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Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2 - East Pallant House on Tuesday 15 May 2018 at 9.30 am

Members Present: Mrs C Apel (Chairman), Mrs N Graves (Vice-Chairman), Mr P Budge, Mrs P Dignum, Mr N Galloway, Mr G Hicks, Mr S Lloyd-Williams, Mr K Martin, Caroline Neville, Mrs P Plant, Mr H Potter and Mr A Shaxson

Members not present: Mr M Dunn, Mr J Ransley and Mr N Thomas

In attendance by invitation:

Officers present: Mr N Bennett (Divisional Manager for Democratic Services), Ms P Bushby (Divisional Manager for Communities), Mrs B Jones (Principal Scrutiny Officer), Mr L Foord (Divisional Manager for Promotion and Events), Mr D Hyland (Community and Partnerships Support Manager), Miss A Loaring (Partnerships Officer), Mrs V McKay (Divisional Manager for Growth) and Mrs L Rudziak (Director of Housing and Communities)

204 **Chairman's announcements**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Mr Dunn, Mr Ransley and Mr Thomas.

The Chairman wished to remind members that emails sent to the committee should not be shared more widely unless with the committee's consent.

205 **Minutes**

The committee considered the minutes of the last meeting held on 16 January 2018.

There were no issues of accuracy.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2018 be approved as a correct record.

Matters arising:

Minute 190 (of meeting held on 14 November 2017 relating to the Forward Plan) and Minute 196 – Housing Strategy Update:

The Chairman advised that an email had been circulated from a committee member who was unable to attend this meeting, setting out his comments on the low level of housing delivery, lack of Forward Plan activity, and the slippage of Local Plan timescales.

With the Chairman's approval Mrs Dignum provided brief answers to these questions which had been circulated to members.

Minute: 192 – sickness absence:

Members were concerned that the sickness absence report would not be available until the June meeting. It was requested that the council's policy and relevant procedures regarding absence management including recording, data calculation and line management responsibilities were detailed in the report to allow a wider understanding of this issue. [Post meeting note: This will be included in the report to the committee in June 2018]

Minute 196 – downsizing:

- Queried whether there was a policy which encouraged people to downsize.

Minute 196 – Affordable Housing Delivery figures

- Those councillors who were encouraging the South Downs National Park to increase affordable housing in this area were to be commended.
- Concern was expressed at the reasons why some housing association properties were left untenanted for over a year.

The Housing portfolio holder, Mrs J Kilby, was invited to the table to answer these questions. She advised that officers were currently working with a number of parishes to develop Community Land Trusts and to identify suitable land for development of housing. Voids were also being considered with Hyde and through review of the Housing Allocations Policy. A policy on encouraging people to downsize would be included in the new strategy. She undertook to take members' comments on board in the review of the Housing Strategy.

Mrs Jones provided an update to the progress of actions and recommendations arising from the last meeting.

206 **Urgent Items**

The Chairman announced that there were two urgent items for consideration at this meeting, namely:

- 1) The committee's representative on the Novium Procurement Task and Finish Group would provide an update on the group's progress.
- 2) The request by the committee at its November 2017 meeting to review the council's public consultation policy and procedure; an update would be

provided.

These items will be taken at Agenda Item 9 Late Items.

207 **Declarations of Interests**

Mr Galloway declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 in respect of Southern Gateway in relation to shares he holds in Royal Mail.

208 **Public Question Time**

A public question had been received from Mr A Hooper by the deadline of 12pm on the day before the meeting. Mr Hooper was present and stated his question to the committee as follows:

“The Council has decided to sell 2 The Gardens, College Lane, Chichester by auction. The auction is scheduled for the 22nd May 2018 as follows:

*Bernard Marcus Auction 22 May Lot 43
Guide Price £210,000*

As of today’s date, a week before the auction, no legal documents are available for potential buyers to review. There are statements that the buyer will have to make contributions to the seller and that these are in the legal pack.

No internal pictures are available of the property; No weekend viewing are available of the property; No ‘For Sale’ sign has been erected outside the property;

Without the legal pack, there is:

*No time to review the legals;
No time for survey;
No time to arrange mortgage.*

*The auction guide price is £210,000
The Zoopla valuation is £408,000*

How does the Council justify that this arrangement will generate best value for this property?

The property should be withdrawn from the May auction and re-entered with at least a month’s notice once legals are available. It is a complex site with regard to access and rights of way.

What is CDC’s policy for selling assets and why it has taken so long to advertise and arrange a legal pack for this property?

Auction is in London with no internet bidding.”

Mrs V McKay, Divisional Manager for Property & Growth and Mr N Bennett, Divisional Manager for Democratic Services, were in attendance to answer Mr Hooper’s questions.

