

Cabinet

24 November 2020 – At a meeting of the Cabinet held virtually with restricted public access.

Present:

Cllr Marshall (Chairman), Cllr Crow, Cllr Elkins, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Russell and Cllr Urquhart

Also in attendance: Cllr Barrett-Miles, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Hillier, Cllr M Jones, Cllr Turner, Cllr Waight and Cllr Walsh

Part I

43. Declarations of Interest

43.1 In accordance with the code of conduct the following personal interests were declared:

- Cllr Bob Lanzer as a member of Crawley Borough Council in relation to item 6, West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Economy Reset Plan 2020-24.
- Cllr Dr James Walsh as Leader of Arun District Council in relation to item 6, WSCC Economy Reset Plan 2020-2024 and item 7, WSCC Reset Plan.
- Cllr Stephen Hillier as a member of Mid Sussex District Council in relation to item 6, WSCC Economy Reset Plan 2020-24 and item 7, WSCC Reset Plan.
- Cllr Michael Jones as a member of Crawley Borough Council in relation to item 6, WSCC Economy Reset Plan 2020-24 and item 7, WSCC Reset Plan.

44. Minutes

44.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2020 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

45. Youth Cabinet Address

- 45.1 Cabinet considered a report by the West Sussex Youth Cabinet. The report was introduced by Daisy Watson, Chair of the Youth Cabinet who outlined their three key campaigns: environment, mental health and tackling racial inequality, and also their work during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 45.2 Cabinet Members, Chairmen of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee and Minority Group Leaders thanked the Youth Cabinet Chair and her colleagues for the informative report and update and welcomed future opportunities to support and work closely with them.

- 45.3 Resolved – that Cabinet thanks the Youth Cabinet for its work and for representing the views of young people in West Sussex and asks that this return as an annual standing item.

46. Exceptional Pressures Update

- 46.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive. The report was introduced by Becky Shaw, Chief Executive who advised that, with the publication of the Government's Covid-19 Winter Plan, WSCC would know which tier the county would be in and what restrictions would be.
- 46.2 Dr Tony Hill, Interim Director of Public Health provided an update on local case figures, widespread community transmission, vaccinations and that the local testing partnership had been approved to commence on 26 November. Lucy Butler, Executive Director for Children Young People and Learning provided an update on cases in schools and attendance levels, which remained above the national average. Keith Hinkley, Executive Director Adults and Health provided an update on designated settings, the expected pressure on the health and social care system following the roll out of vaccinations and changes to outbreak management guidance.
- 46.3 Cllr Bryan Turner, Chairman of Health and Adults Scrutiny Committee noted the effective communications and social media campaign and felt that this had had a positive impact on prevention with West Sussex rates amongst the lowest in the country. He added that community mental health services should be prioritised.
- 46.4 Cllr Stephen Hillier, Chairman of Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee said the Committee had considered the educational impacts of the virus and heard that WSCC had handled this well. He noted the financial pressures on schools and support for headteachers and the impact on attainment, including for gifted pupils. He agreed community provision for mental health support was important.
- 46.5 Cllr Andrew Barrett-Miles, Chairman of the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee highlighted the good maintenance of highways and the continued operation of waste transfer stations during the second lockdown but had some concerns about the effects on libraries. A concern for the Committee was the pressure on staff dealing with the Active Travel Fund and hoped Tranche 2 would be approached so as to manage this effectively.
- 46.6 Cllr Joy Dennis, Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee noted the establishment of the local track and tracing partnership. She said it had been difficult for the Committee to monitor performance using existing outcomes and measures and that the financial pressures and hard work of staff were not underestimated.
- 46.1 Cllr Steve Waight, Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee considered the impact of lockdown on the prevent,

protect and response priorities of the fire service. He noted the performance and assurance framework would give evidence for effective scrutiny of the fire service response to the pandemic.

- 46.8 Cllr Dr James Walsh, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group noted the impact of delayed test results and possible void test results on tracing and therefore infection control. He asked if work had commenced on how vaccination would be rolled out and had WSCC identified primary care and community settings.
- 46.9 Cllr Michael Jones, Leader of the Labour Group had concerns about positivity rates and questioned the extent of resources required to support the local tracing partnership. He asked what messaging were being used to raise awareness of the community hubs to residents including vulnerable groups.
- 46.10 The Leader, Cabinet Members and Interim Director of Public Health responded to the questions raised in discussion.
- 46.11 Resolved – that Cabinet notes the update and discussion.

47. West Sussex County Council Economy Reset Plan 2020-24 (CAB11_20/21)

- 47.1 Report by the Executive Director Place Services. The report was introduced by Cllr Bob Lanzer, Cabinet Member for Economy and Corporate Resources which outlined the council's economy reset plan 2020-24, which would supersede the current Economic Growth Plan.
- 47.2 Cllr Joy Dennis, Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee said that the Committee had looked at the plan in September and that this was an important part of the overall reset planning. She highlighted the importance of signposting for skills, digital technologies, opportunities in coastal areas for tourism and promotion of the rural economy through small businesses. The Committee felt it was vital that members work closely with MPs.
- 47.3 Cllr Dr James Walsh, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group mentioned the effect of Brexit coupled with Covid-19 on the South East economy. He felt it was important to reskill existing workforces through engagement with further education and universities and questioned whether the Arundel chord rail line had been considered as a further option to promote West Sussex for leisure and tourism.
- 47.4 Cllr Michael Jones, Leader of the Labour Group mentioned small independent businesses and the hospitality sector which had been adversely affected by a second national lockdown. He highlighted the longer-term implications for young people, particularly school leavers who may become NEET (not in education, employment or training) and felt additional support was required. He noted that as well as being an enabler, West Sussex is a big contributor to the economy.

