

Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee

2 December 2021 – At a meeting of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee held at 2.00 pm at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Montyn (Chairman)

Cllr Burrett
Cllr Boram
Cllr Britton
Cllr Condie

Cllr B Cooper
Cllr Elkins
Cllr Hillier
Cllr Payne

Cllr Sparkes
Cllr Turley
Cllr Wall

Apologies were received from Cllr Evans, Cllr Linehan, Cllr Lord and Cllr Bence

Also in attendance: Cllr Hunt, Cllr Marshall and Cllr Waight

25. Declarations of Interest

25.1 In accordance with the code of conduct the following personal declarations were made: -

- Cllr Burrett in respect of item 5, Growth Deals Programme, as a member of Crawley Borough Council
- Cllr Boram, in respect of item 5, Growth Deals Programme, as a member of Adur District Council
- Cllr Elkins, in respect of item 5, Growth Deals Programme, as a member of Arun District Council
- Cllr Hillier, in respect of item 5, Growth Deals Programme, as Cabinet Member for Economic Growth at Mid Sussex District Council
- Cllr Sparkes, in respect of item 5, Growth Deals Programme, as a member of Worthing Borough Council
- Cllr Turley, in respect of item 5, Growth Deals Programme, as a member of Worthing Borough Council
- Cllr Waight, in respect of item 5, Growth Deals Programme, as a member of Worthing Borough Council
- Cllr Walsh, in respect of item 5, Growth Deals Programme, as a member of Arin District Council

26. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

26.1 Formatting and spelling to be corrected in resolution 1 in paragraph 20.4.

26.2 Resolved – that with the corrections above, the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2021 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

27. End of September 2021 (Qtr 2) Quarterly Performance and Resources report

27.1 The Committee scrutinised the End of September 2021 (Qtr 2) Quarterly Performance and Resources report by Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Support Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).

27.2 Summary of responses to committee members questions and comments: -

- Although the Council recognised the importance of making homes environmentally friendly, housing was the responsibility of the district and borough councils with the overall planning framework the responsibility of central government
- The reported reduction in the Council's carbon emissions was largely due to lower building occupancy and officers reducing their travel due to the Covid-19 situation – work was starting on a programme to embed carbon reductions in the way the Council carried out its functions going forward so that the reductions could be sustained
- The rising costs due to inflation and pay awards was a risk that would be closely monitored
- Although £10.1m from the covid grant was currently unallocated, there was a concern that this would not cover future costs attributed to covid – the Council was lobbying central government to allow covid grant money to be carried forward
- One-off savings are regularly reviewed to see how and if they can be delivered, if they cannot, they will appear as growth in the following year's budget
- No West Sussex Children Looked After were in unregistered homes
- Changes to the risk register can be highlighted in future reports
- The Council is developing a programme of smarter ways of working including changes to flexible working arrangements and how to realise savings by reducing, or changing, the way buildings are used in future whilst also maintaining staff health and wellbeing as a priority
- Economic recovery from the pandemic is a challenge - initiatives include: -
 - the skills accelerated programme and work with further education is helping to address the skills gap
 - the Research, Innovation in Sussex Excellence (RISE) project will help small and medium-sized enterprises
 - work around the Green Economy
- the Fair Funding methodology when introduced would decrease the Council's aggregate unit cost of services which was currently the second highest in its statistical group as defined by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
- A query was raised regarding the slippage in the Capital Programme relating to Orchard Street – **Action:** The Cabinet Member for Finance and Property to provide information on the property concerned

- Following the forthcoming closure of Centenary House, Durrington, the Council's offices are moving to Bridge House, Durrington which is being leased for five years and is in a good position geographically to provide local services
- The Council's offices in Littlehampton need around £1.1m spent on them before they can be used – the location of services will be reviewed towards the end of the Bridge House lease as the Council would like a presence in both Worthing and Littlehampton
- The move from Centenary House will reduce the Council's revenue expenditure and carbon footprint and be the main estate saving although more will come from smarter ways of working in the future
- A new code of governance is expected shortly
- The Council's staff sickness rate was higher compared with the average quoted by the Office for National Statistics which is based on the whole UK workforce, rather than just a comparison of public sector figures
- Policies are in place to keep staff fit and well including the rollout of mental health first-aiders and sickness levels are continually monitored
- A request was made to see the breakdown of staff sickness levels by department – **Action:** Sue Evans to provide a breakdown of sickness rates
- The Adult Social Care budget will come under continuing pressure so mitigating actions are very important
- There are concerns that the Care Bill puts more emphasis on back-office work than frontline
- The Council's Quality Assurance Framework for Adults' Services will direct focus where needed on Council services
- **Action:** The Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee to monitor the situation regarding pressure on the care market including domiciliary care waits and staff shortages

27.3 Resolved – that the committee: -

- i. Welcomes the format changes and additional information included in the report, particularly around the performance and workforce information
- ii. Expresses concern over the climate change targets and whether the Council was doing enough to reduce climate impacts and recognises the need to work in partnership with district and borough councils and the Government to influence planning requirements and guidance in future, particularly in relation to solar panels and electric vehicle charging points
- iii. Recognises the pressures on the Adult and Social Care budgets and welcomed the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee monitoring the situation
- iv. Recognises the financial pressures caused by rising inflation and also the pay award settlement that continues to be negotiated nationally

- v. Requests that the service transformation projects include information on the realisation of benefits and efficiencies to be achieved

28. Growth Deals Programme

28.1 The Committee scrutinised a report by the Executive Director for Place Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).

28.2 Summary of responses to committee members questions and comments: -

- Some of the smaller schemes in Arun had not progressed as quickly as anticipated, but the main projects were on track
- The Council did not have a way to measure type of road use and therefore the KPI measured new cycle paths in distance only rather than usage
- Some aspects of the One Public Estate programme are complex and challenging. An example is Littlehampton which involves multiple partners and means projects take longer and are harder to make viable for all partners.
- Consideration of the size or relocation of Littlehampton fire station would be part of the Fire Service's review into its estate
- Adur and Worthing councils were happy with a joint approach to growth deals in their areas when the scheme began but future reporting should separate the deals by council area
- The Pond Road scheme in Adur needs £16m to complete, but only £2m is available for new Growth programme schemes in the capital programme. It is recognised that this is a complex site with multiple owners that has needed a lot of negotiation and discussion
- New Monk's Farm has been developed in Adur providing housing, land for commercial use, a new Gypsy & Travellers site and improvements to the A27
- The County Council is willing to discuss with Adur District Council its growth deal could be refreshed at this point
- In refreshing the growth deals long-standing schemes would be reviewed to ensure they are deliverable and provide the benefits originally envisaged. If they are no longer the right scheme for the area new options will be investigated

28.3 Resolved – that the Committee: -

- i. Welcomes the work in moving the Growth Deal projects forwards
- ii. Recognises the importance of working in partnership and the ability this brings to lever in additional funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership and other funding sources
- iii. Welcomes the levelling up funding for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton and the capital allocation from the County Council
- iv. Recognises that if a proposed scheme is not moving forwards due to partnership or viability issues that these should be re-visited and re-assessed. If a partnership is not working, then

the County Council should consider progressing its elements of the scheme separately if appropriate.

- v. Welcomes the Cabinet Member and officers' commitment to review the Adur growth deal to see how that can be progressed.

29. Work Programme Planning and possible items for future scrutiny

- 29.1 The Committee considered its work programme and possible items for future scrutiny. The Chairman suggested a possible Task & Finish Group on the Capital Programme.

30. Date of Next Meeting

- 30.1 The Committee notes its next meeting will take place on 31 January 2022, commencing at 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 4.32 pm

Chairman