

Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee

17 June 2022 – At a meeting of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Montyn (Chairman)

Cllr Burrett	Cllr Gibson	Cllr Turley
Cllr Baldwin	Cllr Kerry-Bedell	Cllr Wall
Cllr Britton	Cllr Linehan	Cllr Payne
Cllr Condie	Cllr McDonald	
Cllr Elkins	Cllr Sparkes	

Apologies were received from Cllr Boram

Also in attendance: Cllr Hunt and Cllr Waight

1. Election of Chairman

- 1.1 Cllr Montyn was proposed as Chairman by Cllr Burrett and seconded by Cllr Sparkes – there were no other nominations.
- 1.2 Resolved – that Cllr Montyn is elected as Chairman of the Committee for the year.

2. Election of Vice-Chairman

- 2.1 Cllr Burrett was proposed by Cllr Britton and seconded by Cllr Baldwin. Cllr Condie was proposed by Cllr Turley and seconded by Cllr Gibson. A secret ballot was held.
- 2.2 Resolved – that Cllr Burrett was elected as Vice Chairman by ten votes to four.

3. Business Planning Group Membership

- 3.1 The Business Planning Group membership was agreed as Cllr Montyn (Chairman), Cllr Burrett (Vice Chairman), Cllr Sparkes, Cllr Condie and Cllr Turley.

4. Declarations of Interest

- 4.1 In accordance with the code of conduct, the following personal interest was declared in respect of item 8, Update on Asset Management Policy and Strategy: -
 - Cllr Condie as Director of Brighton Energy Co-operative

5. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

- 5.1 It was noted that Cllr Elkins attendance was not reflected in the minutes of the last meeting – this would be rectified.
- 5.2 Resolved – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2022 be updated to reflect the attendance of Cllr Elkins and be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Responses to Recommendations

- 6.1 Customer Service Centre Function: -
- There was a query regarding the cost of bringing the service back in house (including pensions) – **ACTION:** Lee Harris to provide the cost to the Committee
 - Use of technology in the future could include voice recognition and artificial intelligence. Any new targets would come the Committee in the Performance and Resources Report
- 6.2 Resolved – that the Committee notes the responses.

7. Update on Asset Management Policy and Strategy

- 7.1 The Committee scrutinised a report by the Assistant Director of Property and Assets (copy appended to the signed minutes).
- 7.2 Summary of responses to Committee members' questions and comments: -
- IT assets are managed by the IT department – other assets such as fire and security systems are managed by Facilities Management through contracts or cyclical maintenance - maintenance or replacement will be driven by the asset condition survey
 - The asset condition survey has been enabled by the introduction of the new Concerto database– information from this will guide the need for replacement
 - The Council has struggled to appoint property Estate Surveyors, Contract Managers and Project Managers but will work to fill vacant posts by making the roles more attractive through job re-evaluation and more competitive salaries. The Property Team will continue to work closely with the Mult-Disciplinary Consultant partner
 - The shortage of staff was not affecting quality of advice, but is slowing the process
 - The Committee suggested that the Joint Venture partner should be added to objective 3 of the Strategy – this would be considered
 - When new ways of working are introduced, it could be possible that one or two major Council office hubs would be surplus to requirement as less office space would be needed

- The rationalisation of the estate is a by-product of new ways of working, it is not a driver, as things would be done more efficiently with more hybrid working
- All departments had been consulted on their requirements and the best way to deliver their services
- Consultants had been appointed and their report would be completed soon
- Those officers who could not work at home during the pandemic, were able to do so from Council offices, this will continue
- Shared office space could become normal practice between teams
- There was some concern that the sale or transfer of buildings could be affected if only essential maintenance was carried out – a balance had to be struck between capital and revenue demands
- Joint Venture projects were moving ahead at pace and an update would come to the Committee in November
- Special Educational Needs & Disability provision was part of the capital programme, not the Asset Management Strategy
- The Council is open to discussing the disposal of assets with district/borough councils where feasible and appropriate
- The Council had to balance its desire to help communities against what buildings it could afford to run and maintain
- It is a legal requirement for the Council to get the best consideration possible when it grants a lease or disposes of a building
- Developers do not currently build schools to carbon neutral standards as it is not a Department for Education requirement
- Carbon reduction is a priority in all Council decisions, but financial viability has to be a consideration when assessing the business cases

7.3 Resolved – that the Committee: -

- i. Supports the draft Asset Management Policy and Strategy 2022/23 - 2025/26 and agrees that it meets the objectives in the Our Council Plan and is flexible enough to meet the changing needs and work practices of the County Council.
- ii. Requests that the Joint Venture Partnership arrangements should be reflected in the objectives of the Asset Strategy
- iii. Supports the SMARTER working initiatives and requests that the committee is kept up to date on the outcomes
- iv. Recognises the delays caused by recruitment issues and supports the work being done to rectify this situation
- v. Recognises the issues in relation to carbon neutrality

8. Update on Early Help Asset Plan

- 8.1 The Committee scrutinised a report by the Assistant Director of Property and Assets, copy appended to the signed minutes.
- 8.2 Summary of responses to Committee members' questions and comments: -

- The nine locations originally required by Public Health were able to be covered by offering seven centres and part use of two others
- The Sure Start Grant conditions are set by the government and determine how assets should be used by the Council. These conditions are usually non-negotiable

8.3 Resolved – that the Committee: -

- Supports the Early Help Asset Plan
- Welcomes the update on properties affected and
- Recognises the importance of local Member communication

9. Scrutiny Annual Report

9.1 The Committee scrutinised a report by the Director of Law and Assurance, copy appended to the signed minutes.

9.2 Summary of responses to Committee members' questions and comments: -

- Scrutiny chairmen should consider how to incorporate climate change in their committees' work programmes
- Committee members should challenge the Policy Alignment and Compliance section of committee reports where they consider the content to be inadequate
- A Scrutiny Development Action Plan setting out key areas for future action is monitored by scrutiny chairmen. This is not a public document but can be made available to councillors – **ACTION:** Helen Kenny to circulate the Scrutiny Development Action Plan to members of the Committee
- Committee members should consider opportunities to interact informally
- It was agreed that the following wording in the draft Executive-Scrutiny Protocol – 'The scrutiny process is informed and driven by the political insight of members' – be changed to read 'The scrutiny process is informed and driven by members'

9.3 Resolved – that the Committee: -

- Supports presenting the Scrutiny Annual Report to full Council
- Recognises that the Council Plan underpins the work of scrutiny
- Welcomes the ability of individual committees to work flexibly
- Supports the development of an Executive Scrutiny protocol

10. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

10.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

11. Work Programme

11.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes its Work Programme.

12. Date of next meeting

12.1 The Committee notes its next meeting will take place virtually on 13 July 2022 commencing at 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 12.27 pm

Chairman