

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 27 APRIL 2015

PRESENT:- Councillors Colin Lovell, Mary Martin (Vice-Chair), Cindy Matthews, Kevin Parry, Maureen Penny, James Robbins, Vera Tomlinson, Steve Weisinger, Robert Wright (Chair), Michael Bray, Des Moffatt and Steve Wakefield

Councillors David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet, Brian Mattock, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, Peter Watts, Russell Holland, Brian Mattock, David Renard and Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport.

Also in attendance: Councillor Peter Watts

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stan Pajak

66. 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 Steve Wakefield declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in respect of any agenda items concerning Haydon Wick Parish Council as he was a member of Haydon Wick Parish Council.

67. Public Question Time

Mr Terry Reynolds, a local resident, asked a question about how his previous question asked at the Scrutiny Committee on 23rd March 2015 in relation to illegal car parking in areas of Gorse Hill, Swindon was recorded in the minutes, in particular, the use of the word 'allegations'. The Director of Law and Democratic Services explained that allegations by the public remain as such until Council officers had verified the comments made. The Chair reminded Mr Reynolds that his question was responded to by Councillor Garry Perkins, the Cabinet Member for Economy Regeneration and Skills at the meeting on 23rd March 2015 and also passed to Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council for a further response.

Mr Richard Symonds, a local resident, asked a question relating to a recent article in the Advertiser about the number 20 bus route, comments by the Leader of the Council at a recent meeting and the long term viability of Thamesdown Transport. Councillor Dale Heenan, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport responded to Mr Symonds question.

Mr Richard Symonds, a local resident, asked a supplementary question relating to a concern that a question he asked at a previous meeting, and response received at that meeting, was not recorded in detail in the minutes.

The Director of Law and Democratic Services responded to Mr Symonds concerns and explained the Council's policy for the recording of public questions in Council minutes.

68. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2015, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

69. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 22nd March 2015.

84. Budget Management 2014/15

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance responded to questions put by Councillors James Robbins and the Chair on the following matters:

- The reason for additional places being made available at Highworth Warneford School and the possibility that it was due to a change in demand from feeder schools
- the possibility of the maintenance work at Highworth Warneford School being completed by September 2015
- The recovery of the investment made at the Waterside depot

Resolved – That Minute 84 of the Cabinet be noted

85. Council Tax Recovery and Social Inclusion

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance responded to questions and comments put by Councillors Vera Tomlinson, Cindy Matthews, James Robbins and the Chair on the following matters:

- support for the Council Tax Recovery Scheme which had been needed for a long time
- the success of the Council Tax Recovery Scheme 'Telephoning' pilot and concerns for those families that did not own a telephone
- recent publicity from the Children's Society highlighting the problems children faced when their families were subject to debt recovery measures
- the contribution of ideas to further improve the Council Tax Recovery Scheme
- the Cabinet Member to consider including referrals for health advice for 2015/16

Resolved – That Minute 85 of the Cabinet be noted

86. References from Other Council Bodies

Councillor Brian Mattock, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social care responded to questions put by the Chair on the following matters:

- When the last programme started which addressed obesity

- The results of the last programme
- Any local improvements in adult obesity

Resolved – That Minute 86 of the Cabinet be noted
87. Councillor Keith Williams

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council responded to question put by the Chair in relation to Councillor Keith Williams not seeking re-appointment to the Cabinet for the Municipal Year 2015/16.

Resolved – That Minute 87 of the Cabinet be noted

70. Averies Task Group - Terms of Reference

The Scrutiny Committee considered the report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services about the Averies Task Group Terms of Reference and membership.

The Committee were reminded that they had established a Task Group to review the Local resilience Forum's independent, multi-agency debrief of the Averies Fire incident and had agreed the Task Groups membership and Terms of Reference.

In considering the Terms of Reference at its first meeting the Task Group felt that they were too restrictive and did not give sufficient scope to allow the Task group to review the events leading up to the incident at the Marshgate Site and the condition of the site immediately prior to the incident.

The Task Group were also aware that Councillor Mark Dempsey, current member of the Group would not be standing in the local elections in May 2015 and would be leaving the Council at that time and therefore no longer a member of the Group.

The Committee noted that arrangements were being made by the Task Group for a public meeting on 26th May to hear the concerns and comments from the public who were directly affected by the incident. It was suggested that the Task Groups final report should be forwarded to the Government, especially as there had been a number of similar incidents around the country.

Resolved:

1. That the Averies Task Group revised Terms of Reference, as detailed at Appendix A to these minutes be approved
2. That the Scrutiny Committee appoint a successor to Councillor Mark Dempsey on the Averies Task Group at its first meeting after the elections in May 2015

71. Work Programme - Annual Report 2014/15

The Committee received the report of the Scrutiny Officer setting out the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee and the four Overview and Scrutiny (O/S) Committees over the past municipal year.

The Chair explained that it was hoped that the O/S Committees would avoid duplication of workload and consideration of issues. Generally this was achieved; however there were a few instances where duplication occurred and this should be avoided in the future. It was suggested that O/S Committees should be consulted earlier in the process for the development of Strategies and Policy.

Members commented generally on the work of the O/S Committees, in particular the following comments and issues were raised:

- Good work was undertaken by the O/S Committees, however, on occasions the level of officer support restricted the depth of work of the Committees
- The majority of Scrutiny reports considered by O/S Committees were of a good quality and contained the information requested, however in some instances it was difficult for the members to interpret complex data contained in reports
- Disappointment that some outside organisations were unable to attend O/S Committees
- Concern that a number of recommendations from O/S Committees were not being communicated to the appropriate bodies.

The Chair thanked the O/S Committees and officers for their hard work during the year.

Resolved:

1. That the end of year report 2014/15 be noted.
2. That future O/S Committee recommendations be highlighted for Council