Auctioneers had taken pictures of the property and weekend viewings had been facilitated on Saturday 12 May and again on the following Saturday 19 May. Possible further weekend viewings were being considered. A sales board was now to be erected as the query regarding the boundary had been resolved. Auctions were normally in major cities and there was a process to enable proxy votes. The Cabinet had approved the sale of this property via auction whereupon the background work had begun to enable officers to bring it to the market. Unlike other forms of property sales, an auction requires that all necessary legal work involved - confirming boundaries, rights of way, statutory searches and preparation of documentation – be carried out before the property is auctioned. The legal pack was now complete but had not yet been circulated. An RICS qualified valuer had valued the property and the guide price had been published by the auctioneer - a reserve price is not disclosed.

A property auction was acceptable as ‘best value’ as it opened the sale to a wider audience in order that many offers could be received at the same time. Auctioneers liaised with the council on the best way to achieve best value as it was in their interests to do so.

A decision had already been discussed by officers to postpone the auction from the May auction date to the June date.

The committee made the following comments:

- The processes were unsatisfactory and should be borne in mind for future auctions.
- Queried the policy on disposal of land.
- Queried the reason the property was declared surplus.

Mr Bennett advised that auction of property was not a common district council process. The council’s legal and estates processes were efficient. This sale had involved complex and exceptional issues which resulted in delays.

The question had not been circulated to the committee due to the short period between receipt of the question and the meeting itself.

Mr Hooper declared that he was satisfied with the officers’ responses and of the outcome of this issue.

209 **Community Safety Review 2018 - Final report from Task and Finish Group**

The committee considered the report included with the agenda. Caroline Neville, the Community Safety Review Task and Finish Group Chairman, presented the report.

Mrs Bushby was in attendance.

The committee made the following comments and received answers to questions, including the following:

- *Queried whether the group was convinced of the police’s new policy regarding not attending all crime scenes and the public concern regarding lack of police on*

the street. Sussex Police had reducing funds and the public needed to take increasing responsibility for safety with the introduction of CCTV, community watch groups etc. The police interview victims of crime and take statements. In one example this had led to a coordinated response and apprehension of criminals.

- *Queried whether the TFG had an indication of how many people were referred to Prevent.* The Prevent duty sat with West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) although the district council had a duty to consider terrorism. We support them by delivering training around radicalisation. There had been no reports in the last year.
- *Queried the concern regarding the car washing company operating out of car parks.* There had been concern that extra money was being demanded of workers to be allowed to work, however the police had investigated and no evidence of modern slavery had been found. The council had however decided not to extend the contract. A new car washing contract was being considered at present. **Mrs Bushby undertook to respond to the committee with an update on this matter.**
- *Queried the initiatives put in place to provide older driver assessments as part of the Killed and Seriously Injured project.* Funding had been achieved to provide these assessments and advertising would be issued soon.
- *Queried whether further advertising could be put in place to warn people about thefts from beauty spots.* Officers were working with the Forestry Commission, SDNP and National Trust to get the message as widespread as possible.
- *Queried cuckooing and what was being done to stop this.* Drug dealers were coming down to the coast from larger cities and setting themselves up in vulnerable people's properties to sell drugs. This was often associated with violence and was common across the coastal strip. Officers were working with the police to protect victims of cuckooing and to track down offenders.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the required level of scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) had been achieved.
- 2) That the performance of the CSP was good and that evidence of effective partnership working in the district had been demonstrated.
- 3) That the reason for the increase in crime rates was due to a number of factors including increased reporting of historic offences and changes to the reporting method of certain categories of offence.

210 Chichester in Partnership Annual Report 2017-18

The committee considered the report included with the agenda.

Miss Loaring was in attendance.

The committee made the following comments and received answers to questions as follows:

- *Queried the figures in the cost benefit ratio of the Choose Work scheme and what this meant.* Miss Loaring undertook to provide an explanation of these figures to members following the meeting. [Post meeting note: The cost benefit analysis (CBA) is a system which looks solely at financial benefits; in this case:
 - Benefit of people moved off benefits and into work
 - Increased earnings of people achieving new skills
 - Benefits of reduced mental health interventions
 - Costs benefits from reduced number of NEETS
 - Improved wellbeing of individuals
 - Improved family wellbeing

There will be further benefits of the project (e.g. housing) but the above are those which can currently be measured. This is offset against the costs - the cost of employing people and delivering the project - and will take into account optimism bias, the accuracy of the data and increasing costs.]

