

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 25 MARCH 2019

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Emma Faramarzi (Vice-Chair), Emma Bushell, Fionuala Foley, Brian Mattock, Des Moffatt, Barbara Parry, James Robbins, Timothy Swinyard, Steve Weisinger and Caryl Sydney-Smith.

Also in attendance were: Councillor David Renard (Leader of the Council), Councillor Russell Holland (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance), Councillor Dale Heenan (Cabinet Member for the Town Centre), Councillor Cathy Martyn (Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety), Councillor Maureen Penny (Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment), Councillor Gary Sumner (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning) and Councillor Oliver Donachie (Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jane Milner-Barry and Vera Tomlinson.

68. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. The following declarations were made:

- Councillor Brian Mattock made personal, non-prejudicial declarations of interest in respect of:
 - Agenda item 5 (Consideration of Cabinet Decisions) as a Borough Council appointed Trustee of the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery Trust.
 - Agenda item 6 (Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session – Cabinet Member for Finance) as a Director of the Housing Company.
- Councillor Emma Bushell made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 5 (Consideration of Cabinet Decisions) as a Swindon Town Football Club Season Ticket holder, and also as an owner of a share in Swindon Town Community Mutual Ltd (Trust STFC).
- Councillor Tim Swinyard made personal, non-prejudicial declarations of interest in respect of:
 - Agenda item 5 (Consideration of Cabinet Decisions) as a Swindon Town Football Club Season Ticket holder.
 - Agenda item 7 (Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session – Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment) as he is employed at Nationwide.
- Councillor Steve Weisinger made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 6 (Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session – Cabinet Member for Finance) as a Director of the Housing Company.

Councillor Bob Wright made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 7 (Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session – Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment) as his son is employed at Vets for Pets.

69. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

70. Public Question Time

Mr Roy Worman, a Haydon Wick resident, referred to the annual road safety review conducted by the Borough Council which considers data from the Police on injury collisions, and asked whether it is possible for the public to access this data and if it could be broken down to a parish level.

The Chair advised that a written answer would be provided in accordance with the Public Question Time Protocol.

Mr Worman asked a question regarding the plans to communicate with residents on extra funding for rural bus routes.

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

Mr Worman asked a further question regarding the Council's application for £25m funding through the Future High Streets Fund for the Bus Boulevard public transport interchange at Fleming Way, Kimmerfields.

Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for the Town Centre, responded at the meeting.

71. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

The Committee considered a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 20th March 2019.

Item Number 70. Budget Management Update

Resolved – That Minute 70 of the Cabinet be noted.

Item Number 71. Capital Monitoring Quarter 3 2018/19

Resolved – That Minute 71 of the Cabinet be noted.

Item Number 72. Swindon's Art and Museum collections and cultural provision

Councillor David Renard (Leader of the Council), Councillor Oliver Donachie (Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity) and Councillor Heenan responded to questions put by Councillor Des Moffatt and the Chair on the following matters:

- The work undertaken on comparing the benefits to Swindon, and the effect on footfall, from relocating the Museum.
- The £250k grant funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership, specifically allocated for developing the business case for this project.

Resolved – That Minute 72 of the Cabinet be noted.

Item Number 73. Swindon Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan 2019/20

Councillor Penny responded to questions put by Councillor Des Moffatt and the Chair on the following matters:

- The criteria used when selecting which roads will receive resurfacing treatment, with the list of works being recommended by officers to the Cabinet Member for decision.
- The extra issues considered when heavy wear has caused problems to the sub-strata of a road which regular patching does not repair.

Resolved – That Minute 73 of the Cabinet be noted.

Item Number 74. Air Quality Management Area Declaration

Councillor Cathy Martyn (Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety) responded to questions put by Councillor Des Moffatt and the Chair on the following matters:

- The improvement seen in the air quality on Cheney Manor Road / Rodbourne Road from the regular checks undertaken.
- Whether policies to improve air quality inadvertently displaces the problem, and measures taken to mitigate this.
- The difficulties in understanding the impact of air pollution on health deterioration.

Resolved – That Minute 74 of the Cabinet be noted.

Item Number 75. The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund

Councillor Heenan responded to questions put by Councillors Emma Bushell, Des Moffatt and the Chair on the following matters:

- The removal of an enclosed bus shelter from the proposals, and when this amendment took place.
- Proposals to address issues on the roundabout at Whale Bridge.
- The allocation of land within the proposals to assist the future establishment of a café / restaurant and public toilets on site.

Resolved – That Minute 75 of the Cabinet be noted.

Item Number 76. Swindon Borough Local Development Scheme Review 2019

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

- The plans for cross party involvement and participation in the review, and for an economic evaluation of the Scheme.
- The economic importance of setting aside the correct land for specific purposes in the future, particularly with the proposed reduction in government funding.

Resolved – That Minute 76 of the Cabinet be noted.

Item Number 77. References from Other Council Bodies - Health and Wellbeing Board

The Committee noted that the resolution of this Minute had been amended to read as:

Resolved – That the recommendations of the Health and Wellbeing Board, at its meeting on 13th March 2019, that (a) the proposed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, set out in Appendix 1 to the report to the Board, be endorsed and (b) that Council be recommended to approve the establishment of a Swindon Safeguarding Partnership, with the Swindon Clinical Commissioning Group and Wiltshire Police.

Resolved – That Minute 77 of the Cabinet be noted.

Item Number 78. Proposed Sale of the County Ground Stadium, Central Swindon

The Leader of the Council responded to questions put by Councillor Jim Robbins and the Chair on the following matters:

- The timeline for the Trust to purchase the stadium, and secondary plans should it be unable to raise the full amount.
- The footprint of the land that is being sold.

Resolved – That Minute 78 of the Cabinet be noted.

72. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Finance

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, was in attendance and presented to the Committee a report summarising progress and performance in respect of each of the following service areas within his portfolio of responsibility:

- Annual Budget (Revenue and Capital Programme)
- Finance Management Overview
- Medium Term Financial Plan
- Procurement
- Revenue and Benefits Services
- Welfare and Benefits Policy
- Commercial Investment Fund

In overseeing these areas, the Cabinet Member for Finance is responsible for delivering the following Pledge from the Council's Vision:

- Pledge 17. Provide early support so that Swindon residents are financially included and avoid getting into debt.

Councillor Holland and Councillor Heenan responded to questions put by Councillors Emma Faramarzi, Brian Mattock, Des Moffatt, Jim Robbins, Tim Swinyard, and the Chair on the following matters:

- Reviewing when the Housing Company advertises properties as being for sale, to help achieve improvements in terms of the number of units delivered and the financial return from them.
- The expected organisation wide improvements in HR and Finance business processes as a result of the implementation of the new HR and Finance system.

- The systems in place to ensure that any potential sites identified by the Housing Company do not end up with a large volume of houses being developed at the same time.
- The number of care leavers in receipt of a council tax exemption, and the steps taken to ensure that all those who are entitled to it are receiving it.
- How the care leaver exemption to council tax is calculated when other exemptions already apply to a household, such as the single person discount.
- The targeted work on credit unions that the council has been undertaking, and the numbers of people who have joined a credit union as a result.
- The new retail relief scheme which will operate in 2019/2020 offering small and medium sized shops, cafes, restaurants and public houses a 33.3% reduction in their rates bills, subject to state aid limits, and what is being done to promote awareness of this scheme.
- The work being undertaken to achieve the same level of savings on budgets for children's services that have been achieved on the budgets for adults services.
- The net return on the four commercial properties which have been purchased in at a cost of £17m.
- Institutional obstructions that are preventing savings being achieved.
- The cuts in funding to local authorities to support welfare needs and those in crisis and how this may lead to more claims being received than the funding available, and the work being done by the Council to help those in crisis become more financially stable.

Resolved – (1) That Councillor Holland be thanked for attending the meeting to present his performance 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.

73. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment

Councillor Penny, Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment, was in attendance and presented to the Committee a report summarising progress and performance in respect of each of the following service areas within her portfolio of responsibility:

- Waterside Depot, including Household Waste and Recycling centre (but not PPS)
- Streetsmart
- Public Toilets
- Waste Disposal/Waste Minimisation
- Street Lighting
- Street Cleaning
- Recycling
- Refuse Collection-Domestic and Trade
- Ground and Tree Maintenance and Open Spaces
- Removal of graffiti and abandoned vehicles
- Parks (Streetsmart services only)
- Playgrounds
- Maintenance of Roundabouts and non-HRA verges

- Building Services, cleaning, catering and security services
- Gullies, drainage, minor road repairs and potholes
- Public Transport, Concessionary Fares, Specialist Transport, Council Transport and Fleet Management
- Traffic and Transport Forward Planning including Local Transport Plan and implementation
- Building community capacity
- Envirocrime

In overseeing these areas, the Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment is responsible for delivering the following Priorities and Pledges of the Council's Vision:

- Pledge 3 (in part) Refresh and implement the Masterplan for Swindon Town Centre, supporting our vision that Swindon is a vibrant, modern place. We will do this through b) delivery of the bus boulevard, c) Delivering improvements to the strategic town centre transport network.
- Pledge 5. Enhance Wellington Street as a prime thoroughfare for the town.
- Pledge 13. Find new ways to engage communities and neighbourhoods to increase the cleanliness of their local areas.
- Pledge 14: Encourage Swindon residents to increase recycling and reduce their waste in line with the Council's Waste Strategy. Swindon Borough Council to reduce the use of single use plastics with the intention to stop using such plastics by 2019/20 and encourage local businesses to do the same.

Councillor Penny asked members to note that paragraph 4.3 of the report should read as 'The Streetworks Team received 6684 notices from utility providers and contractors between January and December 2018, and the team works hard to minimize these disruptions to the travelling public'.

Councillor Penny and Councillor Donachie responded to questions put by Councillors Emma Faramarzi, Brian Mattock, Des Moffatt, Jim Robbins, Tim Swinyard and the Chair on the following matters:

- The sufficiency of the three week notice period given to employers in Swindon on planned roadworks.
- The ability of the Council to influence the timings of when other statutory bodies will undertake work across the road network in Swindon, to help minimise disruption to businesses and residents.
- The excellent service provided by officers during the difficult weather conditions experienced this year.
- The high number of missed green waste collections, and the plans to improve this service.
- Pressures on the call centre at peak times, such as when green waste subscription renewals are due, and how this could be managed more effectively.
- The traffic delays being experienced by residents in the Churchward estate trying to join the Great Western Way, and the plans for addressing this issue.
- The importance of building effective relationships with businesses in the railway village as part of the Heritage Zone proposals.
- How the Council will be looking at providing real time information on roadworks as part of its digital improvements.
- The success of the modern techniques used by the Council for repairing potholes, and improving the durability of those repairs.

- The ability of Parish Council's to fund highways work, should it be devolved.
- The proposals to reduce the number of fly tipping incidents, to increase the number of prosecutions, and to improve the publicity surrounding these to act as a deterrent.
- The proposals for replacing bus corridors in Swindon with junctions that prioritise buses.
- The effect of anti-social parking on bus timetables where vehicles have been unable to pass parked cars. The Council is currently reviewing its parking plan to help address these issues, and the possible use of cameras to prevent parking on bus stops was noted, along with the number of parking permits sold by the Council.

Resolved – (1) That Councillor Penny be thanked for attending the meeting to present her performance report and for her 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.

(3) That a review of plans to address anti-social parking in the Borough be suggested for inclusion on this Committee's Work Programme for the 2019/2020 Municipal Year.

74. Work Programme 2018/2019

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Law setting out the topics for inclusion in the 2018/2019 Scrutiny Work Programme, as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 18th June 2018, and updated during the course of the Municipal Year.

Resolved – That the Work Programme for 2018/19 be noted.

75. 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.