

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**MONDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2015**

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Oliver Donachie, Richard Hurley, Gemma McCracken, Des Moffatt, Kevin Parry, Maureen Penny, Stan Pajak, Carol Shelley and Steve Weisinger

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills, was also in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Ballman, Colin Lovell, Vera Tomlinson and Chris Watts.

**21. Declarations of Interest**

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

**22. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

**23. Minutes**

Resolved – (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

(2) That it be noted that the Director of Law and Democratic would consult with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Strategic Planning on the matter of insurance cover for council-supervised community “Clean-Up” days in order to finalise guidance for issue to members.

(3) That, in order to address members’ concern that a number of requests for information remained outstanding, the schedule of such requests and outcomes, currently available on the Council’s website, be included as a regular agenda item for the Committee.

**24. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Economy Regeneration and Skills**

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills, 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:

- Economic Development
- Museums, including Steam
- Arts and Culture
- Community Heritage
- Regeneration
- FSL Ltd (client lead member)
- Strategic (non-operational) property portfolio
- Changes to the Borough’s boundaries to support economic development

- Adult Learning
- Tertiary Education
- Skills
- Specific responsibility for Lydiard Park project
- Country parks (securing sustainable uses)
- Parking services – charges, enforcement and strategy
- Community assets – libraries, community centres
- Cemeteries & Crematoria assets

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Perkins, in his presentation of the report, commented specifically on those elements within his portfolio that he felt had been most successful, those where he felt that 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 Perkins responded to members' specific questions and observations on following issues raised in the presentation and also in the accompanying report:

- The Cabinet Member's view of the positive and negative aspects of the use of subsidies to maintain service provision and achieve identified outcomes.
- The extent of consultation undertaken, and proposed to be undertaken, in relation to possible changes to the Borough's boundaries to support and promote economic development.
- The Cabinet Member's view as to whether the North Star development will be successfully delivered.
- The successful local Battle of Britain commemorations and proposals for the restoration and future housing of the World War One Memorial currently situated in the Old Town Hall.
- The Cabinet Member's assessment of the data presented in the report in relation to ticket sales at Swindon's museums, galleries and theatres.
- The relocation of the Tabernacle Stones and their incorporation into the Town Centre redevelopment.
- Proposals for the future of Lydiard Park, its continued use as a community asset open to the general public free of charge and the maintenance of the existing, recognisable character of the Park.
- Services commissioned by the Council and the ability of the Scrutiny Committee to review the operation and effectiveness of such arrangements within the recognised confines of commercially sensitive information and the need to maintain client side accountability.
- The timeframe for the new road connecting the south of the New Eastern Villages to the Commonhead roundabout and the bridge over the A419 to link the New Eastern Villages to the centre of Swindon.
- The Cultural and Community Asset Change Programme and the future offer at Coate Water Park.
- The role of the Trust-appointed Director of Operations for the Museum and Art Gallery, particularly in relation to the development of Swindon's cultural offer.
- The Cabinet Member's view of the reasons for the apparent disparity between educational attainment at primary and secondary education levels in Swindon and the consequent impact on the employability of local young people Not in

Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and measures that are being taken to improve employment opportunities for these young people.

- The impact on educational attainment statistics of an identified increase in the numbers of 18 year-olds dropping out of the formal education system.
- The role of the Council, in conjunction with local colleges, to encourage students to complete courses of study.
- Local employment opportunities for young people and the responsiveness local colleges in providing courses of study that offer skills relevant to local employers.
- The correlation between the timing of New Eastern Villages development and (i) construction of the new road connecting the south of the New Eastern Villages to the Commonhead roundabout, (ii) construction of the bridge over the A419 to link the New Eastern Villages to the centre of Swindon, and (iii) the introduction of the new rapid transit system, and proposals for mitigating the impact on local highway management of the traffic that will be generated by the new development.
- The Cabinet Member's, and his supporting officers', view(s) of the feasibility of providing roads and supporting infrastructure in advance of particular development triggers.
- The role of the Joint Strategic Economic Committee, the Cabinet Member's involvement in the work of that Committee, and the availability of the agenda and minutes of meetings of the Committee.
- The Town Centre Masterplan and the Council's contract with MUSE.
- The projected timeframe for completion of the Whalebridge roundabout project.
- This suggestion in the report that a concentration of employment in large companies can provide instability in the local labour market.
- The availability of specific delivery dates for the particular "Vision" pledges that fall within the Cabinet Member's portfolio of responsibility.
- The Town Centre Masterplan and the cost to Swindon residents of providing the road infrastructure necessary to support the plan.
  - the projected costs for the possible two way section of Station Road.
- Engagement with Network Rail with a view to utilising the slip road alongside Station Road (at the back of Signal Point Block) as a route for motorists to access the Railway Station and to relieve congestion in that area.
- Parking services and the use of the surplus funds generated by Penalty Charge Notices.
- The embedding of appropriate broadband provision support infrastructure as an element of regeneration projects.

Resolved – (1) That Councillor Perkins, and his support team of officers, be thanked for attending the meeting to present this performance report and for their full and open responses to members' questions and observations on the issues raised.

(2) That the Cabinet Member's agreement that, subject to the recognised confines of commercially sensitive information and the need to maintain client side accountability, future service commissioning arrangements should include a scrutiny review requirement, be noted.

(3) 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).