

**Minutes of a meeting of Scrutiny Committee Place and Environment  
held on Wednesday, 18th October, 2023  
from 7.00 - 8.40 pm**

**Present:** J Belsey (Chairman)  
K Berggreen (Vice-Chair)

M Avery	J Hitchcock	G Zeidler
R Bates	T Hussain	S Hicks
J Henwood	A Peacock	A Eves

**Absent:** Councillors J Edwards and A Rees

**Also Present as Cabinet Members:** Councillors A Cooke, R Eggleston, I Gibson and C Hobbs

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

Cllr Eves substituted for Cllr Edwards and Cllr Hicks substituted for Cllr Rees.

**2 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies were received from Cllr Edwards and Rees.

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

None.

**4 TO BE AGREED BY GENERAL AFFIRMATION THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28 JUNE 2023.**

The Committee agreed the minutes and they were signed by the Chairman.

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

None.

**6 SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC STRATEGY - 1-YEAR REVIEW.**

Judy Holmes, Deputy Chief Executive introduced the report. She highlighted the continuing progress in delivering the strategy, which was agreed by Council in 2022. She noted that Appendix 1 detailed the achievements made in the financial year 2022/23 to deliver the 14 key objectives.

Members discussed, provision of youth clubs, qualification levels, EVCs, apprenticeships, female earnings, Biodiversity Net Gain and the usefulness of the success measures such as dwell time. Members expressed concern over the progress with active travel routes and the take up of grants to upgrade property energy ratings.

In response to a Member's question the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed work was ongoing to secure a cycle route between Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill. The Strategy runs for three-years and active travel will continue to be an action for those 3 years. She confirmed, that following the motion to Council, the Council would be writing to the West Sussex County Council urging them to prioritise routes in Mid Sussex and responding to WSCC's consultation on their draft Active Travel Plan. On Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) she noted that it was the responsibility of WSCC to prioritise and fund deliverable active travel routes.

Lara Southam, Head of Regeneration and Sustainable Economy advised level four qualifications would be equivalent to a degree and level three would be equivalent to an A level. She confirmed that Sussex Clubs For Young People had gone into administration in Summer of 2023. The Community Hub was identified as a project within the UKSPF Investment Plan and officers are working with the remaining stakeholders to ensure the hub is provided and she confirmed the funds are still available for the hub. She also explained how dwell time data was acquired and how changes in working patterns have affected the data. With regard to grants to upgrade property energy ratings, the focus was to improve the worst energy ratings, and she confirmed the Council is working with other Local Authorities to secure future funding sources.

Sally Blomfield, Assistant Director Planning and Economy highlighted that the Sustainable Economic Strategy brings together actions that will be delivered through other policies. She confirmed the LCWIPs had been commissioned through an external provider who had engaged with the town and parish councils. She confirmed the value of networking with business and education partners to forge better relationships.

In response a question from the Chairman, the Deputy Chief Executive provided an update on the Science and Technology Park, noting the Council is actively working with landowners, building relationships with the stakeholders and remains committed to the project.

Rob Anderton, Assistant Director for Commercial Services and Contracts outlined the procedure for selecting sites for rewilding, noting the guidance provided by the Blue Campaign and that existing sites are continually monitored for changes in flora and fauna.

Simon Hughes, Director for People and Communications noted the growth in internet service providers within the district, noting the mixed benefits; he highlighted the use of satellite and other technology for broadband connectivity in rural areas. He also confirmed that prior to purchasing temporary accommodation properties the Council assesses to determine works required to improve the energy rating.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations, which were agreed unanimously.

**RESOLVED**

The Scrutiny Committee for Place and Environment agreed to endorse the progress made in delivering the objectives in the Sustainable Economy Strategy in the year 2022-2023.

## **7 GREEN SPACES INVESTMENT - STRATEGIC VISION.**

Simon Hughes, Director for People and Commercial Services introduced the report. He advised that the strategy will provide a long-term blueprint of priorities and an evidence base to improve, modernise and maintain parks and open spaces. It would enable leverage of resources, section 106 funds and external grants to improve green spaces.

Rob Anderton, Assistant Director for Commercial Services and Contracts summarised the work carried out to bring forward the six masterplans for key parks and explained how these were a pre-cursor to the strategy, ensuring evidence-based investment.

The Members discussed the maintenance of playgrounds, queried the benefit of bulk buying equipment to achieve a lower cost price, the decline in the number of suppliers of playground equipment, and the need for public engagement when planning changes to facilities.

The Director for People and Commercial Services advised the Council can engage with Parish Councils about re procurement of equipment. He noted the existence of frameworks where costs are specified and highlighted that procuring more stock is not always cheaper. He noted that often, part of the procurement process includes considerations around the maintenance of equipment and the availability of spare parts and confirmed that fewer suppliers have a larger share of the market, but they can be more resilient. He confirmed the strategy would help to identify when replacement could be necessary. The Council will engage with the public on Tier 4 parks to better understand their benefit to the local community. He also confirmed the Council would engage earlier with sports clubs and other user groups on their current needs for facilities to ensure effective use of resources.

In response to a Member's question regarding facilities at Mount Noddy, the Assistant Director for Commercial Services and Contracts confirmed the master planning process included public consultation and the final plans would be in the public domain as the Council would soon be seek planning consent.

The Committee were advised that a gap analysis of the funding had not been undertaken.

The Chairman welcomed the new strategic direction being taken and separately noted the progress on Centre for Outdoor Sports.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

### **RESOLVED**

The Scrutiny Committee for Place and Environment:

- i) Endorsed the principles of the Strategic Vision for the delivery of the Playing Pitch and Play and Amenity Green Space Studies.

ii) Endorsed the review, over the coming 12 months of 'Tier 4' play areas.

## **8 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAMME.**

Louise Duffield, Director for Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report and noted that briefing notes provided the Committee time to debate policy.

She confirmed the Committee had requested the attendance of energy companies at a future meeting.

Members discussed the list of topics and the transport model.

Judy Holmes, Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the District Plan - Regulation 19 should be on the agenda for the next meeting and advised that Systra undertake the transport modelling and the Council and WSCC have access. MSDC own the transport model and it is constantly updated.

As there were no further comments, the Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

### **RESOLVED**

The Scrutiny Committee:

- i) Confirm the work programme for the municipal year 2023/24 and beyond.
- ii) Note the alternative approaches by which Scrutiny may receive information and consider matters.
- iii) Note the process for Scrutiny Members requesting, via the Chairman, further topics to be considered by the committee.

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

None.

The meeting finished at 8.40 pm

Chairman