

**Minutes of a meeting of Council
held on Wednesday, 30th March, 2022
from 7.00 pm - 8.13 pm**

Present: M Belsey (Chairman)
P Coote (Vice-Chair)

J Ash-Edwards	B Dempsey	A Peacock
R Bates	S Ellis	M Pulfer
J Belsey	R Eggleston	R Salisbury
A Bennett	A Eves	S Smith
P Bradbury	I Gibson	L Stockwell
P Brown	J Henwood	D Sweatman
H Brunsdon	S Hicks	C Trumble
R Cartwright	S Hillier	N Walker
P Chapman	R Jackson	R Webb
R Clarke	Anthea Lea	N Webster
E Coe-	G Marsh	
Gunnell White	J Mockford	
R de Mierre		

Absent: Councillors G Allen, L Bennett, A Boutrup, M Cornish, R Cromie, J Dabell, J Edwards, B Forbes, L Gibbs, S Hatton, T Hussain, J Knight, C Laband, Andrew Lea, J Llewellyn-Burke, C Phillips, A Sparasci and R Whittaker

1. OPENING PRAYER.

The opening prayer was read by the Vice-Chairman.

2. TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 9.

None.

3. TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 2 MARCH 2022.

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 2 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

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

With regards to item 8, Standards Committee Annual Report, Councillor Bradbury declared an interest as Chairman of the Standards Committee at West Sussex County Council and Councillor Gibson declared an interest as a Member of the West Sussex County Council Standards Committee. Councillor Gibson also declared a

personal interest that becomes prejudicial regarding this item and will retire both from the room for the duration of discussion and voting on it.

Councillor Hillier declared that he is a West Sussex County Councillor in relation to items covered in his Cabinet Member report.

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

None.

6. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Chairman noted the attendance of the Vice Chairman at a recent tree planting as part of the Council's involvement in the Platinum Jubilee Queens Green Canopy initiative. She also noted that future Chairman's engagements are available to view on the Council's website.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET HELD ON 21 MARCH 2022.

The Leader moved the item, highlighting a £1.138m increase in the Capital Programme as a result of the inclusion of four projects. This included a new Changing Places toilet at the Orchards Shopping Centre, including the addition of new male and female toilets replacing the facilities that are currently in place. He also highlighted the proposed Hickman's Lane Pavilion improvements, which were subject to attaining planning permission. The item was seconded by the Deputy Leader who noted that this would result in tangible improvements to impact a high percentage of the local community, with projects spread across the towns.

The Leader agreed to provide a written answer to Councillor Eves who asked if the Council expressed an interest in the Government funding for Changing Places Toilets Programme in July 2021, and if not, why not. He noted that the current project was Council funded, delivering a project for its towns.

In response to a question over the Hill Place SANG funding, the Leader confirmed that the Council is forward funding the project but it would be recovered from developers as the use of the SANG is required to mitigate the impact of planning permissions on the Ashdown Forest.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations as contained in the report which was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED

That Council approved:

(i) the variations to the Capital Programme 2022/23 contained in paragraph 3 above in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure rule B3.

Councillor Gibson left the meeting at 7.11pm

8. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021.

Councillor Clarke moved the item noting that the most significant item of work during the year was the consideration and recommendation to adopt the LGA Code of Conduct so that Town, Parish and District Council's in the area follow the same code. He thanked the Committee and Independent Members for their work throughout the year and thanked the Solicitor to the Council for his guidance. The item was seconded by Councillor Smith. The Solicitor to the Council clarified that West Sussex County Council are planning to adopt the same Code.

The Chairman took Members to the recommendation as contained in the report which was agreed.

RESOLVED

Council noted the report.

Councillor Gibson returned to the meeting at 7.15pm

9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2022/23 TO 2024/25.

Councillor Pulfer moved the item noting that the recommendations had been debated at the recent Audit Committee. This was reiterated by Councillor Stockwell who seconded the item.

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

RESOLVED

Council agreed:

- (i) The proposed Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2022/23 and the following two years,
- (ii) the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement (MRP) as contained in Sections 4 and 2.3 respectively of the report;
- (iii) the proposed amendments to the specified and non-specified investment appendices;
- (iv) the Prudential Indicators contained within this report.

10. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2022/23.

Councillor Webster moved the item which reflects the current arrangements for in-person, virtual, and hybrid meetings. He noted that to safeguard Council employees (Members included) the Council carries out a regular risk assessment in relation to holding public meetings to reflect health and safety regulations, Government guidance and regulations regarding living with Covid. As the year progresses, the programme timings and locations will be considered in the same way as it has over the past year. The item was seconded by the Leader.

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

RESOLVED

Council agreed:

That the Programme (attached to the report as Appendix 1) be approved.

11. TO RECEIVE THE LEADER'S REPORT.

The Leader has shared with Members the letter he wrote to the Secretary of State with regards to the District Plan Review. The Leader welcomed the lobbying work undertaken by local Members of Parliament and noted that once a response has been received from the Secretary of State, the Council will be able to carefully consider the next steps of the work. In the meantime, Officers from the Planning Policy Team continue to work on the District Plan Review as they do on a routine basis for all reviews.

Regarding the war in Ukraine, he confirmed that the Government has now launched the local sponsorship scheme as a second route alongside the family sponsor scheme to assist refugees. There is a coordinated response across West Sussex in delivering this initiative to support the families who have volunteered to help. In response to a question on any obstacles preventing families taking in refugees, particularly available school places, he noted that the Government has put in place a financial support package to fund the additional needs from local services.

12. REPORT OF CABINET MEMBERS, INCLUDING QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.1.

Deputy Leader

The Deputy Leader noted recent Cabinet consideration of a feasibility study on the Centre for Outdoor Sports, and the next steps involved. He has contacted a number of Burgess Hill sports clubs, ten of which have so far shown an interest and as an action plan for community engagement is developed, he looks forward to getting back to them to consider their needs. He also noted that the Centre will not be appropriate for all sport and therefore more work is taking place as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy to understand clubs' needs over the next 10 years. Members expressed a wish for a variety of sports to be considered, including a hard surface running track, an artificial pitch in Crawley Down, improvements to pitches in Hurstpierpoint and athletics provision. The Deputy Leader noted that consultation will include a wide variety of groups and the Council will work to assist wherever possible.

The Deputy Leader also noted that submissions had been made to maintain the Green Flags in three parks in the District, with East Court being 'mystery shopped' this year.

He also provided an update on the food waste pilot which is on track with the actions and comms plan being finalised. The trial will commence late summer and communications will be issued to those residents involved 6-8 weeks before the trial begins. He confirmed that West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is the disposing authority and it is anticipated that the waste will go to Basingstoke whilst WSCC develop their own facility in West Sussex.

Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Net Zero

The Cabinet Member noted that the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging points has begun in some car parks and first connections should go live during May this year, details of which will be shared in the Member Information Bulletin. He noted that by partnering with WSCC the Council is part of one of the largest local Government roll-outs in the UK and senior officers involved are involved with advisory work at a national level. It is also hopeful that schemes may be well-placed to attract support from the £500m fund that the Secretary of State wrote to all councils about on the 25th March. The Cabinet Member noted that WSCC are leading on work to support SMEs with guidance around the carbon agenda and in particular with how to measure their carbon footprint baselines. A local company, Adelphi, are a leader in manufacturing in the most environmentally friendly way and are supporting this work. This activity will be of great help in beginning to achieve some of the targets in the Sustainable Economic Strategy.

In relation to the Council's work on Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) the Cabinet Member attended the first meeting of the Haywards Heath LCWIP and a forthcoming consultants' report will establish a list of projects that will be prioritised in terms of impact to offer the most potential and benefit to residents. A workshop will be arranged shortly with stakeholders in Burgess Hill and the planning of this is being done in conjunction with the Town Council.

He noted that the Council has been successful in winning a bid for £75k to develop a full business case for Community Low Carbon Energy Hubs which are hoped will offer a way for rural campuses (schools, hospitals), neighbourhoods or villages to generate and share their own renewable energy while lowering their carbon emissions.

The Cabinet Member noted that the recovery of parking transactions continues but is still 26% down on pre-covid levels. However, Lindfield, Hassocks, Cuckfield and Crawley Down are all continuing to exhibit higher footfall figures than pre-pandemic. In response to a question from Councillor Alison Bennett he agreed to provide a written response on the footfall for Hurstpierpoint and the next steps to support the high street. He also agreed to provide a written response to Councillor Eggleston who asked for a comparison of the three towns to see how carpark usage has changed pre-pandemic, through the pandemic and to the current position.

In conclusion he noted that the 2022 Micro Business Grant Scheme will be launched at the end of April. The Council is supporting the ShopAppy initiative and the "Pop to the Shops" campaign to support local highstreets.

Cabinet Member for Leisure and Customer Services

The Cabinet Member noted that Energy Payments are beginning to be issued to the 41.5k households within the District, with discretionary funding also available to those who are eligible. Payments will be made next month to those who pay by Direct Debit and Officers are making direct contact with other residents to highlight the application process and ensure the payments reach those who need them. She also confirmed that £150 hardship grants are given to every taxpayer who received Council Tax support, and the Covid Additional Relief Fund is still open for businesses to apply.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the latest edition of 'Mid Sussex Matters' has been distributed, and the Full Fibre website is due to go live shortly for local

businesses to register their interest. Briefings on the Council's digital work externally and internally are being provided to Members, who are encouraged to attend.

With regards to the threat of cyber-attacks, the Council is taking part in the LGA 360 programme, a sponsored security review. A project team is also driving forward a change to the document management system that supports the Planning department and the Planning Portal.

With reference to safeguarding, the Cabinet Member recently attended an interactive training session which is hoped to be shared with all Members in due course. She also acknowledged that the recent Scrutiny Committee agreed the Council's Modern Slavery Statement.

The Cabinet Member provided an update on the increased membership and visits to leisure centres and confirmed that a 1 year agreement is in place from 1 April with Places Leisure to revert the financial risk for the contract back to them. The Council is working with Places Leisure on a longer position in this regard.

Cabinet Member for Community

The Cabinet Member noted that thanks to the support of WSCC and Public Health England the Council can continue to offer 9 well balanced programmes to support older and vulnerable residents whose muscle fitness and balanced has been reduced during the confines of the pandemic. He also noted that the Council's Equality and Diversity progress report has recently been reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee and the Council has moved forward in many areas in the cross-council work despite the impact of the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member recently attended the Police and Crime Panel where the second priority of the Police and Crime Plan was considered which is the relentless disruption of serious and organised crime. The Panel also reviewed a report provided by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service regarding the police response to violence to women and girls on a national basis. He noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner was on the expert panel as part of this work.

Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning

The Cabinet Member focussed on the work of the Development Management Team, thanking all those involved in continuing to provide services whilst adapting to working from home during the pandemic. He noted that keeping development processes effective is essential in maintaining the 5 year housing land supply and noted that 98% major applications were met within target, as well as 98% minor and 99% of all other applications. Planning permissions have been granted on only 23% of appeals brought forward, against the national average of 33%. The performance puts Mid Sussex in the top tier of national authorities.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that 315 affordable housing units have been delivered up to the end of February and over the past financial year £2.7m of Section 106 funds have been delivered, with £2.64m spent on the communities related to the sites.

With regards to the Planning Enforcement team he noted that 450 alleged breaches of planning control investigated were investigated this year along with a number of notices being issued.

With regards to training, he noted that training sessions are coming up for Planning Committee Members which will be a mixture of in-person sessions in the Council Chamber and a hybrid/live meeting on enforcement for all Members on 21 June.

He concluded by highlighting new regulations on telecom masts for 5G.

A Member requested that the Cabinet Member publish the statistics for enforcement and thanked the Cabinet Member for a recent meeting held at East Grinstead Town Council with regards to housing and the impact of development on roads around the area. In response to a question around the vulnerability of school place provision and the potential to travel a distance to school, the Cabinet Member had made enquiries with WSCC and confirmed that there are no issues with Primary School places in East Grinstead, but Secondary places were an issue. He noted the concern and agreed to continue to work on those aspects.

13. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2.

1) Question from Councillor Samantha Smith:

There has been much speculation in Burgess Hill as to New River's intentions for the town centre and concern that only the residential aspects of the planning permission would be built, which would be unacceptable to me and the residents of Burgess Hill. Could the Leader of the Council please explain whether it would be the case that New River could build a residential-only development and outline any safeguards the council has in place.

Response from Councillor Jonathan Ash-Edwards

Thank you for the question.

I can reassure you and Burgess Hill residents that the Council has safeguards in place to protect the delivery of the commercial aspects of the scheme therefore eliminating any opportunity for the developer to build only the residential elements.

The Planning Permission includes a condition which requires an implementation programme for the whole development to be submitted and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on the site. The condition then requires that the development must be carried out in accordance with this approved programme.

In addition the Council has safeguards in place in its position as the Freeholder as the current lease would not allow a residential only scheme to be built.

The Council continues to encourage New River to explore all opportunities to deliver on their planning permission and deliver on the promises they have made to the people of Burgess Hill.

Councillor Smith asked a supplementary question noting that the town centre has been a mass of decaying concrete, unsightly fencing, and hording. She asked if the area could be improved even just temporarily with an urban pocket park noting that this would not only bring in colour with grass instead of concrete, planting and also

benches. It would improve this part of the town centre and inject a feeling of social improvement and wellbeing

The Leader noted that whilst everyone wants to see New River deliver the redevelopment of the area, there is a need to improve the appeal and usability of the old library area in the short term. He noted that pocket parks are small urban parks providing access to green space and improved public realm in the heart of towns and are a sensible way forward and provided an undertaking that the Council will explore that further.

2) Question from Councillor Paul Brown:

Given that Scrutiny Committee for Housing Planning & Economic Growth meeting on 19th January 2022, agreed to set up a working group to examine the Draft District Plan 2021-2038 and the plan has been paused, would the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee agree that Terms of Reference should be prepared and that this working group should be formed without further delay with the express objective of firstly scrutinizing the amended policy sections of the Draft District Plan?

Would not progressing the scrutiny of policy amendments in the Draft District Plan be a sensible approach, avoiding further delay, whilst this Council wait for housing numbers to be confirmed by the Secretary of State?

Noting that this Scrutiny Committee did not meet on the scheduled date this month of 16th March 2022 and has not had any opportunity to debate or set a work programme and has not met to scrutinize any substantive matter since meeting on 20th January 2021, (when the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan SPD was considered), would the committee chairman advise why this scrutiny committee has been effectively closed down?

Response from Councillor Neville Walker:

As you know at the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth on 19th January 2022, the Committee resolved to defer discussion of the District Plan Review so that further work and consideration can take place and the outcome of change to any Government policy is known.

It also agreed that the Committee established a working party to review: the evidence for the proposed housing allocation in the Draft District Plan 2021-2038, the fundamental alterations to 10 major policies in the current District Plan and the addition of 6 new policies, and the appropriateness or otherwise of including the sites identified for development in the Plan, in whole or part and report its findings to the next appropriate meeting of the Committee with recommendations for adoption by the Committee and Council.

This work is ongoing and we have not yet received a response from the Secretary of State.

Officers are reviewing the timetable for the District Plan Review. A revised Local Development Scheme setting out a revised timetable will be prepared and discussed by Cabinet in the coming months.

As you know Scrutiny Committees only meet when there is business to consider. There has been no business for this Committee therefore has not met, it has certainly not been 'closed down'. It will meet when there is business to consider.

The meeting finished at 8.13 pm

Chairman