

## **Cabinet**

15 December 2020 – At a virtual meeting of the Cabinet held at 10.30am 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, Cllr J Dennis and Cllr Waight

Also in attendance: Cllr Hillier, Cllr M Jones, Cllr Turner and Cllr Walsh

### **Part I**

#### **52. Declarations of Interest**

52.1 In accordance with the code of conduct, Cllr Dr James Walsh declared a personal interest in Item 5, Exceptional Pressures Update as Leader of Arun District Council.

#### **53. Minutes**

53.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **54. Fire and Rescue Service Independent Advisory Panel Closure**

54.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue and Communities, Cllr Duncan Crow. Following the outcome of the HMICFRS inspection, the Fire and Rescue service established an Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) to oversee the improvement journey. The Chairman of the Panel has now considered that the service has the capability and capacity to continue its improvement work without the support of the IAP which is stepping down.

54.2 Ann Millington, Chairman of the Independent Advisory Panel highlighted there is a firm grip on what was needed to continue with improvements in the service and that there is a strong sense of pace required to continue with the progress. Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer added that the service was undertaking a sustainable journey whilst recognising there were still challenges ahead.

54.3 Cllr Dr James Walsh, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group queried the timescale in which the ambitions for the service would be met. He asked about action to address the culture of bullying and the evidence that it is proving effective. The Chief Fire Officer gave assurance on these matters.

- 54.4 Cllr Michael Jones, Leader of the Labour Group asked what the contribution of the IAP had been and, if it was useful to help drive improvements, whether it should be rolled out more widely.
- 54.5 The Leader and Cabinet congratulated the service and noted the effective leadership in place to continue to take improvements forward. The Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue and Communities concluded the departure of the IAP was a valuable milestone but that the service would not become complacent.
- 54.6 Resolved – that Cabinet notes the letter received from the Independent Advisory Panel and welcomes the decision to close the Panel, and acknowledges the substantial progress made by the service which has led to the Panel reaching this decision.

## **55. Exceptional Pressures Update**

- 55.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive, Becky Shaw, who advised there had been strong cross-council working as part of the response to exceptional pressures. WSCC was ready for the end of the European Union transition period and decisions were awaited about which tier the county would be in under Covid-19 restrictions.
- 55.2 Dr Tony Hill, Interim Director of Public Health provided an update on local case figures and vaccination plans. Whilst the situation remained reasonable in West Sussex in comparison to other parts of the country, positivity rates were increasing and the need to remain alert was stressed. Lucy Butler, Executive Director for Children Young People and Learning provided an update on cases in schools and attendance levels and expected that the next term would be particularly challenging. Keith Hinkley, Executive Director Adults and Health provided an update on care homes, infection control measures and a targeted approach based on individual home risks.
- 55.3 Cllr Bryan Turner, Chairman of Health and Adults Social Care Committee commented that the response to the pandemic was managed with more confidence and assurance during the second wave. He highlighted the good work of the community hub in identifying residents who required a care assessment. There were low numbers of care homes in the county reporting covid which demonstrated the support to the sector by the county council.
- 55.4 Cllr Stephen Hillier, Chairman of Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee noted the good work of community hubs. He said that school attendance in West Sussex was excellent, and that teachers should be prioritised for vaccinations. He suggested granular data from districts and boroughs would be useful to identify settings where transmission was happening.
- 55.5 Cllr Dr James Walsh, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group felt the vaccine was a positive step but that it would take a long time to deliver its full effect. He asked about the logistics of vaccination and

arrangements for administering it. The Interim Director of Public Health responded to his questions.

- 55.6 Cllr Michael Jones, Leader of the Labour Group considered the growing pressure on Health and Adult Social Care and asked if a review of longer-term projects was required and what this would entail. He asked about implications for staffing levels and attendance at schools and whether schools should be closing earlier than planned for the Christmas break. The Executive Director of Children, Young People and Learning responded to his comments regarding schools.
- 55.7 Cabinet received an update from the Head of Communications and Engagement on the communications strategy and its effective reach through social media, local press, door drops, connections magazine and at specific community hubs.
- 55.8 Resolved – that Cabinet notes the update and discussion.

## **56. Quarterly Performance Monitor**

- 56.1 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 the challenging year in terms of finance, staff, providing services during lockdown and adapting to home working. Whilst government Covid-19 support grants were most welcome, additional costs remained with a £5.5m unfunded overspend. The outcome of the Financial Settlement was awaited.
- 56.2 Cllr Dr James Walsh, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group expressed concern about the fair funding review in respect of Adults Social Care. He asked how the Business Rates review would go forward. He asked about items on the risk register including the risk of death or serious injury to a child and action to reduce it and also about cyber security. The Executive Director for Children, Young People and Learning and Cabinet Member for Economy and Corporate Resources responded to Cllr Dr Walsh's questions regarding the risk register and action being taken.
- 56.1 Cllr Michael Jones, Leader of the Labour Group welcomed the pay award and allocation to fund this from the contingency budget. He raised the number of Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) appeals and asked the cost of damage from the fire at Crawley Household Waste Recycling Site (HWRS). He asked why solar installation at schools had been suspended and raised issues about the development at Whitehouse Farm. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Cabinet Member for Education and Skills responded to Cllr Jones's comments.
- 56.2 Resolved – that Cabinet:
1. Notes the projected overspend position in 2020/21 and the proposed mitigation measures set out on page 42 of the September QPM

2. Authorises the allocation of £1.156m of contingency budget to fund the additional 0.75% NJC pay award as detailed in paragraph 2.5
3. Notes the other performance information in the QPM including the performance indicators, workforce indicators and the corporate risk register.

## **57. Emerging Issues**

- 57.1 Cllr Jacquie Russell, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised a notification had been received from the Department for Education (DfE) in which the minister had issued new statutory direction for WSCC which paused the progression of the Children's Trust for at least 1 year to enable the service to focus on the improvement journey.
- 57.2 Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance provided an update on the Comprehensive Spending Review which included the option to increase the adult social care element of council tax by up to 3%, grants to further address covid-19, troubled families, highways and highstreets. However WSCC allocations were currently unknown. Once known, the Revenue Budget for 2021/22 would be finalised over Christmas with final proposals advised early in the New Year.
- 57.3 Cllr Duncan Crow, Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue and Communities noted the praise for the community hub from both the Health and Adult Social Care and Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committees, thanked the staff who were operating the hub and advised the service remained open 8am – 8pm over the Christmas holiday period.

## **58. Date of Next Meeting**

- 58.1 The next meeting of the Cabinet will be held on 22 January 2021.

The meeting ended at 12.23 pm

Chairman