

## **Cabinet**

23 March 2021 – At a meeting of the Committee held at Virtual meeting with restricted public access.

Present:

Cllr Crow, Cllr Elkins, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Russell and Cllr Urquhart

Apologies were received from Cllr Barrett-Miles and Cllr Walsh

Also in attendance: Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Hillier, Cllr M Jones, Cllr Turner and Cllr Waight

### **Part I**

#### **73. Declarations of Interest**

73.1 No declarations of interest were made.

#### **74. Minutes**

74.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **75. West Sussex County Council COVID-19 Pandemic Report - March 2021**

75.1 The Leader explained that 23 March marked one year since the first national lockdown and wished to recognise the many challenges faced due to the pandemic and the sadness caused by the loss of many loved ones. As a day of national reflection takes place, there is optimism ahead as the vaccination programme gains momentum and communities continue to work hard together to protect themselves and each other.

75.2 Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive introduced by Cllr Amanda Jupp, Cabinet Member for Adults and Health who outlined the steady reduction of cases in West Sussex and progress with the vaccination programme. Dr Tony Hill, Interim Director of Public Health provided specific case and hospital numbers for the county, an update on lateral flow testing and said that no substantial issues had arisen with the return to school.

75.3 Cllr Bob Lanzer, Cabinet Member for Economy and Corporate Resources advised a programme of webinars on economic recovery had been well attended by businesses. He highlighted that whilst overseas travel remained unavailable, domestic tourism would be

supported through the Experience West Sussex initiative and promotion of the County.

- 75.4 Cllr Duncan Crow, Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue and Communities advised that libraries should reopen on 12 April with appropriate measures in place to keep people safe and outlined the work done by libraries throughout the pandemic.
- 75.5 Cllr Jacquie Russell, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said there had been a gradual increase in face to face contacts between families and social workers where safe and possible and that these would increase from 29 March.
- 75.6 Cllr Roger Elkins, Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure highlighted the good work of the service in continuing to deliver highway maintenance throughout the pandemic. Transport management as children return to school would factor in additional capacity required for social distancing.
- 75.7 Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance reflected on the additional government grant funding received by the County to enable the continuing support to residents, particularly in respect of the council tax support grant which had been shared with district and borough councils for those in hardship.
- 75.8 Cllr Nigel Jupp, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills highlighted the good school attendance figures for West Sussex and the free school meal voucher scheme available to qualifying families over the Easter break. He advised additional support would be available to school leavers to prevent cases of young people not in education, employment or training.
- 75.9 Cllr Deborah Urquhart, Cabinet Member for Environment gave thanks to staff for their work during difficult circumstances and that through collaborative working the waste and other teams had developed new strengths.
- 75.10 Cllr Bryan Turner, Chairman of Health and Adults Social Care Scrutiny Committee praised teachers, governors and officers for their work and felt the community hub had provided real value to residents. He asked about the effectiveness of the Local Tracing Partnership (LTP). The Interim Director of Public Health advised that two thirds of people contacted by the LTP would otherwise have not been reached, and that this was positive. Cllr Steve Waight, Chairman of Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee noted the good performance of the fire service in response to the pandemic.
- 75.11 Cllr Michael Jones, Leader of the Labour Group paid tribute to the NHS, public sector and WSCC staff on the day of reflection.
- 75.1 The Leader summarised that whilst the situation showed signs of improvement there was still a lot to do in terms of social care and

recovery of the economy. He thanked staff and partners for their continued hard work.

75.13 Resolved – that Cabinet notes the update and discussion on the council’s response to the pandemic.

**76. Quarterly Performance Monitor (a) and Quarterly Capital Programme (b)**

76.1 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 highlighted the financial position and expected outturn for the council. An underspend was predicted however this was a changing picture due to covid expenditure and grants received. The pandemic had impacted some Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) however broadly performance was pleasing.

76.2 Cllr Joy Dennis, Chairman of Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee noted the non-delivery of some savings and expressed concern about the Designated Schools Grant overspend and children’s services spend forecast.

76.3 Cllr Bob Lanzer, Cabinet Member for Economy and Corporate Resources highlighted the efficient work of IT and staff to enable safe working from home, which had resulted in an underspend. He advised the superfast fibre broadband project had achieved 96.7% coverage and rural business connectivity had been topped up. Staff appraisals, induction and training rates were good.

76.4 Cllr Jacquie Russell, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised that February saw a reduction in the number of children in care and work had helped to stabilise children in need whilst open and transparent managerial approaches had been embedded.

76.5 Cllr Amanda Jupp, Cabinet Member for Adults and Health noted the exception report which demonstrated an amber level of care homes at good or outstanding was due in part to fewer inspections being carried out currently and that work with the market was ongoing to address any quality challenges.

76.6 The Leader summarised that the QPM indicated the budget was likely to be met, thanked central government for its support at a critical time and that this had in turn enabled additional support for residents.

76.7 Resolved – that Cabinet:

1. Notes the overall projected underspend position for 2020/21
2. Notes the other performance information in the QPM, including the Performance Indicators, Workforce Key Performance Indicators and the Corporate Risk Register.

## **77. Emerging Issues**

- 77.1 Cllr Duncan Crow, Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue and Communities noted the recognition of West Sussex's Fire and Rescue Service in the recent national Annual State of Fire and Rescue Services report which signposted accelerated improvement work, increased staff numbers, a focus on prevention and protection work and clearing a backlog and he welcomed the external validation of this progress.

## **78. Date of Next Meeting**

- 78.1 The next meeting of the Cabinet will be held on 15 June 2021.

The meeting ended at 3.51 pm

Chairman