

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
25 MARCH 2019

Present: Councillors: Leonard Crosbie (Chairman), Toni Bradnum, Billy Greening, Nigel Jupp, Lynn Lambert, Mike Morgan, Brian O'Connell, Kate Rowbottom and Michael Willett

Apologies: Councillors: David Coldwell, Paul Clarke, Matthew French, Tim Lloyd and Ben Staines

Absent: Councillors: Jonathan Dancer

SO/72 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/73 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman of the Committee had held a thank you gathering prior to the Committee for everyone involved in the work of Overview and Scrutiny. Members confirmed their gratitude to the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Support Officer, other officers involved with the Committee and the Councillors involved with the Committee. The Chairman of the Council was present during this item and expressed his thanks especially to the former Overview and Scrutiny Committee Support Officer and the Chairman of the Committee.

SO/74 **CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3**

The Committee received the report on the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities, Finance and Performance for quarter three.

The Director of Corporate Resources highlighted that the financial information in the report was for the year to January 2019 and the performance information for the year to December 2018.

There were no major areas of concern regarding performance although the speed of processing housing benefits and council tax support was just below target due to the emphasis on quality and the lack of benefits staff available at the start of the new arrangements in July. There was currently a 0.3% error rate with claims processed. The Director of Corporate Resources said that the new partnership with LGSS was providing a good service and once the IT transfer from Mid Sussex's servers was complete the issue with the speed of processing would be resolved due to LGSS's resilience arrangements.

A budget monitoring forecast was presented. The forecast outturn had moved from a £177,000 surplus in period 9 to a surplus of £195,000 in period 10. This was due to some significant re-forecasts.

It was noted that performance indicators for the speed of determining planning applications were on target. Councillors asked about the number of applications where the Council had sought an extension of time. Members requested that this information be included in future KPI monitoring reports.

It was explained regarding the target for the percentage of invoices paid on time that measures were being put in place to allow more automatic payments. Councillors were keen to know whether the issues were an IT problem or a processing problem. The Director of Corporate Resources said it was a mixture of both.

Asked about the slow spend of the capital budgets the Director of Corporate Resources acknowledged that forward planning by officers could be over ambitious, although there were inevitably unpredicted and uncontrollable delays such as changes in the design of the Roman Way flats requested by Councillors and the incident with the Piries Place redevelopment.

The Director of Corporate Resources also explained that the Council had £3,000,000 per year to purchase property but could not control when the properties became available so some years this money was spent and in others it was not.

The Director of Corporate Resources reminded Councillors that local authority capital projects generally did not make a financial return but that whilst not spending left the Council better off, this was not a good approach for Horsham District's communities.

Asked about the spend profile on the salaries budgets the Director of Corporate Resources stated that there had been recruiting difficulties with many services leading to the use of agency and temporary staff. This had been a particular problem in the refuse collection service where posts could not be left vacant. The Head of Service was working with Human Resources on the issue.

Councillors questioned whether there needed to be more money in the Council budget for planning compliance.

The Chairman noted that the compliments received by the Council far outweigh the complaints and considered the information in the report to reflect well on the Council.

RESOLVED

That the Head of Development be asked to advise the Committee on the number of extensions to planning applications.

That a review of planning compliance be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the new Council year.

SO/75 **RECEIVE THE REPORT OF WSCC S106 TASK & FINISH GROUP**

The Committee considered the report of the West Sussex County Council S106 Task and Finish Group. The Chairman of the Group stated that West Sussex County Council had never lost money due to section 106 applications being out of time. He stated that the process for allocating funds was sound but the existing protocol needed updating.

It was agreed that the first recommendation in the report be amended to include reference to the introduction of CIL.

Recommended to Council:

- 1) That the current protocol agreed between West Sussex County Council and Horsham District Council be reviewed and updated as required, as agreed by the West Sussex County Council Team Manager in conjunction with Horsham District Council in accordance with new legislation regarding CIL.
- 2) That the protocol be reviewed by the Business Improvement Working Group on an annual basis
- 3) That the West Sussex County Council Team Manager be invited to attend the Business Improvement Working Group annually to update members and talk through current procedures employed and review effectiveness
- 4) That a training seminar be offered to parish clerks and members on the S106 procedure and how to interpret the monthly reports issued to parishes.
- 5) That the annual report produced by West Sussex County Council be distributed to all Members and Parish Councils.

SO/76 **AGREE THE MEMBERSHIP OF WORKING GROUPS - FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE, BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY**

The Committee considered the proposed membership of the Finance and Performance, Business Improvement and Community working groups. Membership would need to be reviewed following the Council elections on 2nd May 2019:

Finance and Performance

Leonard Crosbie
Nigel Jupp
Lynn Lambert
Tim Lloyd
Paul Clark

Community

Toni Bradnum
Matthew French
Mike Morgan
Billy Greening

Business Improvement

Paul Clark
Tim Lloyd
Brian O'Connell
Toni Bradnum
Nigel Jupp
Lynn Lambert

It was noted that the groups did not have to be politically balanced. The Committee agreed to hold one seat on each working group for any new Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee joining after the May election.

SO/77 **CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the Cabinet Forward Plan.

There was a discussion around whether the Council's budget had now reached the bottom and whether any more cuts could be made without affecting performance. The Director of Corporate Resources explained the Fair Funding Review, the Localisation of Business Rates and the Rebaselining of Business Rates were unlikely to favour District Councils in south east England. She said she felt there was always room for more efficiencies with new technologies such as artificial intelligence coming in.

RESOLVED

The Committee would consider the report on the Highwood Community Centre – Development Proposal and Construction Contract Award and the report on the re-provision of the athletics track at a future Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

SO/78 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Overview and Scrutiny work programme. As noted above, the Committee would like to consider the papers regarding the review of the Highwood Community Centre and the athletics track.

The Chairman proposed the recent public order issues with groups of youths in Horsham and Southwater be considered by the Community Working Group.

The Chairman would review monthly report data with the Director of Corporate Resources before the next meeting of the Finance and Performance Working Group.

SO/79 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.09 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN