

**Minutes of a meeting of Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance
and Performance
held on Wednesday, 20th November, 2019
from 7.00 - 8.00 pm**

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

G Allen	R Cromie	C Trumble
H Brunsdon	A Eves	R Whittaker
P Budgen	R Jackson	S Hicks
R Cartwright	Andrew Lea	
P Coote	L Stockwell	

Absent: Councillors A Bennett

Also Present: Councillors N Webster

Also Present as Cabinet Members: Councillors J Ash-Edwards, R de Mierre and J Llewellyn-Burke

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

Councillor Hicks substituted for Councillor Alison Bennett.

2 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillor Alison Bennett.

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

None.

4 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2019.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

None.

6 INTRODUCTION OF A BANDED INCOME COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME FOR 2020/21.

Kevin Stewart, Business Unit Leader for Revenues and Benefits introduced the report. He noted that the Council Tax Support Scheme was very complex, but as members previously had a presentation on the details of it, it would not be necessary to recount the full details. He advised that the Committee only needed to consider the feedback including any proposed changes which had arisen from the 8 week consultation period which had involved contacting food banks, West Sussex County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, residents including those currently in receipt of Council Tax Support, registered social landlords, Citizens Advice, Stepchange, the Jobcentre, online forms, stakeholder group meetings and a presentation at a national Conference. The Business Unit Leader confirmed there had been 8 responses: 6 from residents, 1 from Citizens Advice, and 1 from the Police Crime and Commissioner. The Committee were informed that while the number of responses was low, Citizens Advice and the Police Crime and Commissioner were representative of many customers.

The Business Unit Leader advised that 28 other councils had introduced a banded Council Tax Support Scheme successfully, including two East Sussex County Council authorities. He noted from his knowledge that around 100 other councils were looking to implement a banded Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21. He commented that this would benefit many people by making the system more transparent and simpler for everyone. The Committee were informed that customers on low income or universal credit would benefit as their income can change monthly. He highlighted that this system would prevent monthly changes to council tax bills and would provide a consistent figure for the year. The Business Unit Leader noted that this would reduce the administrative workload for the Revenues and Benefits team. He explained that the only change from the last meeting was the delay of the minimum income floor by one year. He confirmed that the responses were generally supportive, with a number of factors being discussed such as the impact of those caring for disabled children, and the impact of simplifying the system would bring it in line with the current housing benefit system.

Members discussed the minimum income floor, and the dates which customers would be informed of the changes affecting them and the Revenues and Benefits' team role in supporting those people.

A Member enquired whether an independent consultant would be able to assist the Committee, and how the complexities of the regulations surrounding housing benefit, council tax, council tax support and universal credit interact. This was discussed and as the Business Unit Leader was knowledgeable and experienced on the topic it was decided that the expertise of the officers was sufficient to assist the Committee.

A Member asked for clarification that those affected or wanting to seek further information were able to discuss the impact and effects of the new scheme. The Business Unit Leader noted that those affected had been contacted, and would be able to discuss changes and impacts. The Business Unit Leader gave an assurance that this work on contacting and helping customers affected would continue.

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

RESOLVED

The Committee agreed that all aspects of the proposed new Council Tax Support Scheme as detailed in Appendix B and C are recommended for adoption by Council on 18th December 2019.

7 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING.

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Resources introduced the report to the committee. He explained that this is an annual report, being put forward in March, and this midterm assessment is to assess how capital programs are progressing. He noted that the capital programs are not revenue funded.

Members discussed the Hurst Farm development costs, and this was explained as the costs of consultants and agents involved in the sale of Hurst Farm.

A Member asked for further information regarding budget, costs, specifically cumulative costs of programs, and whether these would be reported in the Committee.

The Head of Corporate Resources explained that these figures were set out in the annual financial report which would be produced in June 2020.

Members discussed the number of projects that the Council was engaging with, and whether there was capacity for further projects, and the balance of resources. The management and planning of projects was discussed. The Head of Corporate Resources noted that the Council is able to manage these projects successfully due to resource management.

The Leader advised Members that the range of work undertaken by the Council was impressive. He noted it was important to remember when putting new ideas forward that the capacity of the Council should be considered, and that Members should continue to look to prioritise projects which will aid the residents of Mid Sussex.

The progression and costs of The Martlets Shopping Centre and Goddards Green Sewage Treatment Works were discussed.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendation which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

The Committee noted the report and its contents.

8 DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN AND BUDGET 2020/21 - CONSULTATION PROCESS.

Emma Sheridan, Business Unit Leader for Community Services, Policy and Performance introduced the annual report to the committee. She notes that the report outlines the timetable and the role of the Committee in the process of creating the Corporate Plan and Budget. She advised that a consultation will start on the 20th December for 6 weeks, during which there will be a meeting of this committee to determine their ideas and decision. She stated that the decision of the Committee will go to Cabinet on the 10th of February and to Council on the 4th March.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendation which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

The Committee agreed the proposed approach.

9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2019/20.

Neal Barton, Policy, Performance and Partnerships Manager introduced the report for the period July to September 2019. He noted that 74% of the performance indicators monitored by the committee were at green, with 17 of the Corporate Plan flagships at green and 4 at amber. He highlighted the increase of cashless payments for car park pay and display purchases, currently 35% and therefore the end of year target has been raised from 25% to 37%. He noted that all customer services targets were met, as well as all targets for planning applications and affordable homes. He highlighted that 118 affordable homes had been built this year which exceeded last year's total of 102.

A Member asked how the previous shortfall in meeting the Health and Wellbeing intervention target was mitigated to meet the target this quarter. The Policy, Performance and Partnerships Manager explained the previous shortfall was due to staff sickness and the Council has now employed another person increasing the resources of the department. The target had been profiled over the year to reflect seasonal changes.

The use of electronic forms and the impact of these on customer services was discussed. Members enquired how customer satisfaction was measured and if electronic communication with the Council was included. The Policy, Performance and Partnerships Manager explained that those contacting the Council by phone were included in the customer satisfaction surveys. Members discussed the possibility of new indicators for responding to electronic forms and communications.

A Member asked if the changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme would affect their targets and the performance of the Revenues and Benefits department. The Business Unit Leader for Revenues and Benefits explained that as the Council Tax Support Scheme would reduce the complexities of Council Tax Support that these targets would continue to be met.

Members discussed the economic development specifically of the 3 town's shopping centres. The footfall through the shopping centres was discussed as were methods for accurately measuring this. The Policy, Performance and Partnerships Manager explained that West Sussex County Council had previously used a monitoring system for footfall, but this was not considered reliable. An alternative method is currently used at the Orchards Shopping Centre and he would investigate further how this could be extended to Burgess Hill and East Grinstead.

The economic impact of the Orchards and other shopping centres was discussed including their refurbishment and improvements. The Leader explained that a report to Cabinet had set out the work and options being considered to improve shopping centres and the investment into for these works.

A Member expressed concern over the electric charging points in Burgess Hill. The Chairman explained this had been addressed at full Council and the Leader noted that this matter was for the utility company to resolve.

Members discussed the development of Waste and Outdoor Services progression to target. Members discussed ideas for improving the rate of recycling and how to discourage people from contaminating recycling.

The Leader explained that MSDC are working with West Sussex County Council to improve the level of recycling and other aspects of household waste.

A Member noted that there were villages in the South Downs area of the District, which had not had much development within them and therefore would need resources from the Council to make improvements, including to children's playgrounds. The Deputy Leader advised that the Council was aware of this issue and was working to improve this.

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

RESOLVED

The Committee:

- (i) Noted the Council's performance and progress with flagship activities in the second quarter of the year and identified areas where further reporting or information is required;
- (ii) Agreed to advise the Cabinet of any issues that the Committee considered should be given particular consideration at the Cabinet meeting on 13th January 2020.

10 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LEADER, FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20.

Tom Clark, Head of Regulatory Services introduced the report. He noted the dates for the draft Corporate Plan and Budget for 2020/21, the Annual Sustainability Report, and the Council Performance for the Third Quarter 2019/20.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendation which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

The Committee agreed to the Committee's Work Programme as set out at paragraph 5 of the report.

11 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10, DUE NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN.

None.

The meeting finished at 8.00 pm

Chairman