

**Minutes of a meeting of Scrutiny Committee for Planning,
Economic Growth and Net Zero
held on 15 March 2023
from 7.00 pm**

Present: N Walker (Chair)
A Peacock (Vice-Chair)

R Bates	P Coote	J Mockford
M Belsey	R Eggleston	K Adams
P Brown	B Forbes	J Dabell
R Clarke	J Henwood	

Absent: Councillors S Hatton, C Laband, G Marsh and R Whittaker

Also Present: Councillors R de Mierre and N Webster

Also Present as Cabinet Member: Councillors S Hillier and R Salisbury

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

Councillor Hicks substituted for Councillor Hatton, Councillor Adams substituted for Councillor Laband, Councillor Dabell substituted for Councillor Marsh.

2 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillors Hatton, Laband, Marsh and Whittaker.

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

Councillor Brown declared an interest in item 7 as he is the correspondent for the Open Spaces Society.

**4 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE FOR HOUSING, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC GROWTH HELD ON
5TH AND 18TH OCTOBER 2022.**

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 5th and 18th October 2023 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

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

The Chairman confirmed he had no urgent business.

6 WATER RESOURCES - RESILIENCE AND FUTURE PLANNING.

Sally Blomfield, Assistant Director Planning and Economy introduced the report and welcomed representatives from the water companies who would be addressing the committee on the recent water outages and planning for future growth. It was noted that slides from the presentation will be circulated after the meeting.

Douglas Whitfield, Operational Director for South East Water and Jo Shippey, Community Engagement Manager from South East Water gave a presentation on the freeze/thaw incidents in Sussex in 2022.

Members discussed the changing habits of Mid Sussex residents since the pandemic, organisation of water supply, targets for water leaks and timely repairs. Members also expressed concern over the lack of communication with residents during the incident and the use of plastic water bottles at emergency water stations.

The representatives for South East Water provided information on the demand levels, and alternative water supplies that are being investigated, including refillable containers in the event of any future incidents. It was confirmed that the repair targets are set by the regulator and have been achieved for 13 years, noting that some repairs may take longer due to their location and restrictions on working.

It was also confirmed that a new in-house system for effective communications was being developed as the present system had been overloaded during recent events and a commitment was made to improve engagement with the public.

Lee Dance, Organisational Director for Water Resources South East explained how the regional water companies collaborate, the issues of transferring water from different catchment areas, and that new techniques are required to make the delivery of repairs more cost efficient. He confirmed that the drivers of demand levels are the growing population, government ambition, climate change and environmental improvements.

Nick Price, Water Resources Strategy Manager for Southern Water; Lee Dance, Organisational Director for Water Resources South East and Andrew Halliday, Water Resources Strategy Manager for South East Water gave a presentation on planning for future growth.

Members discussed the impact of water neutrality, grey water and rainwater harvesting, and how households could be encouraged to reduce their water usage. The Water Resources Strategy Manager for South East Water confirmed a proposal for piloting rainwater harvesting and grey water use for agricultural users, which required funding. The technology for water desalination plants should be developed before a commitment is made to invest and a behavioural change programme may reduce water usage.

Members discussed the issue of leaks on private land and how the water companies work with households to address this.

The Organisational Director for Water Resources South East outlined the future resilience of supplies and noted mains replacement programmes are costly.

The Members thanked the speakers for their presentations and for information provided at a recent visit to the local water treatment works at Goddard's Green.

RESOLVED

The Scrutiny Committee for Planning, Economic Growth and Net Zero:

(i) Noted the content of this report and the presentations to be made by the water companies at this Scrutiny meeting.

7 DISTRICT PLAN 2021 - 2039 - SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO DRAFT MID SUSSEX DISTRICT PLAN CONSULTATION (REGULATION 18).

Sally Blomfield, Assistant Director Planning and Economy introduced the report, noting it summarised the responses to the representations to the draft District Plan 2021-2039 during the first public consultation. She noted any future changes to the District Plan following consideration of the responses would be presented to a future Scrutiny Committee as part of its consideration of the Regulation 19 draft of the District Plan. Any proposed changes would need to be evidence based.

Members welcomed the number of representations, engagement of the local community and work by some Parish Councils to engage with their residents. Members discussed further engagement with the local community, the possibility of reconvening the Working Group, if necessary, to discuss any future changes to the District Plan and requiring developers to submit ecological surveys. Members expressed concern about the responses from the NHS regarding healthcare provision in the District and queried the reference to duplicate comments contained in the report.

Judy Holmes, Deputy Chief Executive reiterated that all work is evidence based and sites are allocated using the approved site selection criteria. The Plan must be robust in order to get through public examination. The scrutiny committee should determine if the Working Group should be reinstated and if so it would be supported by officers.

Kevin Toogood, Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services Monitoring Officer confirmed that the scrutiny committee is an advisory committee to the Council.

Cllr Eggleston proposed the following amendment to the recommendations:

That this committee recommends to Council that it positively engages with Town and Parish Councils prior to the Regulation 19 process.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Hicks. The Chairman took Members to a vote on the amendment which was approved with 7 votes in favour, 5 against and 2 abstentions.

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

RESOLVED

The Scrutiny Committee for Planning, Economic Growth and Net Zero:

(i) To note the comments received during the public consultation on the Draft Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 and supporting documentation;

- (ii) To note the additional work required and the next steps ahead of the Regulation 19 stage, and
- (iii) This Committee recommends to Council that it positively engages with Town and Parish Councils prior to the Regulation 19 process.

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

None.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Vice-Chairman thanked the Chairman for his dedication and commitment for chairing the scrutiny committee for over 12 years.

The Chairman reflected on his 12 years as Chairman and thanked the Members and the officers for their support and guidance.

The meeting finished at 9.11 pm

Chairman