



Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held virtually on Tuesday 15 June 2021 at 2.00 pm

Members Present: Mr A Moss (Chairman), Mrs T Bangert (Vice-Chairman), Mrs C Apel, Mrs N Graves, Mr T Johnson, Mrs S Lishman, Mr C Page, Mr H Potter, Mrs C Purnell and Mrs S Sharp

Members not present: Mr G Barrett and Mr D Palmer

In attendance by invitation: Mr D Marsh (Chichester BID) and Ms H Marshall (Chichester BID)

Officers present: Ms P Bushby (Divisional Manager for Communities), Mr L Foord (Divisional Manager for Communications, Licensing & Events), Mr A Frost (Director of Planning and Environment), Mrs J Hotchkiss (Director of Growth and Place), Miss S Hurr (Democratic Services Officer), Mrs V McKay (Divisional Manager for Growth), Mrs T Murphy (Divisional Manager for Place), Mrs S J Parker (Public Relations Manager), Mrs L Rudziak (Director of Housing and Communities), Mrs D Shepherd (Chief Executive) and Mr J Ward (Director of Corporate Services)

7 **Chairman's Announcements**

Apologies were received from Mr Barrett and Mr Palmer.

8 **Minutes**

That the minutes of the meetings held on 26 January 2021, 9 March 2021, 30 March 2021 and 8 April 2021 be approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

With regards to questions from Mr Seabrook forwarded to Ofwat, the Chairman confirmed that not all answers had been received and this matter was being pursued. Mr Frost also confirmed that Mrs Shepherd and he would be meeting with Ofwat and Southern Water tomorrow (16 June 2021) and would raise the as yet unanswered questions. On the matter of the new strategic pipeline to Tangmere and the connection to the White House Farm development Mr Frost responded that he would take that matter forward outside the meeting and further advised that it was not unexpected for water to be delivered and sewage to be removed by tanker for the initial occupations of a development prior to any necessary improvements to the network being finalised.

The Chairman gave an update on the Committee's recommendations to be considered by Cabinet on 4 May 2021:

- That the recommendation made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee relating to Draft Revised Air Quality Action Plan be approved for public consultation.

Cabinet resolved that the revised Air Quality Plan be approved for public consultation

- That the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee relating to Southern Gateway as detailed at page 131 in the private agenda pack be agreed.

Cabinet considered recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 May 2021. With reference to minute 11 the recommendations set out on page 131 of the Cabinet agenda pack were agreed. Where the recommendation referred to Full Council a further update would be provided in due course.

9 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

10 **Declarations of Interests**

The Chairman declared a personal interest as he knew Mrs Marshall, the CEO of Chichester BID as a Fishbourne Parish Councillor and local resident of Fishbourne.

Mrs Sharp confirmed she was no longer a director of Chichester BID.

Mrs Apel declared a personal interest as a Trustee of Stonepillow.

11 **Public Question Time**

There were no questions from members of the public.

12 **Recovery Plan Review**

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council Mrs Lintill, who provided a verbal update regarding the Recovery Plan Review:

The Council's clear priority for 2020/21 has been to support our residents, businesses and communities through the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and the recovery phase whilst maintaining our day to day services. This support has taken many forms this year.

Our Revenues Team began the year by implementing the multiple grants schemes for businesses based on their Business Rates value. Restrictions and government funding changed rapidly throughout the year and the Team worked hard to make

sure as many as possible received financial support they needed. To date an excess of £54m has been paid out. In addition, £500,000 of COVID Recovery Grants, funded by the Council was administered by our Economic Development and Communities Teams and allocated to eligible businesses and community or voluntary organisations. Timely paid by our Finance Team.

Our Health Protection and Economic Development Teams both saw huge increases in the number of requests for advice from local businesses. Both Teams worked extremely hard to respond to all requests and ensure businesses were supported. Later in the year, two COVID Information Recovery Officers were employed to support businesses with reopening and operating in a COVID-safe way.

Support to individuals has also been provided this year. The Hardship Fund, administered by our Benefits Team, paid out around £350,000 to residents receiving Council Tax Reduction, with each receiving a one off payment of up to £150 towards their Council Tax balance. The Team also administered Test and Trace Support Payments and managed to set up the scheme and start making payments within just two weeks.

Since the 'Everyone In' initiative to bring all rough sleepers into accommodation at the start of the pandemic, our Housing Team have continued to work with rough sleepers, alongside our partner Stonepillow and supported by funding from the Government. This has meant a significant reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in the District, with many former rough sleepers being supported to access and sustain accommodation.

Supporting West Sussex County Council's Community Hub, the Communities Team co-ordinated a small task force who helped collect and deliver essential food and medical supplies to those advised to shield. Well over 100 referrals for support were received this year.

