspiration is to extend out to towns and villages over time as it is the single biggest thing that can assist with the uplift of the local economy in the District. He noted that a wider communication on the project will be provided to all Members in due course.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendations contained in the report which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

The Committee:

i) Noted the Council's performance and progress with Council Priority Projects in the third quarter of the year and identified any areas where further reporting or information is required; and

(ii) Agreed to advise the Cabinet of any issues that the Committee considers should be given.

9 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2 DUE NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN.

None.

The meeting finished at 6.23 pm

Chairman