

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
28 JANUARY 2019

- Present: Councillors: Leonard Crosbie (Chairman), Toni Bradnum, Paul Clarke, Matthew French, Nigel Jupp, Lynn Lambert, Mike Morgan, Brian O'Connell, Kate Rowbottom and Michael Willett
- Apologies: Councillors: David Coldwell, Jonathan Dancer, Billy Greening and Tim Lloyd
- Absent: Councillors: Ben Staines

SO/54 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SO/55 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/56 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

SO/57 **REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL BUDGET 2019/20**

The Council Budget for 2019/20 had been agreed by Cabinet on 24 January and the Committee noted the budget as recommended to full Council.

The Director of Corporate Resources summarised the revenue and capital budgets, as amended by Cabinet. In response to questions she advised that the Council, like other local authorities, took a prudent approach to income in the light of anticipated reduced government funding.

The Chairman and members of the Committee asked for clarification on a number of points, including the impact of the revised council tax increase and the increased funding for Highwood Community Centre agreed by Cabinet. The Director of Corporate Resources outlined the potential impact this would have on the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Head of Finance confirmed that the projections given within the MTFs were based on a comprehensive modelling process.

The Director of Corporate Resources advised that the impact of WSCC's proposed housing related support reduction could not be predicted at this stage, although action was being taken by some effected organisations.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Corporate Resources and Head of Finance for their work on preparing the budget and MTFs, and the Committee was broadly supportive of the Council Budget.

SO/58 **UPDATE ON MONITORING PROCESS AND OUTCOMES OF THE LGSS - DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES**

The Director of Corporate Resources updated the Committee on the performance monitoring procedures put in place for the partnership with LGSS for the processing of Revenues and Benefits. She advised that the agreement between LGSS and HDC included 29 references to performance measurement, and she outlined the measures in place. These included: monthly performance reports; customer satisfaction and complaints monitoring; internal audits; annual review of key indicators; monthly meetings between senior staff; and a quarterly review of the risk register. The LGSS Operational Manager and other LGSS staff worked closely with the Council.

Since the transfer to LGSS, complaints were dealt with promptly. LGSS quality control had reported that the level of error detected was below the lower threshold. The Director considered LGSS to be a solid and professional business with excellent technical expertise.

The Director confirmed that the data transfer from Mid Sussex's servers to LGSS's had been delayed until after annual billing. Whilst this was frustrating and led to the use of some agency staff locally, it would not have an impact on the service provided to customers.

The Committee were reassured by these quality control measures and were satisfied that the partnership with LGSS had overcome issues with the previous arrangements.

SO/59 **PROPOSAL TO HOLD 11 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS PER COUNCIL YEAR TO ACCOMMODATE THE INTRODUCTION OF THREE WORKING GROUPS**

The Chairman reminded the Committee that it had been agreed that three standing Working Groups be established to scrutinise the Council's performance.

The Committee considered the proposal by the Vice Chairman regarding how these working groups would work and relate to the main Committee:

- The groups would be made up of five members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee;
- The meetings would be informal and not open to the public;
- Other members of the Committee would be welcome to attend;
- Any questions or recommendations arising from these meetings would be brought to the next available Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting, to be put to the relevant Cabinet Member or Officer;

- To accommodate the additional business generated by the working groups, four additional Committee meetings have been scheduled for the next Council year (ie a total of 11 meetings).

It was noted that under these arrangements, the routine Cabinet Member interviews would no longer be required as Cabinet Members may be invited as required when the Committee is looking at a particular issue. The Chairman advised that for the next Council Year, in months where there is a Cabinet meeting, the Overview & Scrutiny Committees were arranged for the Monday of the same week so the Committee will be able to consider the Cabinet agenda.

The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman for his work on the proposed terms and the Committee agreed to the proposal as submitted.

SO/60 **WORKING GROUPS**

The Committee considered the proposed Terms of Reference for the three new standing working groups. These were agreed as submitted, subject to an amendment to the Business Improvement Working Group to make it clear that the Group could make recommendations to the Committee regarding changes to practices and procedures employed by the Council.

The Chairman agreed that membership of the working groups would be confirmed as soon as nominations from Members were received. It was noted that there would probably be changes to membership of the groups after the Council elections in May 2019.

SO/61 **TASK AND FINISH GROUP AND UPDATES**

The Chairman introduced the proposed Terms of Reference for a Task and Finish group on West Sussex County Council s106 funds currently held by HDC. The group would look at the types of funding held and how disbursements are agreed and monitored.

Membership of the Task and Finish Group was agreed as: Paul Clarke, Leonard Crosbie, Lynn Lambert, Mike Morgan and Brian O'Connell.

The Chairman agreed that the Group would need to present their final report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 25 March. It was agreed that three meetings would probably be sufficient and that the first one would be held on Monday 4 February.

Members agreed that the Chairman and Vice Chairman would no longer be considered ex officio members of working groups; each could be a member of a working group in the same way as any other Committee Member.

SO/62 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted the Work Programme, which would be updated as required, and to reflect decisions made at the meeting.

SO/63 **CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

The Chairman introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan for January and the Committee talked through a number of items.

The proposal to sell surplus Council assets, which was to be considered by Cabinet on 21 March, was of particular interest to the Committee. Members discussed the proposed sale of Council land in the context of the proposal to create an Affordable Housing company, which was also to be considered by Cabinet.

Members discussed the need to ensure best use of the surplus land, and the Chairman agreed that the Committee should scrutinise the proposal before the Cabinet meeting on 21 March. An additional meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee would therefore be arranged for Monday 18 March.

The Committee agreed that the Chairman would request a copy of the Business Case for the Council's proposed Housing Company, which was currently being drafted, and information on the proposed sale of Council assets, with a view of circulating them to the Committee as appropriate, prior to this additional meeting.

It was agreed that the item should be considered in exempt session because the information relates to the financial or business affairs of the Council (subject to and in accordance with exemption from publication under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972).

SO/64 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN