

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 2015

PRESENT:- Councillors Maureen Penny (Chair), John Ballman, Oliver Donachie, Richard Hurley, Colin Lovell, Gemma McCracken, Des Moffatt, Kevin Parry, Maureen Penny, Stan Pajak, Carol Shelley, Vera Tomlinson and Chris Watts

Councillors David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet, Brian Mattock Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice-Chair of Cabinet, Cabinet Member for Adult Health and Social Care, Toby Elliott, Cabinet Member for Communities and Strategic Planning, Emma Faramarzi, Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety, Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Sustainability and transport, Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, People and Performance were in attendance.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Robert Wright (Chair)

16. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

17. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

18. Minutes

Resolved : That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th August 2015, be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to Councillor Toby Elliott's name being spelt correctly in Minute 15.

19. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 9th September 2015.

24. *The Vision for Swindon (Minute for Confirmation)*

Resolved – That Minute 24 of the Cabinet be noted.

25. *Budget Management 2015/16*

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, People and Performance, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Des Moffatt and Stan Pajak on the following matters:

- The preparation of a business plan for the Thamesdown Drive Speed Amelioration project and consideration for an increase in the budget to provide a credible business plan.
- The details for a school safety zone at Holy Cross School.

Resolved – That Minute 25 of the Cabinet be noted.

26. *Capital Monitoring Programme 2015/16*

Resolved – That Minute 26 of the Cabinet be noted.

27. *References from other Bodies*

Resolved – That Minute 27 of the Cabinet be noted.

It was agreed that information requested by individual members during the course of the Committee's consideration of the Cabinet decisions should be forwarded to the Committee Clerk for distribution to Scrutiny Committee members. (Appendix 1 refers)

20. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Communities and Strategic Planning

Councillor Toby Elliott, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Strategic Planning, was in attendance and presented a detailed report summarising progress and performance in respect of each of the following service areas within his portfolio of responsibility:

- Strategic Spatial Planning and development Framework Planning
- The New Eastern Villages
- Neighbourhood Planning
- Local Land Charges (inc. Building Control)
- Localities and Community Development
- Capacity Building (promoting and developing community-based alternatives to traditional public services)
- Parish and Town Councils / Community Council Engagement Strategies
- Community Strategy
- Community Engagement Strategies
- Sports Participation

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Elliott, in his presentation of the report, commented specifically on those elements within his portfolio which he felt had been most successful, those where a different approach might have produced better results and the lessons that might have been learned as a consequence, and the challenges he expected to be faced by the Council relation to these service areas in the coming year and beyond, particularly in relation to on-going budgetary constraints.

Following his presentation of the report, Councillor Elliott responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following topics:

- The need to engage all ward members in the forthcoming review of Swindon Borough Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which identifies smaller scale housing opportunities in the Borough.

- The reasons for the inclusion of Wiltshire Council in the commissioning of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to assess housing need, type, size and tenure in the Swindon area.
- The importance of including Parish Councils and Parish Councillors in discussions about the SHMA.
- The reasons for Swindon Circles of Support targeting people aged over 65 based in social housing and their carers and not older people living in their own homes.
- The continued success of Parish Councils delivering services traditionally provided by the Council. In addition, the possibility of other service providers taking over the delivery of services where it had been demonstrated that the level of service was starting to decline.
- The involvement of Swindon Borough Council in the Swindon half marathon.
- Insurance cover issues relating to council-supervised community volunteer “clean-up” days and the need for clear advice to be provided to all Councillors.
- Assurances about infrastructure and traffic flows during the development of the New Eastern Villages, in particular the Acorn Bridge area.
- Information and update about the work of Swindon Circles of Support and the request for the Council to work with US Cities of Service members in Philadelphia to develop a blueprint for impact volunteering to support older people.
- Concerns about the ability of GP’s to meet existing demand in Swindon and the potential impact of new developments on future demand.
- The comparisons between volunteers who help with the delivery of Council services and volunteers for other organisations within Swindon and how the Councils vision for volunteers compliments and impacts other organisations.
- The delivery by some Parish Councils of services previously provided the council and the potential impact on Council staff.
- The current and future role of Parish Councils in the consideration of planning applications by the Borough Council.
- Assessing the benefits of Swindon Circles of Support

Resolved :

- (1) That Councillor Elliott be thanked for attending the meeting to present this performance report and for his full and open responses to members’ questions and observations on the issues raised.
- (2) That it be noted that Councillor Toby Elliott would arrange for the revised advice on insurance cover relating to council-supervised community volunteer ‘Clean-Up’ days to be circulated to all Councillors.
- (3) That, with regard to members’ concerns about the ability of GP’s to meet existing demand in Swindon, and the potential impact of new developments on future demand, it be noted that Councillor Toby Elliott would arrange for the matter to be considered by Councillor Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills.
- (4) That, with regard to the current and future role of the Parish Council in the consideration of planning applications by the Borough Council, the cabinet Member to arrange for the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services, Heritage and Libraries and the Committee Services Manager to recirculate advice to

Councillors and Parish Councils about how they are able to engage with the planning process.

- (5) That information requested by members during the course of the Committee's consideration of this item be forwarded to members via the Committee Clerk (Appendix 1 refers).