

**Minutes of a meeting of Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance
and Performance
held on Tuesday, 22nd March, 2022
from 6.00 - 7.34 pm**

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

A Bennett	I Gibson	C Trumble
H Brunsdon	J Henwood	R Whittaker
P Coote	S Hicks	J Dabell
R Cromie	R Jackson	
A Eves	Andrew Lea	

Absent: Councillors L Stockwell

Also Present: Councillors P Brown, R Clarke and S Hatton

Also Present As Cabinet Member: Councillors J Belsey, J Ash-Edwards and R De Mierre.

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 reasons for the virtual meeting.

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

Councillor Dabell substituted for Councillor Stockwell.

3 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillor Stockwell.

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

None.

5 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2022.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2022 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 SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022-2025.

The Chairman introduced the report, acknowledging the work of the cross-party working group and noting that the strategy brings together the Council's economic development, sustainability and climate change work for the first time, recognising their intrinsic link.

The Strategy sets out how the Council will support the Government's policy of Net Zero by 2050 and provides a clear stance on these issues based on economic growth, job creation, conservation of the environment and practical actions to achieve Net Zero. He noted that following a recent Member workshop, Officers and Members have indicated that in general they are comfortable with the strategy.

Judy Holmes, Assistant Chief Executive provided an introduction noting that it was unusual to have a three year strategy which is relatively short for Local Authorities. This is a deliberate decision acknowledging the fast-moving nature of this workstream and the challenging environment, requiring a need to be agile. She confirmed that the work was commissioned by this Scrutiny Committee with a working group to oversee the development. The group met 8 times, supported by external consultants Ricardos and Scott Marshall Associates. The working group also had the opportunity to comment on two drafts of the strategy. The Strategy will be subject to a review of relevance on a regular basis and there are already some amendments to make before it is published.

As Chairman of the working group, Councillor Pulfer reiterated the comments made by the Assistant Chief Executive and thanked all Councillors for their valuable input.

Discussion was held on the Vision in the document which is to be 'a vibrant District that is attractive, resilient and innovative that balances social well-being, environmental protection and sustainable economic growth'. The Chairman acknowledged that there was general agreement with the Vision. A Member noted that it did not include reference to carbon reduction and climate change but it was acknowledged that the wording had been discussed at length by the working group who felt the wording in the document was balanced and appropriate. Discussion was also held on the infographics on p.22 and it was noted that additional statistics mentioned were included in the report and could be pulled through into the infographic if the Committee agreed. The external consultant Scott Marshall confirmed that the real-life satisfaction figure quoted was a score on a scale of 1 to 10.

The Assistant Chief Executive highlighted that the strategy was based on the 17 UN goals organised around three themes of People, Place and Partnership, with objectives to help deliver these. Councillor Alison Bennet proposed an amendment to Objective 8 as detailed below:

To commit to the development of the Mid Sussex Nature Recovery Plan to deliver Objective 8 of the Sustainable Economy Strategy and the Plan will:

1) set out how Mid Sussex District Council will allocate resources to meet the strengthened biodiversity duty contained in the Environment Act 2021

2) begin by contracting a consultant to deliver a short-term desk based natural capital mapping of Mid Sussex that will form the basis of a Mid Sussex nature recovery network, be budgeted from the Sustainability and Climate Change special reserve and will be conducted using West Sussex County Council's project mapping tool to ensure coherence.

This was seconded by Councillor Pulfer and supported by the Deputy Leader. The Chairman took Members to a vote on the amendment which was agreed.

Discussion was held on the KPI's included in the Strategy including the relevance of measuring footfall verses dwell time in retail centres, retail vacancy rates, the target around active travel and the need to continue engagement with local colleges to provide skillsets in delivering green technologies. The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that the Ricardo study is due to be delivered by the end of April and will be used as an important evidence base to inform KPIs both in this Strategy and the quarterly KPI reporting. A Member requested that when data is updated within the profile, Members are made aware of the specific changes.

Members considered the agile nature of the Strategy and the need to be cautious about adding too many amendments to the success measures at this stage in order to allow it to evolve with the many partners involved, particularly as the Council is often an influencer rather than the direct deliverer of some of the initiatives.

Discussion was held around electric vehicles and charging facilities. Councillor Andrew Lea proposed an amendment to Objective 10 to include an additional bullet point stating:

Monitor, and where appropriate support other sustainable low carbon dioxide vehicle technologies.

This was seconded by Councillor Henwood. The Chairman took Members to a vote on the amendment which was agreed unanimously.

The Action Plan was considered by the Committee and Councillor Alison Bennett proposed an amendment to Objective 3 concerning pay inequality for women proposing that it reads:

Increase hourly female earnings from 95% to 100% of male hourly pay amongst workers in Mid Sussex by the end of the strategy period.

This was seconded by Councillor Eves. A counter amendment was put forward by Councillor Lea suggesting it should be to promote equality of pay for all groups within Mid Sussex and discussion was held on both options. The Chairman took Members to a vote on the amendment by Councillor Bennett which was agreed with 7 in favour, 3 against and 5 abstentions.

Discussion was held around Objective 6 and the package of support for local businesses to improve the sustainability of their organisations. The Committee also considered the Profile and Impact Assessment, noting that an amendment is required under 'education and qualifications' bullet point three (p.71) to recognise that Haywards Heath 6th Form College is now open.

Following discussion, the Chairman took Members to the recommendations contained in the report (including the confirmed amendments) which were agreed.

RESOLVED

The Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) Considered and commented on the draft Sustainable Economy Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025 attached as Appendix 1;
- (ii) Recommends to Council that the draft Sustainable Economy Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025 (as amended) be approved.

8 PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2021/22.

Neal Barton, Policy, Performance and Partnerships Manager introduced the report noting that overall performance was generally good with 76% of indicators showing green. He noted that some services are still affected by the Pandemic and the recovery programme, including Environmental Health, Housing Services and Revenues and Benefits. The Land Searches team are also affected by the current state of the property market.

The Committee discussed the data held on calls coming in via the Contact Centre. The Head of Digital and Customer Services noted that data is held on all calls received which assists in determining ways to improve how information is shared with residents. Staff turnover and sickness levels were also discussed and the Head of Digital and Customer Services confirmed that a number of measures are in place to manage staff training, support and recruitment including liaising with other Local Authorities in order to manage turnover. Measures are also in place to monitor and assist staff related to dependency leave requirements.

Members discussed issues with downloading large documents on the Planning Portal, and the Council's position in relation to cyber-attacks. The Head of Digital and Customer Services noted that more information will be provided at a Digital briefing to all Members in coming weeks. Discussions were also held on the figures related to electric charging vehicles, the availability of information related to successful planning enforcement cases (further details of which will be provided in a future briefing) and how to increase the percentage of household waste being recycled. It was also requested that the word 'cumulative' be added to the figure related to affordable housing as it is not a quarterly figure.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations contained in the report which were agreed.

RESOLVED

The Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) Noted the Council's performance in the third quarter of the year and identified any areas where further reporting or information is required;
- (ii) Advised the Cabinet of any issues that the Committee considers should be given particular consideration at the Cabinet meeting on 9th May 2022.

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

None.

The meeting finished at 7.34 pm

Chairman