- *Queried the availability of jobs in the district and the amount of people applying for those jobs.* The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) required people out of work to demonstrate that they had applied for work. As a result there were a large number of people applying for jobs for which they were not suited. Some jobs were seasonal or zero hour contracts so these were not a guarantee of permanent work. Skills mapping was required. Women wanted local jobs as they needed to be near their children and transport issues limited them. The profile of clients supported by Choose Work had changed over time from the very young with challenges in entering the workplace to people who were more able to access the job market but increasingly had low level mental health or confidence issues.
- *The social prescribing project and its width in the district.* All the GPs in the district were involved and invested in this project. Two community referrers would work from surgeries in the north and two in the south.
- *Queried action 1.6 on the Annual Report supporting young people to access the apprenticeship scheme and the low outcome of 25%.* The apprentice did not always get the job at the end of the apprenticeship. The Government was pushing businesses to take apprenticeships. Officers were supporting an apprenticeship graduation ceremony and this would raise the profile locally.
- *Queried action 1.3 in the report relating to the lack of funding available to train those on low wages to increase their skills.* Chichester College had started to offer some free courses and Aspire being in the area had added to the offer. The partnership was promoting these courses to people.
- *Challenge to provide business premises in areas which would otherwise be used for housing to enable local people to access opportunities for work. This was important in the South Downs National Park area (SDNP). Queried whether the SDNP was working with us to offer apprenticeships and on the social prescribing project.* The SDNP did not feel they could invest in the social prescribing project at this time. However they were supporting the partnership with Community Celebration events coming up in June.
- *Queried funding opportunities for NEETS to provide budget training for young people.* This issue would be raised at the Youth Forum and with the Earliest Help team. However getting young people interested in financial skills was difficult
- *Queried what help was being provided to local housing tenants as part of the tackling financial inclusion project.* Debt management, promoting the introduction of universal credit and working with the Citizens Advice Bureau to

ensure joint working. Mapping of banks and cashpoints would be carried out to identify closures and what could be done to support people in this regard. Officers were considering a project where digital banking training would be provided, working with WSCC and their 'digital cafes'.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the progress achieved by Chichester in Partnership in 2017-18 be noted.
- 2) That the Chichester in Partnership Business Plan for 2018-19 be noted.

211 **Forward Plan**

The committee considered the Cabinet's Forward Plan for the period from June to September 2018.

The Parking Strategy and the inconsistency of car parking charges across the district was raised. Members were advised that they should feed their comments and concerns to the member representing their area on the Chichester District Car Parking Forum. The Forum considers the annual charges before they come to Cabinet for approval.

The IT Strategy had been delayed due to the resignation of the IT Manager and the instalment of her successor.

The committee raised other items for possible scrutiny in the future, as follows:

- **Potholes on the districts roads:**
WSCC did not seem to have the capacity to deal with this constant problem and claims were not being paid in good time to those who had suffered damage to their vehicles. Mr Oakley, in his capacity as a WSCC member, was given permission by the Chairman to respond. He advised that roads were not designed for the volume of traffic they were now taking. The public needed to take responsibility for reporting pot holes. There were several rough spots on the A27 although these were not regarded as dangerous. Pressure needed to be put on Government to resolve highways issues such as potholes.
- **Education review:**
It was considered timely for the committee to carry out a further review of education in the district. Increasingly schools were becoming academies and the attainment level across the district was a concern. This issue would be added to the committee's work programme.
- **The Review of Council Tax locally defined discounts and premia in particular the empty homes premium:**
Officers would investigate the feasibility of adding this to the committee's work programme.

RESOLVED

That the committee write to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for highways at West Sussex County Council to express concern, on behalf of local residents, at the number of potholes on the district's roads and to ask how recent Government funding of £1m would increase resources to resolve this issue and to speed up the process of reviewing claims.

212 **Late Items**

The two urgent items raised at Agenda Item 3 were considered by the committee.

1) **The Novium Procurement Task and Finish Group update**

Mr Galloway and Mrs Dignum updated members on the issues which had been considered by this corporate task and finish group at its recent meeting on 26 April 2018.

The options considered were 1) to proceed with the procurement exercise, b) to set up our own trust and 3) the service to remain in house. The new museum manager had included some energising ideas in her proposed business plan for the museum. The task and finish group had resolved that further work should be undertaken in respect of options 2 and 3 before the decision was considered by Cabinet (5 June 2018 in the Forward Plan).

Members were concerned with the likely recommendations going to Cabinet and felt that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was not being appropriately consulted as part of this decision; they were advised by Mrs Jones that this issue had been on the committee's work programme for some time. Officers undertook to review the timescales for this report to ensure that this committee was consulted.

2) **Review of Public Consultation**

Mr Foord was in attendance. He advised that the council's Communications Policy, which included public consultation, required to be reviewed this year. This would lead to consultation being carried out in a controlled and coordinated manner through a single point of contact. Terms of reference and a scoping of the review were being developed at present and would come back to this committee for approval at its next meeting when the membership and Chairman would be appointed.

Mr Galloway would be interested in serving on this task and finish group as he had held a relevant position at WSCC. [Post meeting note: Caroline Neville also declared an interest in serving on this group]

The meeting ended at 11.52 am

CHAIRMAN

Date: