

**CABINET**

1 March 2021

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held remotely on Monday 1 March 2021 at 6.30 pm.

Committee Members present: Councillors D.B. Oliver (Leader), S.M. Prochak, MBE (Deputy Leader), C.A. Bayliss, J.H.F. Brewerton, T.J.C. Byrne, K.P. Dixon, K.M. Field, H.L. Timpe and J. Vine-Hall.

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs M.L. Barnes, R.K. Bird, G.S. Browne, J.J. Carroll, Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel, G.C. Curtis, B.J. Drayson, A.E. Ganly, P.J. Gray, K.M. Harmer, J.M. Johnson, Mrs E.M. Kirby-Green, L.M. Langlands, C.A. Madeley, C.R. Maynard, A.S. Mier, P.N. Osborne, G.F. Stevens and R.B. Thomas

Advisory Officers in attendance: Chief Executive, Assistant Director Resources, Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration, Head of Housing and Community, Head of Neighbourhood Services, Finance Manager and Democratic Services Manager.

Also Present: 45 members of the public via the YouTube live broadcast.

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The decisions made under PART II will come into force on 15 March 2021 unless they have been subject to the call-in procedure.

**CB20/106. MINUTES**

(1)

The Chairman was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 at a later date as a correct record of the proceedings.

**CB20/107. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(2)

There were no apologies for absence.

**CB20/108. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

(5)

Declarations of interest were made by Councillors in the Minutes as indicated below:

Dixon            Agenda Item 8 – Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in applications relating to Battle Pre-School and Brede Parish Council.

Field            Agenda Item 8 – Personal and Prejudicial Interest in the Battle Preschool Playgroup application.

**CB20/109. HOUSING FIRST ACCOMMODATION FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS**

(6)

The Council led a multi-agency Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) which consisted of partner services from housing, health, social care, mental health and the voluntary sector. The RSI provided holistic support in a range of settings including the street, Temporary Accommodation (TA) and units of Housing First (HF) accommodation. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic HF accommodation had stalled.

At the start of lockdown and as a result of the Government's 'Everyone In' instruction, the Council made additional discretionary TA placements for former rough sleepers. At present, the Council had eight rough sleepers living in emergency accommodation with a further 22 considered to be at risk of rough sleeping given the reduced ability of many to sofa surf between households. The Government was committed to preventing these rough sleepers returning to the streets through their Next Steps Accommodation Pathway (NSAP) grant fund.

In 2020, the Council worked with all local authorities in East Sussex to develop a consortium bid to the NSAP; two tranches of funding were awarded. The first tranche of £112,000 met the cost of the discretionary placements made under the 'Everyone In' instruction and covered the period up until March 2021. The cost to date of providing additional TA was approximately £122,000, leaving a deficit to the Council of £10,000 which was likely to increase before year end. It was unclear what future funding might be available beyond March 2021.

£280,000 NSAP funding had now been received of which the Council match-funded 40% to purchase four units for HF accommodation in Bexhill; sale completion was expected by April 2021. Support for the units would be provided through the RSI and the overall principle of HF was to provide a stable, independent home and intensive personalised support for those experiencing multiple and complex needs. Investing in HF units would help to reduce cost pressures on the Council's use of emergency accommodation. Currently, the average cost of a placement was £221 per week.

To facilitate the delivery of the HF units, it would be necessary to issue non-secure tenancies as these units were not intended to be destination housing; these were standard across East Sussex. A robust eviction procedure, identical to that used in Wealden District Council which had been established in consultation with the Council's legal team, was detailed at Appendix A to the report. Discussions were being held with a range of partners / providers regarding property management functions etc.

The Head of Service and the Housing Team were congratulated on their work in this area thus far and Members were pleased to see that these vulnerable people were now being supported via a co-ordinated approach with all relevant agencies. It was anticipated that once landlords were able to recommence eviction procedures, the call on housing services and likely number of people rough sleeping would increase. It was requested that consideration be given to providing at

least one unit of such accommodation in a rural setting, provided that adequate assurances could be provided by the supporting agencies.

**RESOLVED:** That the Head of Housing and Community be granted delegated authority to issue non-secure tenancies and enable the Council to provide Housing First accommodation to rough sleepers in the district.

CB20/110. **KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2021/22**  
(7)

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration which gave details of the proposed Key Performance Targets for 2021/22. Managing performance to deliver the best possible outcomes within the resources available was a core function for the Council. Therefore, annually the Council selected a small set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and agreed their target levels of performance for the next financial year. In turn, they would be quarterly reported to, monitored and scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) with any recommendations being forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

Eleven KPIs as detailed at Appendix A to the report were proposed for 2021/22 and would be reported within four themed areas, namely:

- Housing and Homelessness (five indicators)
- Economic Development and Poverty (three indicators)
- Waste Collection (one indicator)
- Additional Income (two indicators)

Other KPIs that were exceeding or significantly missing their target would be reported to the OSC by exception. The OSC were invited to consider and suggest any additional KPIs for monitoring, bearing in mind the impact this would have on staff time to collect and provide commentary on.

The KPIs focused on key outcomes within the emerging Corporate Plan. A Corporate Programme Board would be established to monitor the Council's service plans and a twice annual report would be presented to the OSC to provide an update on activity and target completion.

The Environment Strategy 2020-2030 set out the activities and actions that were to be undertaken in response to the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration in 2019. Net carbon footprint for both the district and the Council would be KPIs in future years. By March 2022, it was anticipated that a baseline exercise and measurement model would be established and completed for inclusion within the KPIs set for the 2022/23 financial year; this work would be carried out alongside ongoing work to progress the strategy. The Lead Member for environment hoped that this could be achieved sooner than March 2022, particularly following the adoption of the agreed Corporate Plan anticipated for May this year, that was currently out for consultation.

Cabinet approved the KPIs and targets and were satisfied that these provided an adequate review of the Council's key performance areas.

**RESOLVED:** That the following Key Performance Indicators for 2021/22 and their performance targets be approved and reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Housing and Communities
  - Number of households in Temporary Accommodation – Target: 60
  - Average length of stay in Temporary Accommodation – Target: 15 weeks
  - Number of households on the Housing Register – Target: 1,200
  - Net additional homes built in the district – Target: 301 (supply), 484 (local plan)
  - Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) – Target: 106 (supply), 121 (local plan)
- 2) Economic Development and Poverty
  - Number of Council Tax Reduction Claimants – Target: 6,000
  - Council Tax Collection Rates – Target: 98.50%
  - Business Rates Collection Rates – Target: 98.2%
- 3) Waste Collection
  - Waste re-used, composted and recycled – Target: 52%
- 4) Additional Income
  - Asset Income Total – Target: £1,850,000
  - Additional Income Generation – Target: £107,000

CB20/111. **COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME - ROUND 2**  
(8)

The Council's Community Grant Scheme (CGS) made provision for up to £130,000 per annum to be made available to community groups or organisations that met the specific grant criteria of the Scheme. In September 2020, Cabinet awarded a total grant of £24,540 including £500 to Strive Café and £500 to Friends of Combe Valley, as well as £15,000 towards the Healthy Aging and Innovation in Rural Europe project. Therefore, the opening balance of the Rother CGS was £86,460. Round 2 for 2020/21 closed on the 15 January 2021; 12 applications had been recommended for approval, subject to specific conditions as detailed within Appendix A to the report.

Thanks were extended to the schemes' supporting officers for the administration, and the Members and external stakeholders who sat on the Panel and considered these applications in great detail and made difficult decisions in some cases. Cabinet was also pleased to see the increased take-up of applications and thanked all Members for the promotion of the scheme within their communities.

Cabinet was reminded that conditions were applied when awarding grants; specifically, that full funding was required to be obtained in advance of any Rother payments being made and that Rother District Council was acknowledged in any publicity and promotional material

associated with any project. It was noted that the total amount committed from the overall budget would be £89,450 which would leave no further funding for the remainder of the financial year.

The Community Grants Panel had delegated authority to award grants under £500. To encourage further applications, it was proposed that the maximum value be increased to £1,000 from 1 April 2021. The application process was currently under review in consultation with Rother Voluntary Action. Cabinet was supportive of the increase.

Round 1 of the CGS would commence on 1 April 2021 and close on 15 July 2021. Members were encouraged to continue to promote the CGS within their wards and reassured that despite the introduction of a local lottery, the CGS was not discontinuing and was funded in the budget going forward.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) the Community Grants listed below, as recommended by the Grants Panel be approved, subject to specific conditions relating to each application:

Battle for Tennis – £4,000  
Battle Preschool Playgroup – £6,153  
Battle Town Council – £7,000  
Bexhill Family Collective Community Interest Company – £2,500  
Brede Parish Council – £3,085  
Camber Parish Council – £4,470  
Hurst Green Parish Council – £30,000  
Pett Parish Council – £5,000  
Rother District Citizens Advice Bureau – £20,000  
Rye and District Chamber of Commerce – £1,500  
Rye Cricket Club – £1,742  
Rye Heritage Centre – £4,000;

- 2) the maximum value for 'small grants' scheme be increased to £1,000;
- 3) the Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration be granted delegated authority to approve the small grants following a recommendation from the Grants Panel; and
- 4) all Members be requested to promote the small grants scheme within their wards.

(Councillor Dixon declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in this matter in so far as it related to Battle Preschool Playgroup and Brede Parish Council's applications as his wife was employed by both organisations and in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct left the remote meeting room for the consideration of 1) above).

(Councillor Field declared a Personal and Prejudicial interest in this matter in so far as it related to Battle Preschool Playgroup as she was Chairman of the Playgroup and in accordance with the Members' Code

of Conduct she remained in the room, spoke but did not vote on 1) above).

CB20/112. **35 BEECHING ROAD DEVELOPMENT**  
(9)

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration regarding the development of a Council owned property in Beeching Road, 'West Trading Estate', Bexhill.

35 Beeching Road was located just north of Bexhill Police Station, opposite Wainwright Road Car Park and adjacent to the recently demolished former Sharwood's factory site, as detailed at Appendix A to the report. The site was currently leased to Skinners Sheds on a non-secure lease which was scheduled to expire on 4 March 2023 and the tenant had confirmed that they would not be renewing the lease.

The existing building consisted of 1,424sqm and was arranged over two floors and covered just under one third of the overall site. Appendix B to the report detailed a set of photos of the mid-1970s building.

In January 2021, Cabinet approved the letting of part of 1-7 Wainwright Road which adjoined the site. The remaining unlet part of that site would be incorporated within this development's proposal.

It was proposed to undertake a thorough feasibility study at a cost of approximately £220,000 to include detailed design, surveys and to seek planning approval in advance of the expiry of the existing lease. This would ensure minimum loss of income during the development phase. The next step would be to appoint the relevant professionals to carry out this work and the results would be reported at a future meeting of Cabinet for consideration.

Cabinet approved the recommendation and agreed that investing and improving the facility on this site would complement the proposals already in development or underway across the Beeching Road 'West Trading Estate'.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) a budget of £220,000 be agreed to progress feasibility and detailed designs for the future of 35 Beeching Road and remainder of the 1-7 Wainwright Road site; and
- 2) the Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration be granted delegated authority to procure the services required, and enter into contracts as necessary, for the completion of detailed designs and planning application.

CB20/113. **ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT - DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS GRANTS SCHEME**  
(10)

In addition to the Discretionary Business Grant Scheme, the Council also operated an Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) to support those businesses and charities whose material income had reduced and who were not eligible for other Government support e.g. self-employed support. The ARG had a total fund of £2.7m, to date £1.9m had been spent with 371 businesses receiving help and support.

The current grant initially covered the period 19 December 2020 (when Rother entered tier 4) to 15 February 2021; a total of 59 days. If either national lockdown or tier 4 restrictions applied after 15 February 2021, the ARG would be extended and the award amounts amended accordingly. The report set out the existing grant categories/sectors and amounts awarded to date. Thanks were extended to the Assistant Director Resources and the Revenue and Benefits Manager who administered the scheme and ensured that claimants received the money.

Following consultation with Members, it was proposed to broaden the ARG scheme to include additional sectors namely Rother based charities with significantly reduced income (50% or more – not charity shops); and small or micro businesses still able to trade but significantly reduced income (50% or more). It was not proposed that financial support be given to larger businesses, however the Council could use some of the grant funding to support failing local employers. The value of the grants would be in line with the current scheme. New businesses established during the period of the pandemic would not be supported as they would need to demonstrate it was a viable business. It was not proposed to extend the scheme to predominately home-based businesses not included in the above sectors or to the self-employed who were already in receipt of Government support.

Cabinet approved the revised ARG and agreed that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Performance Management and Economic Development and Regeneration to determine the grant amounts and detailed criteria.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) the additional eligible business sectors outlined in the report be included in the Council's Additional Restrictions Grant scheme; and
- 2) the Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Performance Management and Economic Development and Regeneration to determine the amounts of grants and detailed criteria.

CB20/114. **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING -  
QUARTER 3 - 2020/21**

(11)

Members received and considered the report of the Finance Manager on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 3

2020/21. The report updated Members on the Council's finances as at the end of December 2020 and projected a provisional outturn for 2020/21.

Since the Quarter 2 Monitoring Report, there had been two reportable virement regarding a transfer of the property valuation contract budget from Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration to Resources and an £18,000 saving in additional staff hours within the Resources department.

At the end of Quarter 3, the Council was predicted to incur a deficit of £2.594m of which £1.677m was unplanned. This represented an improvement of £193,000. The costs of services showed a deficit of £3.696m and non-service budgets increased the forecast overspend to £4.041m. This was reduced by £2.363m mainly due to additional grant income from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

All forecasts included inherent risks, and these were exacerbated by the level of uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. Quarter 2 report estimated the cost of the Council's pandemic response to be approximately £1.109m after the additional funding from the MHCLG. Quarter 3 forecast showed a net reduction of £197,000 to £912,000.

Overall, the deficit on the cost of services was attributed to various overspends/deficits including staff restructuring, consultancy advice, grants, increased planning fees and land charges income, increased Community Infrastructure Levy funding, salaries, increased garden waste income, supporting leisure services, housing benefit overpayments and other minor variances.

Interest income from investments was expected to be below budget (an improvement of £38,000 on the previous forecast). The pandemic had slowed progress on several capital schemes which would reduce the borrowing requirement in 2020/21. As a result, the interest payments forecast had reduced by a further £68,000 and the amount of revenue funding for capital projects by £628,000.

The Council had received £170,000 from MHCLG to assist with administration costs during the pandemic; in total £2,567,000 had been received. The reimbursement from the MHCLG for the loss of income from sales, fees and charges was anticipated to increase by £25,000 which was attributed to the reduction in car parking income.

The net impact on Reserves was forecast to be a reduction of £3.805m against the planned figure of £2.276m; an improvement of £821,000 on the previous quarter.

The Council Tax part of the Collection Fund (CF) was currently 2.50% lower than the same point last year and Business Rates was 1.85% lower. These represented a significant improvement of 2.74% from the Quarter 2 forecast. Based on the current collection rates, it was expected that the CF would be in deficit by the end of the financial year. Cabinet was advised that the Government was allowing councils



to spread deficits over a 3-year period, so impact on the Council's financial position in 2020/21 would be limited.

A summary of spend by capital project for 2020/21, financing sources and overall five-year programme was shown at Appendices A and B to the report.

In December 2020, the Council had made a joint application to Sport England's (SE) National Leisure Relief Funding with Freedom Leisure (FL) to support the operator through December 2020 to 31 March 2021. The outcome of the application was still awaited and if successful, funding would be received before 31 March 2021 and an open book basis would be applied and a grant agreement required with FL.

Should the SE funding be approved, Cabinet agreed that the Council entered a grant agreement with FL to ensure compliance with any conditions to ensure that costs not properly incurred were recovered.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) subject to Sport England approval, the Council accept the grant from Sport England and pass the funding to Freedom Leisure and enter into an agreement with Freedom Leisure to ensure compliance with Sport England grant conditions to ensure that costs not properly incurred were recovered.

**CHAIRMAN**

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

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