



Minutes of the meeting of the **Corporate Plan Task and Finish Group** held in Virtual - Zoom on Tuesday 14 November 2023 at 2.00 pm

**Members Present:** Mr J Brookes-Harmer, Ms O Hickson and Ms S Quail

**Members not present:** Mr A Moss and Ms B Burkhart

**In attendance by invitation:**

**Officers present all items:** Mr A Alempour (Democratic Services Officer) and Mr A Buckley (Corporate Improvement and Facilities Manager)

## 7 **Appointment of a Chairman**

Councillor Hickson was elected as Chair by the group.

## 8 **Apologies**

Apologies were received for Councillor Burkhart and Councillor Moss.

## 9 **Corporate Plan Mid Year Progress Report**

Mr Buckley introduced the report and advised that this is structured using the current Corporate Plan, however, a new Corporate Plan is in development and is expected to be introduced by January 2024. Mr Buckley confirmed that the role of this group is to evaluate the performance and the delivery of the priorities listed in the report.

### **A Cared-For Environment**

Mr Buckley provided an overview of the Corporate Plan and explained that the group will focus on the Key Projects and Performance Indicators that are currently in a state of exception (amber or red).

- **Corp Plan 024 - Selsey Flood and Coastal Erosion Scheme**

Mr Buckley confirmed that this project is present in the report due to two missed milestones.

The first missed milestone was to secure Cabinet approval to proceed to option appraisal (September 2023).

The second was to produce business case applications to the Environment Agency for funding for outlying design.

Mr Buckley advised that these milestones are not fundamentally at risk, but that the timeline has been adjusted to account for new developments. The outlying will now be presented to the Environment Panel in December 2023, prior to Cabinet approving this in January 2024.

The Chair asked why these milestones hadn't been met.

Mrs Stevens advised that as the project progressed, further areas of work had been identified. Much of the data being used was dated. In order to propose a strong business case towards the Environment Agency, it was determined that more up to date information was required.

Consultants have been collating the new data, and up to date models are going to be provided by the Environment Agency. However, waiting for this information has had a knock-on effect on the project timeline.

- **Corp Plan 025 - Climate Emergency Action Plan**

Mr Buckley introduced the plan and provided an overview of the current stage. The milestones that have resulted in an exception relate to the Low Carbon Chichester Fund Legal Agreement for transfer of funds from Homes England to CDC.

Vistry is exchanging data with the Council to determine the fund amount and schedule of payments. This can then be incorporated into a legal agreement. Mr Buckley advised that further information on project progress can be accessed via the Environment Panel and on the Council's website.

Mrs Stevens added that as the process is between Vistry and Homes England, the Council is unable to influence this stage and has no jurisdiction over the contract discussions between the relevant parties. The Council has asked for monthly updates, but that there has been some delay with the exchange of information between Vistry and Homes England. Mrs Stevens confirmed that this will be monitored and both parties will be encouraged to conclude these discussions.

Mr Day advised that there are two sets of legal agreements, one between the Council and Homes England, and one between Vistry and Homes England. The agreement between Vistry and Homes England is already in place, but payment has not been transferred from Vistry to Homes England. Once this payment has been made, the Council will be able to take more control over the project progress.

Councillor Brookes-Harmer asked whether the payment will be made as a lump sum or in instalments.

Mr Day confirmed that the assessment that has been conducted is on all phases that have been completed to date. Future phases which are in construction or haven't begun will be subject to further assessments. Payment will then be made as

one lump sum payment that covers all the phases that have been completed to date.

Mr Day added that the amount that will be paid will depend on how low carbon the development is. Part of the reason for the delay is due to the parties disagreeing on the provision of the district heating system. The initial plan was for the system to be running on biomass. As data has been provided by Vistry, this has shown that system has mainly been running on a conventional gas boiler, subsequently resulting in more carbon being produced, which in turn has affected the payment amount.

The Chair asked whether the current expected completion date of 31 July 2024 is realistic and whether the project should be listed as amber.

Mrs Stevens confirmed that as both parties have agreed details with regards to carbon usage, the project has progressed and therefore should be listed as amber. The project can potentially be relegated to red alerts depending on how the situation develops.

Mrs Stevens also explained that payments cannot be made in instalments, as Homes England are unable to make any payments until the outstanding queries have been resolved.

- **Corp Plan 052a - Food Waste Recycling for Businesses**

Mr Buckley introduced the project and advised that due to the Government's announcement regarding its 'Simpler Recycling' Plans, this has impacted the timeline for this project.

An assessment of the market position and business opportunities is currently being prepared for the February 2024 Cabinet meeting.

- **Corp Plan 055 - Decarbonisation of the Westgate Centre**

Mr Buckley confirmed that the delay was due to waiting for the heat pump manufacturers, which were being delivered from Italy. Additionally, there have been issues with the existing and new metering being compatible with the E-Site monitoring sites. The original income and gas meter needs to be replaced, which can only be done by the energy provider. Once these actions have been completed, the project can be signed off.

The Chair asked whether the expected completion date of 31 March 2024 is still achievable.

Mr Buckley confirmed that no changes have been made to the current expected completion date by the divisional manager.

- **LPI 010a – Reduction in the Council’s Carbon Emissions from 2019 to 2025 / LPI 010b – Support the District in Reducing its Carbon Emissions from 2019 to 2025**

Mr Buckley introduced the project and explained that there are two performance indicators in relation to carbon emissions.

The first is an internal indicator which covers the Council’s own emissions. The second indicator covers the whole district. Both indicators have a 10% reduction target per year. Mr Buckley also highlighted that Covid has had an impact on the data.

Mr Day advised that the Council’s own omissions are easier to control and monitor than that of the whole district. The Council are able to influence the districtwide omissions, however this is not under the Council’s direct control. Mr Day added that the Council is largely dependent on national initiatives and policies being implemented to achieve the net zero target.

With regards to the districtwide target, the Chair highlighted that the government has replaced its original figure for emissions in 2020 and that the updated figure means that emissions reduced by 10.6% instead of 8.7%. The Chair enquired as to whether these changes are appropriate.

Mr Day advised that the guidance provided states that each year the government improves its methods for estimating emissions and then uses the new method to re-calculate the previously published figures. The Council is compelled to use this data set, as local government cannot compile their own data.

### **Homes for All**

- **Corp Plan 027 - Local Authority Housing Fund**

Mrs Standing introduced the project and advised that although the alert is currently amber, the project is on track to complete by the expected completion date.

The Chair asked for an update on what stage of the process the project has reached and whether the Council is likely to receive more funding.

Mrs Standing confirmed that there are two registered providers involved with the project, one is currently purchasing newer builds and the second is purchasing street properties.

Mrs Standing was asked whether there was likely to be any further funding. Mrs Standing replied advising that her understanding was that nationally not all funding had been taken up by local authorities and there could be a change but at the time of this meeting no details had been confirmed. Mrs Standing advised that if further funding is announced, the Council would naturally consider this.

- **LPI 204a Homelessness Prevention / LPI 204b Homelessness Relief**

Mrs Standing introduced the projects and provided an overview of the two measures. Information was provided on how reporting and data collection will be improved to include further details on homelessness.

The Chair advised that she had received feedback that Agency contract staff had recently been retained. The Chair asked Mrs Standing whether the Council is able to offer fixed term contracts.

Mrs Standing confirmed that the team currently has two agency members of staff and given the size of the department, this is a small proportion. The objective is to recruit permanent staff where possible. There is also an open vacancy which will close on Monday 20 November 2023.

Members discussed the impact of the widening gap between market rents and local housing allowances and the challenges this presents.

- **LPI002 – Number of Affordable Homes Enabled by the Council**

Mrs Standing presented the item and advised members that although this project is currently red, this is still expected to complete by the expected completion date.

The Chair raised her concerns regarding whether communications between Housing and Planning are sufficient to progress the project forward.

Mrs Standing advised that all relevant departments work together in cohesion to achieve the best possible service.

- **LPI 003 – Number of homes improved each year**

Mrs Standing Introduced the project and advised that this is still on track to complete by the project completion date.

- **LPI 004a – Time taken to process new claims for benefits (inc. Housing Benefit and CTR)**

Mrs Standing introduced the project and provided an overview of how the project has progressed. At the beginning of the financial year, the team was experiencing higher customer demand, due to Council Tax bills being issued. This in turn had an impact on processing times in the first quarter.

As illustrated by the data, processing times have drastically reduced since then and are expected to continue to improve.

Mrs Standing highlighted that, upon reviewing national statistics, 81% of Councils process new claims within 25 days. In comparison, Chichester's statistics show that most new claims are processed within 12 days.

- **LPI 013 - Households in Nightly-Paid Temporary Accommodation (not CDC Owned) – All Cases**

Mrs Standing introduced the item and confirmed that the target is based on estimates, as there is no national target set by the Government. At present, this is a national issue that is impacting every Council, as reflected by the increase in their budgets. In addition to demand outpacing supply, the current financial climate has led to an increase in homelessness which has exacerbated the issue.

Mrs Standing emphasised that although the number of families in temporary accommodation has remained at 39 since April 2023, applications are being resolved and these are not the same 39 households present in earlier reports.

Further information was provided regarding voids and how the Council minimises the time these empty rooms are out of use.

Mrs Standing advised that there are currently two of these accommodations and the Council are currently in discussions with them to resolve the issues. The rest are currently in use.

- **LPI 014 - Customers Satisfied with delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants**

Mrs Standing introduced the item and confirmed that this project is slightly off target, reviews are being conducted to determine what needs to be addressed and improved. Generally however, this project is on track to complete by the expected completion date.

### **Thriving Economy**

- **Corp Plan 038 - Parking Strategy Action Plan**

Mr Buckley introduced the project. Initially, there was a review planned for August 2023 to analyse the government trial in relation to E-bikes and E-scooters. This trial has been postponed until May 2024, subsequently delaying the timeline for the project.

- **Corp Plan 045 - Review & Enhancement of Bosham Car Park]**

Mr Buckley introduced the project and advised that the exception relates to the feasibility work to consider the design and layout and the subsequent reporting to Cabinet. This has been delayed but is still expected to progress before the end of year, and therefore, within the overall timetable.

Mrs Westbrook added that there has been a delay with the tendering process, which has affected this project and others on the report.

- **Corp Plan 142a - Southern Gateway**

Mr Buckley introduced the project and confirmed that members have all been invited to attend a briefing at County Hall, where more information will be provided on project progress.

- **CV 20 - Northgate Car Park Improvements**

Mr Buckley introduced the project and provided further information on what improvements are being made and why these are necessary.

Members discussed how these improvements would impact connectivity within the area.

### **Supporting Communities**

- **LPI 291 – Increase in attendance of young people aged 0-15 at Leisure Centres (All Sites)**

Mr Buckley introduced the project. There have been issues regarding the Leisure Centres OFSTED arrangements. This has limited their ability to run summer clubs, which has in turn resulted in lower attendance numbers. Swimming classes have been limited due to staff shortages.

Mr Buckley highlighted that all the Leisure Centre's other indicators are currently green and on target.

### **Financial Prudence**

- **Corp Plan 005 - Vehicle Wash Down Facility**

Mr Buckley introduced the project. A new booking and paying system needs to be developed and implemented, the CCS team is also experiencing a high volume of work which can cause delay.

- **Corp Plan 050 - Budget Review 2023/24**

Mr Buckley thanked members for participating in the prioritisation exercise, this information helps inform the Budget Review Group plan their projects. Mr Buckley confirmed that the prioritisation process is now taking place.

## 10 **Next Steps**

Mrs Westbrook will create a draft report, to send to members and to the Chair to review and sign off. Once this has been signed off, this report will go to Overview & Scrutiny in January 2024.

The meeting ended at 3.36 pm

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CHAIR:

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Date: