

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
21 MARCH 2022

Present: Councillors: Tony Bevis (Chairman), Brian Donnelly (Vice-Chairman), Martin Boffey, Paul Clarke, Tim Lloyd, John Milne, Bob Platt, Jack Saheid and Ian Stannard

Apologies: Councillors: Philip Circus, Billy Greening, Nigel Jupp and Josh Potts
Absent: Councillors:

Also Present: Cllr Ruth Fletcher

SO/50 **MINUTES**

After a minor correction to those present, to reflect the attendance of Cllr Mike Croker for part of the meeting, the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

SO/51 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were received

SO/52 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

No announcements were made

SO/53 **COUNCIL CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAMME**

The item on Carbon reduction was postponed as a result of Covid19 self isolation. It was agreed that this would be added to the agenda for 6 June.

SO/54 **FINAL REPORT OF THE SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL TASK & FINISH GROUP**

The Committee received a presentation from Councillor Mike Croker on behalf of the Sustainable Travel Task & Finish Group. The report made four recommendations for the Committee to consider. (Paraphrased – full wording in the full document included with the agenda):

- To consider pursuing implementation of a highway matters screening method similar to that employed by Mid Sussex DC for planning applications
- To consider a) specified changes to Policy 41 in the draft Horsham District Local Plan; b) A stronger emphasis on sustainable transport in the draft Local Plan, supporting design and other planning policy guidance; c) Initial capital investment in a single LCWIP project that meets LTN1/20 standards and of sufficient scale to act as a flagship for further routes.
- To pursue and enable and enable policy and measures to reduce the need to travel, including active travel and public transport, and enabling home working.

- To develop and support local groups to develop further LCWIPs, especially for larger villages.

Subsequent discussion served to clarify and explore a number of issues, including:

- There were diverse views about the wider value of home working, though its contribution to reducing work-based travel was generally acknowledged.
- Proposals for the number of parking spaces associated with new builds were recognised as difficult to achieve in town centre sites and there was a suggestion that consideration might be given to setting exacting standards, with capacity to vary according to circumstances. Other considerations might include restricting car ownership for town centre tenants.
- Provision for cycle spaces / racks / lanes was recognised as of great importance and there was a strong view that cycle lane provision has been uneven and less effective than it might have been. Better to concentrate on robust through routes.
- Move towards electric vehicles is seen as a positive one for environmental benefit but raises considerable infrastructural issues in terms of provision of sufficient charging facilities. The general view was that hybrid technology was a more realistic medium term option.
- The Task & Finish Group took the opportunity to remind the meeting that the scope of the project, whilst taken into account, considerations relating to electric vehicles and parking issues were not a primary element in the consideration of sustainable transport.

The Chairman, Cllr Tony Bevis, proposed that the recommendations should be taken to Council for consideration, with Cllr Matthew Allen seconding. The vote in favour was unanimous.

SO/55 **REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IN 2021/22**

The Meeting received an update from the Head of Finance & Performance on the finance and performance for 2021/22. Particular aspects of the Finance report highlighted for Members' attention were:

- The surplus forecast for the end of the year is £2.1million. This reflects the cautious budget set at a time when lockdown and other factors created more uncertainties, particularly in leisure services, but also not needing to commit expenditure in the event of a further Covid19 lockdown.
- Additional income has also been received from Government which either exceeded anticipated levels or was entirely new and unexpected. Examples include Housing, Cyber-security and Bio-diversity related funding. It is noted that some of these also bring associated expenditure but are an overall positive development.
- Looking ahead there are clear pressures going forward, such as the increasing cost of fuel, an increase of 11-13% in building material costs and salary increases to address the rising cost of living. The Council is also struggling in some areas, such as Legal and Waste, to retain staff against more attractive private sector incentives.
- Capital programme is suffering from poor performance – around 2/3rds of proposed budget. Have paused the purchase of vehicles while the strategy for replacement, including the nature of vehicles in which to invest, is under review.

Will expect to spend more heavily in 2022/23 once the options are clearer. A number of proposed capital investments have not been able to progress as a result of factors beyond our control.

On the performance side, most Key Performance Indicators are on or above target, with just three currently below target. Two of these relate to increased demand for temporary housing and bed & breakfast (B&B) accommodation following the lifting of the eviction ban. The Housing and Public Protection PDAG on 29 March will receive a briefing from the Housing service about ways in which it might be able to reduce the pressures on B&B and temporary accommodation. The third below-target KPI relates to attendance and commerce at Horsham Museum and the results from reduced opening hours and continuing closure of some facilities over the year.

The meeting noted the contents of the report having sought clarification on some points of detail.

SO/56 **UPDATE ON CURRENT TASK & FINISH GROUPS**

As the final report from the Sustainable Transport T&FG was a main item on the agenda, there were no further updates relating to current activity.

SO/57 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee work programme was noted and the previously advised addition of the Carbon reduction item postponed from this meeting will be added to the June agenda. It was noted that the recast of the Council's Corporate Plan will be taking place in the next Council year and that Over view & Scrutiny will play a key role in that process.

A proposal was also made in relation to off-street parking and it was suggested that the head of Strategic Planning be invited to the next meeting to brief the Committee on current work with Consultancy support in this area. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair would make an approach to explore this proposal.

SO/58 **CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

SO/59 **URGENT BUSINESS**

No additional business was advised.

The meeting closed at 7.31 pm having commenced at 6.15 pm

CHAIRMAN