

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 15 JULY 2019

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Emma Faramarzi (Vice-Chair), Steve Allsopp, Matthew Courtliff, Jim Grant, Brian Mattock, Des Moffatt, Barbara Parry, Carol Shelley, Roger Smith, Timothy Swinyard and Vera Tomlinson

Also in attendance were: Councillor David Renard (Leader of the Council) Councillor Dale Heenan (Cabinet Member for the Town Centre), Maureen Penny (Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment), Gary Sumner (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning) and Councillor Keith Williams (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jane Milner-Barry, Oliver Donachie (Cabinet Member for Economy and Place), Russell Holland (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Education and Skills) and Mary Martin (Cabinet Member for Children's Services).

7. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Roger Smith made a non prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 5 (Cabinet Minute 19) as he worked as a town planner for Savills.

Councillor Barbara Parry made a non prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 5 (Cabinet Minute 17) as she worked for the Ridgeway School.

8. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

9. Public Question Time

Mr Roy Worman, a Haydon Wick resident, asked a question relating to the status of sites identified within the Swindon Local Plan Review documentation.

Councillor Gary Sumner, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning responded at the meeting.

Mr Roy Worman, a Haydon Wick resident, asked a question regarding remedial works to the Whalebridge Car Park.

Councillor Maureen Penny, Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment, responded at the meeting.

10.

Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

The Committee considered a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 10th July 2019.

Minute 16. Budget Management 2019/20

Councillor David Renard (Leader of the Council) and Keith Williams (Corporate Services) responded to questions put by Councillors Jim Grant, Brian Mattock, Des Moffatt and the Chair on the following matters:

- A water leak, from a damaged pipe, underneath the swimming pool at Lydiard.
- The projected variance in the Adult Social Care Budget and whether this was anticipated to be a short or long term issue.
- The reasons for the projected shortfall in revenues from the Swindon Crematorium and potential options to address this shortfall.

Resolved – That Minute 16 of the Cabinet be noted.

Minute 17. Education Transport Policy 2019

Resolved – That Minute 17 of the Cabinet be noted.

Minute 18. Considerations of Objections – Bristol Street Car Park

Councillor Maureen Penny (Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment) responded to questions put by Councillors Jim Grant, Des Moffatt and the Chair on the following matters:

- A potential future review of the pricing of the charges for the Bristol Street Car Park should the income and usage not be broadly in line with expectations and/or other town centre car parks.
- Measures to mitigate the concerns of local councillors and residents concerning commuter vehicles parking in residential areas in Rodbourne.

Resolved – That Minute 18 of the Cabinet be noted.

Minute 19. Swindon Borough Local Plan Review – 2nd Regulation 18 Consultation (Preferred and Emerging Options) – Minute for Confirmation

Councillor Gary Sumner (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning) responded to questions put by the Chair on the following matters:

- The rationale for the removal of Policy D2 from the proposed Local Plan and powers within the Plan to promote sustainable growth and prevent climate change.
- Which groups benefitted from the removal of the DS Policy, in its current form, from the consultation draft of the Local Plan.
- How the Council would prevent sub-standard applications, and in particular those adversely affecting climate change, being submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

Resolved – That Minute 19 of the Cabinet be noted.

Minute 20. Town Centre Movement Strategy – commencement of consultation

Councillor Maureen Penny (Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment) responded to questions put by Councillor Des Moffatt and Tim Swinyard and the Chair on the following matters:

- The removal of buses from the proposed Railway Village Conservation Area through the provision of a bus lane along Faringdon Road.
- The integration of traffic across the whole Borough as well as the area to be covered by the Town Centre Movement Strategy.
- The accommodation of wider traffic flows into the town centre and from new developments into the existing road infrastructure.
- Commuter parking in older streets and some rural areas across the Borough that did not have residents parking schemes.
- The monitoring of, and enforcement against, commuter parking where traffic regulation orders permitted this.
- Individual transport assessments throughout the Borough for new developments such as North Star.

Resolved – That Minute 20 of the Cabinet be noted.

Minute 21. New Eastern Villages (NEV): Strategic Transport Scheme

Councillor Gary Sumner (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning) responded to questions put by Councillor Emma Faramarzi, Jim Grant, Des Moffatt and Barbara Parry and the Chair on the following matters:

- The Council's role in putting in place an estimated £60 million of infrastructure, for the proposed Eastern Village Development, prior to any substantive works being completed by private builders.
- The potential risks associated with the Council undertaking such a large degree of infrastructure work prior to the commencement of works in the New Eastern Villages when it was not a major landowner and did not own strategic areas of land.
- The anticipated timescales for the return of the Council's infrastructure investment in the New Eastern Village and how this affected the risk associated with the proposed development.
- Grant funding from Central Government and borrowing arrangements for the proposed highways infrastructure in the New Eastern Villages.
- The benefits to adjoining areas of the highway infrastructure in the New Eastern Villages.
- The prioritisation of highways and affordable housing as part of the infrastructure investment in the New Eastern Villages.
- The Council's role in ensuring developers provided a quality schemes and met the expectations and obligations associated with any planning permission granted.
- The way in which risks associated with the high number of potential developers associated with the New Eastern Village development be being managed.

Resolved – That Minute 20 of the Cabinet be noted.

11. Leader of the Council: Annual Report

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, attended this first meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2019/20, to report to the Committee on (a) the Authority's achievements in 2018/19 and (b) the Administration's challenges and priorities for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

The Leader, in his report, highlighted achievements during 2018/19 which included:

- The creation of a cross-party Working Group to consider ways in which the Council can stimulate climate change mitigation in Swindon.
- *Pledge 2: With our wholly owned company, Public Power Solutions, enhance Swindon's reputation as a sustainable energy exemplar, by exploring technology that converts energy from waste, facilitating the move to electrified transport, and delivering opportunities to invest in renewable energy to reduce carbon footprint.* This placed waste reduction at the heart of the Council's services and encouraged the investigation of new and emerging technologies.
- *Pledge 5 – Enhance Wellington Street as a Prime Thoroughfare for the Town.* The Council had overseen the design and implementation of a publically funded public realm and highway improvement scheme at Wellington Street.
- *Pledge 15 - Work to secure a viable and sustainable future for our key heritage assets.* Work had been undertaken to secure funding projects in the Railway Heritage Area by working with Historic England, the National Trust and local groups. The Cabinet had also agreed a new pledge that our existing museums are more closely linked to our schools and utilised as an educational resource.
- *Pledge 6F - Ensure that there is a range of good quality housing options in Swindon, including affordable opportunities to buy and rent.* The Council had delivered 70 homes to the Council's housing stock and enabled a further 186 affordable homes in partnership with housing associations and housing developers during 2018/19.
- *Pledge 26 - To prevent homelessness wherever possible, including using additional measures such as the temporary winter housing provision and offering a day centre to prevent rough sleepers from returning to the streets.* Rough sleeping in the town had reduced from a high of 45 to 23 in a recent census.
- *Pledge 6 - Strategic Development.* Progress continued with Tadpole Garden Village and Badbury Park and the search for additional smaller scale sites for housing through the SHELAA (Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment).
- Pledge 10: secure a range of options to access Higher Education. Work was continuing with the Royal Agricultural University Swindon and with a joint bid with Swindon College to secure funding for an Institute of Technology.

The Leader, in his report, also highlighted the challenges for 2018/19 which included:

- The wider regional and national issues such as the creation of England's Economic Heartland and the country's decision to leave the European Union.
- The continued long-term financial stability of the Council and the funding vital services despite pressures on Local Government finances.

- The delivery of services through partnerships and building on relationships with the police, schools, the hospital, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and the relevant charities and third sector groups in order to ensure that all residents are protected.
- The delivery of new schools including, the William Morris Primary School and the Deanery CE Academy.
- Progress in delivering services under the Better Care Fund (BCF) through joint partnership working.
- Changes to the Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements for Children and Adults at Risk from end of July 2019. The new model, approved by Health and Wellbeing Board in March, focuses on continuous learning and improvement with a clear line of sight on frontline safeguarding practice. The
- Ensuring that relationships with the police, schools, the hospital, the Clinical Commissioning Group, and the relevant charities and third sector groups are enhanced in order to ensure that all residents are protected. The service re-design programme continues to support more individuals to become less dependent.
- Continued work to improve the services of children's services through the strategic improvement plan for children's services and to regularly monitor its delivery.
- Economic Prosperity and work to mitigate the closure of the Honda car manufacturing plant and support its workers and the local community.
- Maximising the benefits from Zurich who will build a new state-of-the-art office building in the heart of our town and from The Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) which is one of only 20 in the country, will boost Swindon's economic growth by using its heritage as a catalyst.
- The delivery of the New Eastern Villages Development and provision of the initial infrastructure.
- The rationalisation of the Council's estate programme to make the council more modern, efficient and effective by 2020.
- Work to identify how the Council can mitigate Climate Change in Swindon and to make Swindon Carbon Neutral by 2030.

The Leader responded to a number of questions put by Councillors Steve Allsopp, Emma Faramarzi, Jim Grant, Brian Mattock, Des Moffatt, Barbara Parry, Roger Smith, Carol Shelley, Tim Swinyard and Vera Tomlinson and the Chair on the following matters:

- The success in moving to the next stage of the Future High Street funding bid, talks with neighbouring authorities to highlight Swindon's future role in shaping the regional economy, and the submission of a bid to the Historic High Street Fund.
- Work to provide a strategic plan for Coate Water Park.
- The objective of making Swindon the best business location in the country, by emphasising "Swindon Works", Swindon's location was a cross-road between areas and Swindon as a gateway to the West of England, the electrification of the London to Bristol rail line and work to promote a Swindon to Heathrow rail line and a connectivity to Oxford and beyond by means of technology as well as transport by road or rail.

- Work to support Honda staff and their retraining and a broad overview as to the current position of negotiations between management and the unions and future production at the car plant.
- Reputed interest by Dyson in using part of the Honda facility for electric car production.
- Work by a variety of Task Groups and Steering Groups that the Council were represented on and reasons for elements of this work to be kept out of the public domain with Members signing Non-Disclosure Agreements.
- The Cabinet Member Working Group which would be scrutinising the work of the Honda Task Groups and Working Groups as well as the £200,000 approved by Council to facilitate Honda related work.
- The work of England's Economic Heartland and how (i) the benefits to Swindon of its membership would be quantified, and (ii) its work would be affected by a change of Prime Minister and the United Kingdom leaving the European Union.
- The synergy between Swindon and both Cambridge and Oxford and work to build on these ties and in promoting growth in the immediate and wider region.
- The Council's estate rationalisation and work to reduce running costs whilst providing environmental benefits.
- The Council's trial of electric vehicles within its service fleet and costs associated with the introduction of these electric vehicles which would use energy from the Council's solar panels.
- How the introduction of electric vehicles affected the Council's involvement in hydrogen powered vehicles and hydrogen hub.
- The refresh of the Swindon Programme to promote the Council's priorities and pledges and to deliver the efficiency savings required for the Council up to and including 2024.
- How the integration process of Swindon Borough Council and Clinical Commissioning Group joint commissioning of services and work would be affected by the merging of the Baines, Wiltshire, North East Somerset and Swindon Clinical Commissioning Groups.
- Problems experienced by local residents in North Swindon arising from contacting and booking appointments in local General Practitioner Surgeries and work to remedy this situation by the Care Quality Commission and the Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Raising the aspiration of Higher Education for Swindon's young people and how to people with relevant skills can be encouraged to live and work in Swindon.
- Addressing the issue of suitable housing accommodation for students coming to study in Swindon and the additional pressures this might add to the local private rented housing stock.
- Progress in meeting the three year Improvement Plan for Children's Services.
- Work to ensure that there were enough Building Control Officers employed to deal with the increased workload associated with the New Eastern Villages Development.
- The Council's current Design Guide and whether this met the needs of planting requirements when considering Highway development.
- The use of recycled materials as a fuel substitute and how this affected Swindon's climate change ambitions.
- The quality of replacement boxes and lids for recycling and how breakages by waste collectors can be minimised.

- Remedial and snagging works for the recently completed Wellington Street upgrade.
- The effect of gifted pupils in Swindon attending a limited number of schools outside their catchment area and the impact on schools across the Borough in raising educational standards.

Resolved – (1) That the Leader of the Council be thanked for attending the meeting to present his Annual Report and for his full and open responses to members' questions and observations on the issues raised.

(2) That information requested by members during the course of the Committee's consideration of this item be forwarded to them via the Committee Clerk.

(Councillor Barbara Parry made a pecuniary Declaration of Interest in respect of the discussion on Honda under this item as her husband was employed by Honda and left the room during this discussion.)

12. Work Programme 2019/2020

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Legal Officer setting out the topics for inclusion in the 2019/2020 Scrutiny Work Programme, as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 10th June 2019.

Resolved – (1) That a progress report on the Moredon Playing Fields Sporting Hub be considered by this Committee at its November meeting.

(2) That a progress report on the North Star Development trigger points be considered by this Committee at its December meeting.

13. Status of Requests for Action and / or Information

The Committee received an updated report advising on the status of outstanding issues and member requests for information.

Resolved – That the report on the status of outstanding issues and member requests for information be noted.