When high streets began to reopen, our Community Wardens and, later, specially recruited and government funded COVID Ambassadors, helped the public to feel safe with a presence in the City Centre, reminding people to follow the appropriate guidance. We also provided safety signage conveying social distancing messages. This work will continue through 2021/22, along with other initiatives to support the return of the high street, funded through the Government's Welcome Back fund.

The Council contributed to the national COVID response, with testing sites being set up in some Council-owned car parks across the District and use of Westgate Leisure Centre as a mass vaccination site. NHS staff, were also given free parking in our Northgate car park.

All of the public messages about COVID were co-ordinated and promoted by our PR Team. Their work helped residents, businesses, partners, councillors and staff stay well informed through clear, up-to-date communications across all our platforms. They also worked with the Observer newspapers to deliver an ongoing campaign to encourage people to 'Support Local' through the pandemic and in the recovery phase.

Our own services have been subject to restrictions throughout the year; all 3 of our Leisure Centres and our Novium Museum had to close, along with our cultural partners, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester Festival Theatre and the Great Sussex Way. All these sites have adapted to delivering services in a different way, or with restrictions in place. Online services have increased, including provision of online fitness classes, online booking, expansion of the Virtual Museum, increased engagement on social media and live-streaming of performances. Other services have also adapted incredibly quickly. Our Choose Work Co-Ordinators and Wellbeing Officers were able to continue to support vulnerable clients over the phone or online. Online service provision was increased in Parking Services, with 97% of all parking season tickets now digital and a new online form introduced to allow parking issues to be reported online.

Although our main building has been closed to the public this year, our Customer Services Team have been working on plans for reopening, taking into account the increase in services provided online as a result of the pandemic. Most residents have been able to access the services they need without a face to face visit to the offices. Improvements to the reception area are currently being made, ready for the building to reopen to the public with a new service delivery model; maximising efficiency, whilst ensuring anyone who needs support to access services can receive it.

The Council has also supported our own staff this year. The vast majority were assisted by our ICT Team to begin working mostly from home. This included upgrading our Virtual Private Network and introducing remote meeting software for staff and, supported by Democratic Services, also for Members to allow Council meetings to take place remotely. Our Facilities Team were able to source materials and make adaptations needed for our main offices to become COVID-secure. The Wellbeing Team ran initiatives to support staff wellbeing during this time, with further support from the HR Team and Service Managers available to those who needed it.

Despite the pandemic, work has continued on some important projects that will support the District's recovery in the future. The major regeneration project for the Southern Gateway area has continued, with a relocation site now purchased for one partner. The impact of COVID on this project and on the partners involved in its delivery will be reviewed in 2021/22.

Planning permission was secured this year for a redevelopment project at St James Industrial Estate, Chichester, which will provide around 4,448m² of floor space across 5 new blocks. The Council was awarded £1.18 million towards the project from the Government's "Getting Building Fund", one of just 12 grants awarded from 117 applications. Units will be marketed and available for lettings later in 2021/22.

Work has taken place across all Council Services this year to identify a programme of savings that will now be implemented from 2021/22, with the aim of saving around £2 million over the next three years. This will ensure the Council continues to deliver excellent value for money in these changing times.

There is no doubt that 2020/21 has been a challenging year for everyone. As restrictions now start to lift and the recovery period begins in earnest, CDC will continue to engage with our local residents, communities and businesses about

what they need to recover from the effects of the pandemic and how we can best support them in this.

The recovery report shows the full list of what has been achieved and I am really proud to have led an authority that has achieved so much during this very difficult period. I would like to thank the staff for the part they played in this outstanding performance and to the members who have served on the Recovery Group.

13 **Covid -19 Recovery Plan and future services framework (Quarterly)**

Mrs Shepherd reminded the Committee that it had recommended to Cabinet that it should support the four thematic recovery plans:

- Community and Housing;
- Economic;
- Planning, Health and Environmental Protection;
- Organisational.

Mrs Shepherd drew the Committees attention to the report in which the key achievements to date were highlighted, together with new work, and changes in milestones. Detailed action plans and progress to date were also included within the report.

Mrs Shepherd reported that a vast amount of work had been undertaken over the last year to support communities, businesses and the Council, recover from Covid-19 and concluded that most of the actions had been completed. It had been the intention for the Recovery Groups to be time limited, with the majority of the actions within the Housing and Community, Organisational and the Planning, Health and Environmental Protection recovery plans having been completed or at an advanced stage of progress. Therefore, it was considered that three of the four Groups had substantially fulfilled their purpose and should conclude with a final meeting. Progress on the remaining actions within the Planning, Health and Environmental Protection could be reported to DPIP and Environment Panel as appropriate.

Mrs Shepherd confirmed that the Economic Recovery Group still had a number of major projects and actions to oversee. The impact of COVID-19 on the Chichester economy was difficult to assess at the present time and was also likely to change. The Government plans for economic recovery were also awaited and it was therefore recommended that a politically balanced Economic Development Panel was formed to continue to oversee the Economic Recovery Action Plan and to advise Cabinet on economic strategy and policy. The full 'terms of reference' and membership were to be agreed at July meeting of the Cabinet.

Mrs Shepherd added that the Governance Review Working Group would be reviewing the operational model for the Council and further consider, maximising councillor involvement in decision making, and build upon the consensual working experienced in the recovery groups. This group would make recommendations to Council regarding whether in addition to the Economic Development Panel, there was merit in establishing further Panels.

Mrs Shepherd commented that she was proud of what staff had achieved during the pandemic and the Annual Report which would be delivered later in the year would illustrate that performance had been extremely good.

Mr Ward gave a precis of the current financial position and reported that last year he had attended Corporate Governance and Audit Committee and had predicted the Council would be facing a deficit of £8m but the Government had provided extensive support through specific grants, a general Covid-19 emergency support grant and the Sales, Fees and Charges compensation scheme for authorities which were significantly affected by loss of income.

Mr Ward reported that the financial figures for last year were not yet finalised but it was likely that the deficit would be well below the estimated £8m figure. With regards to the future financial position it was currently uncertain with £2m of reserves used to balance the budget, and it was unknown as to how income streams would emerge from lockdown, but car park income had recovered well. There may be further impacts from future lockdown measures and therefore uncertainties continued, and much was unknown for example as to how the leisure industry would recover and what the Council may be required to provide to the leisure operator.

There had only been a one year settlement for the year and a further spending review was awaited towards the end of the year. The Government had again delayed the fair funding review which would distribute/redistribute funding across the local authority sector and this may not be received until 2023. New cost pressures were also emerging and in the Queen's speech the Environment Bill was mentioned which would mandate separate food waste collection and potentially require garden waste to be collected free of charge. There may however be some additional funding, but how much was currently unknown and whether the new services would be funded or not, but Mr Ward was pleased to report that efficiency savings were on target to achieve £932k of savings against a budgeted target of £747k.

Mr Ward explained that a pay freeze for the year had been expected, but a 1.5% increase had been offered and currently rejected by the Unions which could produce a further cost pressure.

Mr Ward also drew the Committees attention to the final recommendation on the report to recommend to Cabinet the repurposing of the Local Council Tax Support grant of £160k which was no longer required and reallocated this towards the 2021/22 deficit.

Mrs Lishman joined the meeting.

Officers responded to Members' questions and comments:

- With regards to the '40%' progress figure for establishing longer term solutions for rough sleepers, Mrs Rudziak confirmed she believed the figure to be incorrect and that the report to cabinet regarding the allocations scheme revisions had been completed and therefore this matter should be shown as 'green'. On the matter of the potential capital or revenue cost of £2.8m to establish longer term solutions for rough sleepers, Mrs Rudziak explained that £0.5m had been received from the Government jointly with Stonepillow

from 'Next Steps' funding. The Council had allocated an additional £100k to extend The Lodge and purchase the property which had previously been leased within the city which would be providing longer-term accommodation for rough sleepers. The £2.8m cited in the report was specifically for Freeland Close.

- As to whether the Housing First initiative will continue, whereby a person was housed before other support was provided, Mrs Rudziak, agreed it was much easier to provide support for other issues once a person had an address. In terms of the future, jointly with Stonepillow funding had been secured from the Government Rough Sleeper Initiative fund and the £300K grant would enable a continuing of the current level of support for in-reach and outreach work although the latter was now diminishing with only three people now sleeping on the streets. This funding was given out on an annual basis, so it is difficult to plan and therefore providing this as a longer term grant was being considered by MHCLG and the Council was working closely with government on this issue.
- With regards to furlough ending and the cap on evictions being lifted, Mrs Rudziak agreed this was concern for the Council, but other support was in place and time between the stages of eviction had been extended. The backlog at the courts would also slow the impact to a more manageable pace. The Council was working with West Sussex County Council and other districts and boroughs at the Strategic Housing Group and plans had been put in place and additional funding secured to establish various initiatives. Housing officers would provide support at the Courts to help in negotiations with landlords. Additional funding had been requested for Discretionary Housing Payments and a Homelessness Prevention fund was also in place. There had also been a focus on supporting people out of temporary accommodation and engagement with partners who had concerns that an individual may become homeless, to encourage early contact with the Council.
- On the matter of whether those people from Bognor Regis currently housed in Selsey would become the responsibility of the Council, Mrs Rudziak confirmed that for various reasons people were often placed outside of the district but the responsibility was retained by the district housing the person, regardless of the location.
- With regards to other ideas to boost income streams, having previously been heavily reliant on car parking, Mrs Shepherd responded that the Governance Review was a group which should focus on informing Council of which panels may be required. The reason for the Economic Recovery group becoming a panel was due to the volume of work necessary in relation for example to the Southern Gateway project, high streets and commercial activities. It would be appropriate to await the outcomes of the Governance Review, and one of the Terms of Reference was how to engage Members earlier in the decision making process, and whether other panels should be formed.

