

POLICY & RESOURCES PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY & RESOURCES PANEL held at County Hall, East Sussex County Council, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes BN7 1UE at 11.30 am on Thursday, 20 July 2023.

Present: Councillors Evans (Chair), Azad, Galley, Geary, Goddard, Lambert and Maples

Also present: D Norris (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), M Matthews (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), L Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), D Savage (Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer), H Scott-Youldon (Assistant Director Operational Support & Resilience), M Lloyd (Assistant Director Safer Communities), J King (Assistant Director People Services), A Blanshard (Democratic Services Manager), R Smith (Democratic Services Officer)

73 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

74 Apologies for Absence/Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillor Redstone and Councillor Ungar. Councillor Geary had been appointed to attend as a substitute for Councillor Redstone, and Councillor Lambert attended as a substitute for Councillor Ungar.

Councillor Azad had been appointed to attend as a substitute for the vacant position on the Panel for this meeting.

75 Notification of items which the Chair considers urgent and proposes to take at the end of the agenda/Chair's business items

The Chair invited the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) to provide an update on the recent fire that had occurred at the Royal Albion Hotel in Brighton.

The Panel were informed that the fire occurred in challenging weather conditions, and that following a major incident being declared neighbouring Services attended to assist. The ACFO advised Members that all persons had been accounted for, and the site had been handed over to Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC).

Panel Members thanked the ACFO for the update and requested that their thanks be passed to those involved.

76 Minutes of the last Policy & Resources meeting held on 27 April 2023

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Panel held on 27 April 2023 be approved, subject to the following addition to the end of the final paragraph of Minute 72, which was proposed by Councillor Maples and seconded by Councillor Lambert: "Group Leaders especially valued their meeting where the proposals were considered."

Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Policy & Resources Panel

77 Callover

Members reserved the following items for debate:

38. Revenue and Capital Budget 2022/23 and Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2026/27 Monitoring – Provisional Outturn

39. Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/24 and Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28 Monitoring at Month 2 (end May)

78 Revenue and Capital Budget 2022/23 and Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2026/27 Monitoring - Provisional Outturn

The Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer (ADR/T) introduced a report highlighting the Provisional Outturn on the Revenue Budget 2022/23 and 5 year Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2026/27, approved by the Authority in February 2022.

The Panel were informed that the provisional outturn was a net revenue overspend of £357,000, which was a reduction of £70,000 from the position which had been identified in the last report presented to Members. The provisional outturn was reported as being due to wholtime overtime, and on-call costs within Safer Communities, utilities and fuel due to inflationary pressures, and unachievable savings within Prevention.

Members noted that the overspend was less than previously identified, however, raised concern that there continued to be a pressure from on-call costs and training. The Assistant Director Safer Communities (ADSC) advised the Panel that SLT were looking at training delivery, including incorporating modular training and investigating alternative delivery methods for carrying out refresher training.

The Panel asked whether there were any further updates regarding the Fort Road site in Newhaven. The Assistant Director Operational Support & Resilience (ADOSR) advised Members that a project team had now been established and a report was due to be presented to the Fire Authority later in the year. The ADOSR also informed the Panel that the application process for planning permission would begin at the end of the month, and that security would be bolstered at the site in time for the school summer holidays.

Members expressed concern with regards to stay-put protocols in high rise buildings, particularly given the older demographic in the area. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) advised that there was a requirement to undertake inspections of all high-rise buildings, and that grant funding had been received to assist with the costs involved in carrying these out. Members were informed that the recommendations that arose following the Grenfell Inquiry included the need for adequate training for staff to enable them to identify when the stay-put policy is not appropriate and evacuation should be carried out. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) explained that the decision to

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implement a stay-put policy was made by a particular buildings responsible person and not the Fire Service, whereas the decision to evacuate would be made by the incident commander.

RESOLVED – That the Policy and Resources Panel noted:

- (i) the provisional 2022/23 Revenue Budget outturn;
- (ii) the provisional Capital Programme outturn including the slippage amount and spend incurred in advance;
- (iii) the net drawdown from reserves during the year;
- (iv) the savings delivered in 2022/23; and
- (v) cash balances invested at year end and borrowing repaid.

79 Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/24 and Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28 Monitoring at Month 2 (end May)

The Panel considered a report from the Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer (ADR/T) which presented the findings of the Month 2 monitoring undertaken on the Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/24 and Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28.

The ADR/T provided a brief introduction to the report, emphasising that whilst it was at an early stage in the year the financial situation remained challenging. It was highlighted that a key pressure existed within Safer Communities and that this continued to be monitored. Attention was also drawn to pressures which had been created by a reduction in the Firelink grant, as well as pay awards and utility costs which would continue to be monitored. The Panel were also informed that the continued worldwide supply chain issues were impacting on the Estates Capital Programme, with similar issues experienced within Fleet.

A discussion followed regarding the interest rates reported against cash balances invested in NatWest account, and whether there was a possibility of sourcing an alternative energy supplier such as one which provided a discount for investing in solar farms. The ADR/T explained that the interest rate reported for the NatWest product was due to the time that it was taken out. Members were also advised that energy was sourced through a contract with Crown Commercial Services.

RESOLVED – That the Policy and Resources Panel noted:

- (i) the risks to the Revenue budget and the projected overspend;
- (ii) the risks to the Capital Programme and the projected in year underspend;

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- (iii) the increased net forecast drawdown from reserves;
- (iv) the grants available and spending plans;
- (v) the monitoring of savings taken in 2023/24; and
- (vi) the current year investments and borrowing.

The meeting concluded at 12.46 pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2023