47.5 The Leader summarised that WSCC was both an influencer and enabler in the reset of the economy. The West Sussex economy reset plan was a critical document in the restoration, protection and growth of West Sussex.

47.6 Resolved –

1. That Cabinet approves the adoption of the West Sussex County Council Economy Reset Plan 2020-2024
2. That Cabinet confirms the Economic Growth Plan 2018-2023 has been superseded by the Economy Reset Plan 2020-2024.

48. West Sussex County Council Reset Plan (CAB12_20/21)

48.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive. The report was introduced by Becky Shaw, Chief Executive who highlighted the focus on areas with the greatest impact and were outlined in 4 priority areas:

- Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations
- A sustainable and prosperous economy
- Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential
- Making the best use of resources.

48.2 Views on the plan had been sought from staff, partners, the public, and a session for all members had also taken place. The next stage in the plan would be to develop the key performance indicators which measured outcomes against the aims.

48.3 Cllr Joy Dennis, Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee noted the plan was dependent on a number of parts including other programmes of activity within the council. The Committee would consider the plan in December and, with the scrutiny committees, look to develop ways of scrutinising performance measures.

48.4 Cllr Dr James Walsh, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group felt there was a disconnect between the reset plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy which would mean a reducing commitment to vulnerable groups who relied on certain services.

48.5 Cllr Michael Jones, Leader of the Labour Group questioned if the reset plan was achievable at the current time and noted the proposed changes to services which he felt were not in line with the aspirations in the plan.

48.6 Resolved –

1. That Cabinet approves the first iteration of the Reset Plan for further consideration by the County Council at its December meeting
2. Approves the timeline for ongoing development of the Reset Plan
3. Invites each of the scrutiny committees to consider in January 2021 how the Reset Plan's measures and performance

information can be set and used to enable effective scrutiny of the Council's aims and agreed outcomes relevant to their areas of business; and to invite Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee to provide guidance to the scrutiny committees in terms of principles and methods for effective scrutiny of performance to assist them in that task.

49. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22

- 49.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Finance and Support Services. The report was introduced by Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance who outlined that the county council is required to set a balanced budget for each financial year, and the current gap was a challenging £23.4m. The report detailed the savings proposals.
- 49.2 Cllr Joy Dennis, Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee noted that even prior to the pandemic this would have been a difficult budget to set. She said further detail on the proposals would be required before any final decisions could be made. She highlighted that financial resilience for the council was not just revenue costs and income but also capital expenditure and that these should be considered as a whole.
- 49.3 The Chairmen of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee and Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee both noted the pressure on community based services and that, as new services were developed, there needed to be support for families and communities.
- 49.4 Cllr Dr James Walsh, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group said the measures appeared to affect vulnerable groups and that lifelong day services were invaluable to many elderly people. He was concerned about the review of waste recycling sites and felt this could lead to more fly-tipping.
- 49.5 Cllr Michael Jones, Leader of the Labour Group questioned whether service costs relating to the pandemic would be met by the Government. He asked if the efficiencies proposed were genuinely achievable and whether this was evidenced. He was concerned about the expense of long-standing contracts, the review of the recycling sites and the changes to discretionary transport. He asked why the disposal of some of the council's estate was not a priority.
- 49.6 Cabinet Members responded to some of the comments made in discussion and noted that this had been a particularly challenging year. The proposals would involve some very difficult decisions. The Cabinet awaited the Financial Settlement from government and would continue to aim to deliver the best possible services within the budget.
- 49.7 Resolved – that Cabinet:

1. Agrees to progress the proposed savings proposals.
2. Notes that the Comprehensive Spending Review for 2021/22 will take place on 25 November 2020 followed by the Finance Settlement, which will directly impact the financial decisions required of members in setting a balanced budget for 2021/22.

50. Notice of Motion on the Provision of Free School Meals in school holidays

- 50.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Law and Assurance.
- 50.2 The Chairman of the County Council referred the notice of motion on the provision of free school meals in school holidays submitted by Cllr Jones to the County Council on 6 November 2020, to the Cabinet for consideration.
- 50.3 The Leader outlined that, since Cllr Michael Jones's submission of the motion, the Government had announced further targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period. WSCC was set to receive almost £2M (£1,989,591.80) from this COVID Winter Grant Scheme managed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
- 50.4 Final details were being worked up to ensure timely information to parents ahead of the end of term, and Cllr Michael Jones would receive a further briefing following the Cabinet meeting. Cabinet invited him to withdraw his motion on the basis that the Government was now providing funding for meals during school holidays. Cllr Michael Jones said he would give it further consideration on receipt of the additional information.
- 50.5 Resolved – that Cabinet does not support the motion and proposes to recommend that members do not support it at the County Council meeting on 11 December 2020.

51. Date of Next Meeting

- 51.1 The next meeting of Cabinet would be held on 15 December 2020.