The Chairman commented that he strongly endorsed 3.3 of the recommendations, and requested that the 'terms of reference' were made available to OSC at the earliest opportunity. The Chairman added he would welcome regeneration projects highlighted in the 'terms of reference' and seeking new income streams would be justified, particularly with car parking likely to become a reduced element of income.

The Chairman sought clarification with regards to the Babynov company and Mrs Hotchkiss responded that this was a French based company and the estates teams had been working with the company on their relocation to Terminus Road. Many investment projects were long-term projects and commercially sensitive, therefore information could not be released early.

The Chairman expressed concern regarding the challenges of the high street and the need to be proactive and the necessity of group to focus on this issue.

Officers responded to Members' further questions and comments:

- On the question of Economic Development Panel to be both geographically as well as politically balanced, Mrs Shepherd responded that it would be a decision made by Cabinet and Mrs Lintill confirmed the intention would be for both a geographical and politically balanced group.
- With regards to the future of East Pallant House, Mr Mildred confirmed that work on this matter was on-going and the decision was made last year to defer the decision for twelve months as it was necessary to understand future work patterns, related to workspace, the needs of customers and organisational requirements and impacts of flexible working, before coming to conclusions.
- Mr Mildred also explained the Gigabyte project was an action under the Recovery group which had a number of elements including rural areas, and vouchers to secure better internet connections. Work was taking place with a company called City Fibre who were rolling out connections for the whole of Chichester city, Stockbridge and Fishbourne from August 2021, with Tangmere to follow and would be based in a Council unit at Ravenna Point. This would also have a positive impact on attracting businesses to the area.

The Chairman commented on the importance of supporting viticulture and viniculture. He also sought clarification on the progress of reviewing the 'red card' planning procedure and scheme of delegation. The Chairman further commented that during Covid-19 letters to residents regarding planning applications had ceased, which was of concern to residents and urged officers reintroduce this administration. Mr Frost responded that on the review of the 'red card' procedure and scheme of delegation, at the last meeting of the recovery group a paper had been provided with a constructive discussion taking place. A report would now be produced setting out the relative merits of individual letters to neighbours, versus site notices to be presented initially to the Planning Committee for consideration.

The Chairman invited Mrs Purnell to provide her additional recommendation:

This Committee would like to express its thanks to all of the officers at Chichester District Council for their outstanding work carried out during these unforeseen times.

The Chairman seconded the proposal.

Resolved

That the Committee note the progress on the recovery action plans, the efficiency review and the Future Services Framework and make

comments to Cabinet.

That the Committee notes that the Housing and Community; the Planning, Health and Environmental Protection; and the Organisational Recovery Groups have completed the majority of their actions and should be discontinued after their next meeting.

That the Committee recommends to Cabinet the formation of an Economic Development Panel.

That the Committee recommends to Cabinet that Cabinet recommends to Council that the Local Council Tax Support grant of £160k for additional Hardship payments, which is no longer required, is reallocated towards the Council's budget deficit 21/22

That the Committee would like to express its thanks to all of the officers at Chichester District Council for their outstanding work carried out during these unforeseen times.

The Chairman also expressed his thanks to all Councillors for their work during the pandemic.

14 **OSC 2020-21 Annual Report and 2021-22 Work Programme**

The Chairman introduced the Annual Report written with the support of officers and invited questions and comments from the Committee Members. In response to comments, the Chairman confirmed his view of the importance of scrutiny and agreed the priority to invite statutory organisations to attend the Committees meetings and respond to the Committees questions.

Officers responded to Members' questions and comments:

- With regards to the roll out of vehicle charging points, Mr Frost confirmed that the tendering of the project by West Sussex County Council was currently awaited following the withdrawal of the original chosen provider. Mr Frost added that the formal West Sussex County agreement was also awaited and then the Council could review and assess if they wished to join the scheme.
- With regards to the reporting of progress of the Southern Gateway project, Mrs Hotchkiss confirmed a report would be presented to full Council when the Development Agreement was ready to be signed and subsequently, a quarterly report would be provided.
- On the matter of the Local Plan, Mr Frost advised that the work was reported to the Development Plan and Infrastructure Panel (DPIP) as the appropriate forum.

