

## **Cabinet**

20 July 2022 – At a meeting of the Cabinet held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Marshall (Chairman)

Cllr Crow, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Russell, Cllr Urquhart and Cllr Waight

Also in attendance: Cllr Baldwin (virtually), Cllr Baxter (virtually), Cllr Boram, Cllr Britton, Cllr Burrett (virtually) and Cllr Wall (virtually)

Apologies were received from Cllr Johnson, Cllr Linehan, Cllr Lord and Cllr Montyn

### **Part I**

#### **6. Declarations of Interest**

6.1 No declarations of interest were made.

#### **7. Minutes**

7.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2022 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **8. Performance and Resources Report - Quarter 4 2021/22 (CAB02\_22/23)**

8.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Support Services. The report was introduced by Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property who outlined the outturn for 2021/22, pressures, capital projects and other expenditure. Katharine Eberhart, Director of Finance and Support Services said that the year had ended in a positive position and, whilst there is uncertainty, the council is in a good financial position to deal with challenges. Sarah Sturrock, Assistant Chief Executive advised of the achievements in relation to performance with 70% of measures reaching their targets achieved through an integrated planning and budget approach to deliver the council plan.

8.2 Cllr Garry Wall, Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee advised of concerns about cost pressures in meeting the 'front door' demand for care services, inflationary pressures and the future impact of the social care levy. Issues around health inequality and childhood obesity were raised, but the report and work across all departments were well received by the Committee.

- 8.3 Cllr Andrew Baldwin, Vice-Chairman of the Children and Young Peoples Services Scrutiny Committee noted that, whilst the indicator for young people not in education, employment or training was improving, there is still work to do, as is the case for children in need and child protection plans. The challenges with recruiting social workers and residential staff were raised, as was the level of support for schools with children with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs).
- 8.4 Cllr Kevin Boram, Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee highlighted the improved performance in the service although there were concerns about the number of safe and well visits completed. The Committee will continue to monitor the function of the joint fire control centre, as well as establishing a Task and Finish Group to look at the retained Firefighter role. Pressure on staff availability was raised by the Committee.
- 8.5 Cllr David Britton, Chairman of the Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee raised the benefits of the Community Hub and suggested that these positive outcomes were recorded in the PRR going forward. The committee acknowledged pressures on service delivery and procurement, the reduction of income across the bus network post-Covid and the staff recruitment issues in registration services particularly. The increase in investment in Highways and Transport was welcomed.
- 8.6 Cllr Richard Burrett, Vice-Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee said the Committee was pleased with the level of performance across the key indicators given the financial limitations faced by the council. The Committee recognised the challenge with staff recruitment. The committee requested variance information be included in the PRR to show the impact on Capital Programme projects in view of the level of inflation and also asked the Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development to consider whether care leavers should be prioritised for apprenticeships with the council.
- 8.7 Cllr Caroline Baxter, Leader of the Labour Group welcomed the significant improvements but saw risks through lack of investment. Cllr Baxter highlighted the disparity between the pay award for staff and the rate of inflation and was concerned about staff morale. She said that some KPIs in the highways and transport portfolio had shown little sign of improvement and the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit was a concern. Cllr Baxter requested further lobbying of Government for additional funding to support services and increase their resilience.
- 8.8 The following points were made by Cabinet Members in discussion:
- Cllr Jacquie Russell, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised the service was undertaking some benchmarking with good and outstanding authorities in relation to Child

Protection Plans to see where targets should be set and encouraged dual-hatted councillors to promote apprenticeships for care leavers. Placement costs is the biggest pressure for the service and the recruitment and retention of social workers remained a challenge nationally.

- Cllr Steve Waight, Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development advised the indicators contained in the workforce information did not show demotivation of staff or signal low morale and he paid tribute to staff for their continuing hard work and dedication throughout challenging circumstances.
- Cllr Bob Lanzer, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing advised pay negotiations were made at a national level. Emerging census data and a review of the Health and Wellbeing strategy made a case for reviewing KPIs.
- Cllr Nigel Jupp, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills thanked schools and staff for their dedication in achieving improvement. Home to school transport remained a pressure for the service
- Cllr Joy Dennis, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport highlighted that over 95% of work in the service delivery programme had been achieved and within the budget envelope. More work is required to improve highways defects and a Task and Finish Group is looking at road safety to reduce the number of road traffic accidents. Inflation and supply issues are a growing challenge.
- Cllr Amanda Jupp, Cabinet Member for Adults Services thanked teams for their performance throughout a period of unprecedented demand. Pressures on the service will increase into 2022/23 and adequate funding will be crucial.
- Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of the Council advised that, throughout a challenging backdrop, the council has worked collectively with partners, improved in many areas, including governance and working arrangements, and been able to invest whilst retaining financial resilience which is a big achievement.

8.9 Cllr Jeremy Hunt summarised it had been a challenging year, but that the council had increased investment in frontline services for residents year on year. The next step would be to consider savings options for the difficulties ahead and there will shortly be a budget update at an all-member briefing.

8.10 Resolved – that Cabinet has now:

1. Considered the Q4 Performance and Resources Report including:

- The 2021/22 Our Council Plan- performance indicators, risk register summary and workforce key performance indicators.
  - The continued impact the Covid-19 emergency situation has on the Council's performance and financial resilience.
  - The impact of increasing inflationary pressures and the general downbeat economic forecast over the short-to-medium term.
  - Review the effectiveness of measures taken to manage the Council's financial position and any non-delivery of identified savings.
2. Agreed the allocation of £3.406m from Contingency Budgets to fund the 2021/22 staffing pay award as set out in paragraph 2.1.
  3. Agreed the allocation of the unused £4.969m Contingency Budget and £0.597m revenue underspend as set out in paragraph 2.2.
  4. Agreed the proposed changes to the Key Performance Indicator measures detailed in Annex C.

## **9. West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Statement of Assurance 2021- 22 (CAB03\_22/23)**

- 9.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer. The report was introduced by Cllr Duncan Crow, Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue who advised the statement of assurance was a statutory requirement to provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters. Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer added that the statement of assurance reflected a time of extraordinary working conditions whilst at the same time delivering ongoing service improvement.
- 9.2 Cllr Kevin Boram, Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee advised the openness of data is critical for scrutiny. The Statement of Assurance is consistent with information provided to the Committee, which examine various matters for probity and accuracy. The Committee was happy to recommend the approval of the Statement of Assurance 2021/22.
- 9.3 Cllr Caroline Baxter, Leader of the Labour Group thanked the Chief Fire Officer and Cabinet Member and welcomed the report which reflected hard work, dedication of officers and a transparent commitment to delivering improvement.
- 9.4 Cllr Crow summarised it had been a challenging year but the service had performed well and the benefits of investment were being seen. There would be difficulties ahead but the service will continue to work hard to meet them.
- 9.5 Resolved - that Cabinet approves the West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance 2021-22.

## **10. Response to Fire Reform White Paper 2022 Consultation**

- 10.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Law and Assurance. The report was introduced by Cllr Duncan Crow, Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue who outlined the Fire Reform White Paper proposals, which focussed on three themes: people, professionalism and governance. Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer added that the proposals would give more flexibility in the use of resources which will help to achieve the aims of the council plan. Local bargaining could be challenging and whilst a consistent approach through a National College of Fire and Rescue would be welcome, clarity on funding arrangements is needed.
- 10.2 Cllr Kevin Boram, Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee supported the planned response and the alignment with the council plan objective. The Fire and Rescue Service has good access to communities to serve residents flexibly. He highlighted the fundamental need for buildings to be safe and the knowledge that the Fire Service has could play a greater role in the design of the built estate. Cllr Boram welcomed better sharing of data and consistent entry requirements into the Fire Service, however cautioned about possible exclusion of those who enter the Fire Service through different routes.
- 10.3 Cllr Caroline Baxter, Leader of the Labour Group felt the paper covered a number of complex issues, including those around pay and conditions. Cllr Baxter considered that the paper and questions in the consultation did not propose any improvements above the current position in West Sussex. Cllr Baxter said the paper failed to recognise that the Police and the Fire Service were very different models and therefore to transfer responsibility to the Police and Crime Commissioner did not seem sensible.
- 10.4 The following points were made by Cabinet Members in discussion:
- Cllr Bob Lanzer, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing felt the current arrangements in West Sussex reflect the ambitions of the White Paper and meet the needs of the community. He supported national pay bargaining but felt the distinction between this and the current system not allowing for local negotiation could be clarified in the response.
  - Cllr Deborah Urquhart, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change supported the Cabinet Member's recommendations in particular opposing budget ringfencing in order to maintain flexibility over service delivery for residents.
  - Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property thanked the fire service for their excellent work. He agreed that ringfencing funding is not a good option as it could prohibit investment into the service and any potential efficiencies which result in a better outcome.

- Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of the Council highlighted the benefits of service flexibility in West Sussex, particularly in areas of prevention work. It is key for the Council to be able to engage locally in what pay and reward structures look like due to the other vital work that the service undertakes with communities. Consistency through a National College is desirable, however funding commitments and expectations need to be clarified. The Leader added that the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee is a critical function which provides oversight in areas of performance and policy and is effective in its work. The current model of governance in West Sussex is accountable and firmly established which accords with the aspirations of the White Paper.

10.5 Cllr Duncan Crow summarised that the current model in West Sussex is accountable and appropriate for the county and its residents.

10.6 Resolved – that Cabinet supports the proposals in the report and the specific recommendations for inclusion in the council’s response to the consultation as follows:

1. To strongly oppose any change to the current governance of fire and rescue within the County Council.
2. To strongly oppose the ring-fencing of a fire and rescue budget so as to retain flexibility locally.
3. To endorse the operational independence of the Chief Fire Officer, as currently provided for at the County Council.
4. To ask that any additional national resources such as a Fire College are backed with the necessary funding.
5. To clarify the benefits of national pay bargaining whilst securing greater local flexibility on service improvements and skill recognition.

## **11. Emerging Issues**

11.1 Cllr Duncan Crow, Cabinet Member for Community Support Fire and Rescue provided an update on the work of the West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service following the heatwave and period of significant dry weather, and thanked the service for supporting operational activity locally and in other areas.

11.2 The Leader and Cabinet thanked Katharine Eberhart, Director of Finance and Support Services for her work and leadership throughout some difficult financial challenges as she leaves the council at the end of August 2022.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

12.1 The next meeting of the Cabinet will be held on 13 September 2022.

The meeting ended at 12.45pm

Chairman