The Chairman advised that 'Planning Issues – Enforcement and Local Plan Programme' was included in March 2022 as a possible Work Programme item. He had agreed to leave this on the Work Programme, the main points for debate would be discussed with officers and it may be appropriate to leave this item for Planning Committee or DPIP with a focus on any OSC related items being considered by OSC as required. Mr Frost added that Council had recently approved the revised

Local Development Scheme, which was the timescale for the Local Plan and Members will wish to monitor progress with the next key milestone as the update report, which would be taken to full Council next month.

The recommendation was seconded by Mrs Apel.

Resolved

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider and agree its 2020-2021 Annual Report and the 2021-2022 Work Programme, and to recommend them to the Council for noting.

Members took a ten minute break.

15 Budget Amendment: March 2021 Council Minute 82

Mrs Hotchkiss introduced the report and explained that the Chairman had tabled a motion, the details of which were set out in the report. Following a discussion with Cllr Dignum and Cllr Sharp, amendments were made to the motion, which were also included within the report. The Council resolved the amended motion at the March meeting. Mrs Hotchkiss highlighted further points within the background section of the report including the budget figures.

Mrs McKay introduced the Inward Investment Strategy and explained that this was adopted in 2020 with a review after two years. Since this time the Covid-19 pandemic had occurred and officers had carried out a review of the strategy and were confident the main principles remained sound. One of the key objectives in the strategy was to consider branding, and launch the Inward Investment agenda. Engagement had taken place with an expert called White Label to undertake the launch on the Council's behalf. White Label would put in place a series of launch events including the Invest Chichester website, to be launched later this month. White Label would also be brokering a stakeholder engagement with landlords on the high street. The work with White Label will continue until late autumn 2021, at which point the renewing of the Inward Investment Strategy would be considered with the impacts of post Covid-19 being more evident. The Economic Development Strategy was likewise adopted in 2020 and remains in place until 2025, covering the key areas of Inward Investment, supporting the high street, and business growth.

Mrs Murphy provided further information regarding branding, explaining this could be applied to geographical areas, to promote an area as desirable for tourism, business locations and places which local residents can be proud of. It was necessary for branding to appeal to many different groups and developing a place brand was a long term commitment. Towns and cities across the UK had already produced place brands and had seen the benefits relating to inward investment. Currently the district does not have a place brand, and establishing this would be for the benefit of the district, not the council.

Place brand was wider than inward investment strategy (which focusses on businesses). Mrs Murphy drew Members attention to the report and the key challenges including the need for agreement from partners, the varying nature of the

district with the city, rural towns and the coast, how this work would need to be resourced and the number of brands already in existence. Mrs Murphy added that it could be argued that a Place Brand could still help the area with an estimated cost of between £50-£65k to develop, plus ongoing costs. The report further included the setting out of the anticipated process as suggested by the Local Government Association and Mrs Murphy noted that it could be seen as increasingly important, as part of the recovery process following the pandemic.

Officers responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Mrs McKay confirmed that Global Baby (the French parent company having the name of Materna SAS) and Babynov were producers of pouched organic baby food in France, which also undertook the manufacture of its own brand and also packaged baby food produce for significant branded names. Their focus was on sustainability and organic, which aligned with the type of companies encouraged within the district. Their plans are to invest in the site at Terminus Road. Mrs McKay advised that it may be possible at a future date for Members to visit the company when safe to do so.
- With regards to the budget for branding work and promotion, Mrs Murphy responded that a 'brief' would need to be created and put out to market and progressed via the Council's procurement process. The figures within the report were based on historic work and decisions would be required in relation to the extent of the brief.
- With regards to the number of initiatives in the city, and the associated challenges and benefits, Mrs Murphy advised that details of both were set out in the report. Mrs Hotchkiss explained that £40k had been allocated for inward investment, a strategy had been developed and as part of the strategy a 'book of values' which was a brand for inward investment and a logo had been recently launched, with LinkedIn pages also launched for 'Invest Chichester', being the brand for businesses to come to Chichester going forward.

The Chairman made a proposal for an additional recommendation:

The Committee recommends to Cabinet that a comprehensive Place Branding and District Identity Plan that includes Place, Business, the built and natural environment and Community is produced by a specialist company for the District as soon as possible in 2021-2022.

The Chairman further suggested that the final words within the second recommendation, '... and recommend any actions to Cabinet' were removed.

The additional recommendation and the removal of the words from the second recommendation were seconded by Mrs Lishman.

Resolved

That the committee note the amended motion presented to March 2021 Council and Council minute 82.

That the committee note the work to date and planned work by the Economic Development and Place Services relevant to the items listed within the motion.

That the Committee recommends to Cabinet that a comprehensive Place Branding and District Identity Plan that includes Place, Business, the built and natural environment and Community is produced by a specialist company for the District as soon as possible in 2021-2022.

16 **Communications Strategy 2021-2026**

Mrs Parker explained that the Council recognised that effective communications and engagement were central to the delivery of all services. In response to this, a communications and digital strategy had been produced which aimed to provide a framework from which communications was enhanced and developed to meet customer and stakeholders' needs.

Over the past year, communications had been more important than ever, ensuring that businesses and residents were able to access support as necessary. The experience had also further enabled and developed partnerships with groups, organisations, parish councils and other public sector partners who had been at the forefront of ensuring residents were aware of the support available. This experience, along with the knowledge and feedback gathered from councillors, staff, residents, partners and businesses had been used in the production of the strategy for the next five years. Although communications and technology were constantly adapting and changing, ensuring the customer was at the forefront of the approach was also evident within the strategy.

Mrs Parker drew Members' attention to the ten point plan in the draft strategy. This illustrated the commitment to being customer centred and accessible to all whilst ensuring people were able to easily access the Council's services online so that it became the preferred method of contact. However it was also recognised that not everyone would wish to access Council services online.

Mrs Parker explained that each major project had a specific communications plan, considering who needed to be reached and how they wish communication to be undertaken. This strategy also considered each of the main themes including working with the media, using social media, direct communications, how marketing campaigns were delivered and income generated.

Mrs Parker reported that the Council has signed the Local Digital Declaration, which was a shared ambition for the future of local public services in the digital age, and the commitment to realising it. Many website improvements had also been made to ensure easier customer access and feedback would also be sought from customers going forward with this work.

Officers responded to Members' questions and comments:

- With regards to the involvement of people in the many consultations, Mrs Parker confirmed that the changes made in undertaking consultations had resulted in a positive impact and Mrs Parker also confirmed that there had

been an increase in people accessing services online during the pandemic with encouraging feedback received.

- On the matter of face to face communication, Mrs Parker agreed this was the best form of communication and the importance of working with Members was recognised, as those out in the community. There was a significant input into social media and responding to people's comments, the result of which was that people developed a more detailed understanding and often changed their stance on an issue. Mrs Parker further explained that considerable work had been undertaken on the website to meet accessibility guidance introduced by the Government, and when English was not a first language, a company was in place to ensure support could be provided for these customers.
- Regarding the importance of face to face communication, and customers visiting to East Pallant House to access services, Mrs Parker detailed a project which had been undertaken with the Customer Services team to update signage and establish plans for the reopening and how people would receive an enhanced service. Mrs Parker added that it was important to have various methods of communication in place.
- With regards to the complexity of the Communications Channels chart, Mrs Parker confirmed that this part of the strategy would be further considered to establish if a simpler chart could be created.
- Mrs Rudziak explained that the reopening of East Pallant House could not yet be confirmed.
- Mrs Parker confirmed that boosting posts on social media had a positive outcome and significant impact, although this was dependent upon the subject matter and the results were monitored.
- Mrs Parker explained that it was possible to have some images and video on the website, and a series of videos were currently being created to enable customers to understand how to use online services. There was also a platform called 'Camber' which enabled slide shows and videos.
- The grapevine system was for internal staff to enable communication and Mrs Parker explained this had been available for a number of years.
- Mrs Parker confirmed the Chatbot was about to be trialled on certain pages of the website and live chat was also currently being considered.
- On the matter of engaging with younger people, Mrs Parker explained it had been more difficult to engage currently due to the pandemic, but there were established positive partnerships with schools and colleges and other ways of communicating with younger people were being considered. Mr Foord also added that the one of the projects of the recovery group was to look at an improved programme to ensure services were delivered electronically rather than face to face, but customer interaction and how customers wished to interact would be monitored. Electronic communication also gave customers 24 hours per day access to services. The strategy reflected a modern and innovative way of communicating, in a digital age.

Resolved

That the Committee review the draft Communications and Digital Strategy 2021 – 2026, and refer any comments to Cabinet.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Derek Marsh, the Chair of Chichester Business Improvement District (BID) and Ms Helen Marshall, the Vice-chair and Chief Executive Officer of Chichester BID.

Mrs Murphy introduced the report, and explained the purpose of which was for Members to review the Renewal Business Proposal prepared by the BID and make recommendations to Cabinet. Mrs Murphy explained that BIDs were business led partnerships operating in a defined area, and a levy was charged on all business rate payers to fund BID projects and services. A BID was created via a ballot process, and the ballot was managed by the Council. A BID could be created for a maximum period of five years. The first BID for Chichester city was established in April 2012, and second BID in April 2017 and therefore ends in March 2022. The BID would like to proceed to a third term.

Mrs Murphy drew Members attention to the report which set out some of the BID achievements including flags, Christmas lights, and funding for safety initiatives. The current BID team were undertaking significant research and consultation which was also detailed within the appendices to the report. If the BID was not successful in ballot, then any initiatives would require funding potentially by another organisation. The report also highlighted the proposed areas of focus for next five years if successful, including campaigns, partnership work to improve the public realm and support to BID levy payers and improve footfall. It was proposed that the ballot was undertaken on 18 November 2021. The Council was a levy payer so would continue to pay the levy if ballot successful. The Council also collected the levy on behalf of the BID from the payers and paid this on a monthly basis to the BID.

Mr Marsh explained that he and Ms Marshall were appointed in December 2020. The BID had been somewhat moribund due to Covid-19 lockdowns and the previous Chair had resigned nine months previously. Currently preparations for the ballot were well behind schedule and the BID had lost visibility in the City. The BID Operations Manager had taken extended sick leave, the other two staff had resigned and much of the corporate memory had consequently disappeared. Among other problems, the BID bookkeeper caught long Covid and BID were therefore, without key financial support for some months.

It was immediately clear that a huge effort was required to get back on track. Mr Marsh also explained that it was not always understood that the BID was run by two companies limited by guarantee, was not a quango or an arm of CDC. The BID must follow, among other things, the Companies Acts, comply with General Data Protection Regulations and prepare annual accounts for filing at Companies House, and the Board of Directors must exercise stewardship of the management.

Ms Marshall as CEO, took over the day to day running of the BID business and was making preparations for the ballot. As a non-executive Chair, Mr Marsh explained that he had focused on governance and management. Work was on-going to achieve a successful ballot and Term three for the BID.

Ms Marshall confirmed that they were focusing on a range of new initiatives to support local business. Whilst the provision of essential BID services like Christmas

Lights, Rangers, day-to-day communication with BID levy payers were important and not to be underestimated, the view was that a difference could be made in the following areas:

- Building stronger and more proactive collaborations/relationships within the city.

BID wished to be far more visible and therefore more influential, taking the role of being the voice of all the businesses represented seriously. As a consequence, the team structure had been realigned to be more outward facing and more visible through the introduction of the Client Relationship manager role. BID wished to be aware of what Chichester needed at a grass roots level to enable quick reaction and foster stronger relationships with all the city's businesses, and to represent them confidently when key decisions were being made.

BID wished to work more closely with those partner organisations that directly support business in Chichester. In the area of Crime prevention, BID wished to provide a broader and more relevant service and propose to evolve the Business Crime Reduction Partnership with 'Chichester District Business Against Crime Partnership' (ChiBAC). To offer improved value for money and include further On Street presence to monitor all aspects of the public realm in both the day and night time economy.

- More active in driving footfall, and keeping Chichester as a key destination city.

BID wished to put more focus on collaborating to deliver memorable family events, building on what had already been achieved and establish a fixed, rolling events calendar that aligned with other Chichester District events such as Goodwood Revival.

Christmas was considered a missed opportunity in the city and BID wanted to build on the success of the Xmas lights installation and deliver a series of events during the four late nights leading up to Christmas, turning the city into a must-see evening destination over the Christmas period.

Working closely with Chichester District Council, BID wanted to ensure the markets in Chichester had great variety and draw, and ensure that the local businesses welcomed and supported them, working alongside them productively and viewing them as a positive asset.

- Support entrepreneurialism and nurture new business in the city.

BID wished to build a resource bank for the businesses which would include key commercial insights including footfall, car park occupancy, visitor origination and demographics to support sales and stock planning.

BID also wished to set up a marketing asset resource bank – including videos, images, and social media tips and hints. Drawing on the past experience of the BID team and their networks, there are also plans to consider establishing a Business Review support service for those who wished to participate.

Nurturing and retaining young talent in the city was vital to ensure a vibrant skills succession plan in the city. Chichester BID would work hard with those partners who

worked alongside students to create initiatives to bridge the gap between their education and their future careers – thus encouraging the ‘top talent’ to remain in the city and to develop a platform to support a strong young, professional network within the city.

- Support the look and feel of the public realm

Alongside solely providing for the Christmas lights, partially funding the Rangers, partially funding the flower displays, solely providing for the bunting and flags, BID consider there was further opportunity to improve the public realm.

The overwhelming feedback from the independent retailers in the city, was that they would like more abundant floral displays.

BID also wished to be more proactive at attracting Inward Investment and work alongside partners to ensure BID can promote Chichester’s profile and facilitate potential investment. BID would seek matched funding opportunities and were currently reviewing BID Best Practice to achieve this aim.

Ms Marshall concluded that to support these initiatives, BID would ensure total transparency in collaborative activities and financial arrangements through joining the nationally regarded British BID’s Accreditation scheme.

Mr Marsh, Ms Marshall and officers responded to Members’ questions and comments:

- With regards to the benefits to businesses of have a BID, Mr Marsh drew Members’ attention to the list of items that would be lost should a third term of the BID not be secured. Ms Marshall confirmed on the matter of funding the Rangers, BID matched funded the initiative with Chichester City Council. Ms Marshall further explained that without BID the business crime initiative would not exist which was much needed by retailers impacted by shop-lifting, and floral and bunting displays would be absent.
- On the matter of the night-time economy and whether it would return, Ms Marshall responded that it was difficult to predict, but footfall data was tracking what was happening nationally at 27% down on a two year equivalent, with day time economy was around 10% down. Ms Marshall believed there was opportunity for it to return, and there was the potential for the Southern Gateway area of the city to be designated for the night time economy which was a longer-term consideration. Mrs Bushby confirmed that the Council worked closely with BID staff and ChiBAC to ensure the city centre once it reopened was a safe place, particularly for younger people and students. Mrs Hotchkiss added how important the night time economy was, which was illustrated by people spending approximately £60 or more each time they were planning a night out.
- On the necessity for late licences for the night time economy and the opportunity to ask students what they would like to have available within the city, Ms Marshall responded that the health and wealth of the city depended upon bring younger people into the city and therefore to understand what attracts them. The University of Chichester considered that insufficient attractions were provided and there was an issue with the lack of a live music venue. The role of the BID was to work with partners to ensure young people

are involved in business life and demonstrate that there was a credible career path, to retain talent.

- On the matter of licensing, Mr Foord responded that applications under the Licensing Act 2003 for the sale and supply of alcohol, regulated entertainment and late night refreshment was a presumptive piece of legislation to grant a licence unless one or more of the licensing objectives were not upheld. Next week the process would begin to readopt the Council's Statement of Licencing policy under this legislation for the foreseeable future. There was often considerable opposition to licensing applications, not all were contentious but they received opposition. If Members wished to have a growing night time economy, Members had an opportunity to positively comment on the policy and support it going forward. Officers followed the legislative framework, but were regularly facing opposition for new and exciting events and therefore Mr Foord asked Members to support these opportunities.
- Mrs Murphy explained it was important to focus on what BIDs were in place to deliver and to achieve. Mrs Murphy also noted that the Chair of Chichester BID was a Member of the Chichester Vision, so that role would also be involved in some of the wider partnership discussions. Historically the BID had led on a couple of the actions within the Action Plan and some projects had been delivered by the BID working in partnership with key organisations. It was also important that the BID would be working with British BIDS in the coming year to develop the accreditation scheme.
- On the matter of complaints regarding the noise of students within the residential areas late at night, Mr Marsh responded that the city was increasingly becoming residential with apartments being created from empty shop buildings and the city becoming more residential was not compatible with increasing the night time economy.
- On the matter of the cost of the BID, Mrs Murphy responded that the Council was a BID levy payer, which was approximately £14k p.a., the Council also undertook the collection of the BID levy on behalf of the BID but there was a management fee which was charged for undertaking that work to cover the software which was used by the Revenues team and some of staff time which was set at a recommended percentage of the overall fee nationally. The ballot costs were in the region of £3k which was covered by the Council unless the ballot was not successful or there was less than a 20% turnout within the ballot in which case the Council would look to recharge the BID for the cost of the ballot. There were also on-going costs of officer time, in terms of partnership working on projects. The BID generated approximately £300k to £350k p.a. with regards to the BID levy payers within the city, who paid 1.25% each year which explained earlier in the debate, the Council collected on the BIDs behalf.

Mrs Bangert left the meeting and did not return.

Members discussed the value of the BID.

Mrs Murphy reminded Members that an annual report was presented to the Committee in the autumn of each year.

The Chairman proposed the following recommendation which was seconded by Mr Potter.

Resolved

The Committee welcomes the new initiatives being introduced by BID and recommends to Cabinet that the Council continues to work in partnership with the BID and to support the 'Renewal Business Proposal'.

The committee specifically raised the following points:

- The night time economy for all residents
- Encourage independent shops
- Support innovative markets
- Work with the University and College

18 **Forward Plan**

The Chairman requested whether other items should be added and it was concluded that all items were present within the Forward Plan.

19 **Late Items**

There were no late items.

The meeting ended at 5.31 pm

CHAIRMAN

Date: