

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 22 AUGUST 2016

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Emma Bushell, Claire Ellis (Vice-Chair), Emma Faramarzi, Nick Martin, Gemma McCracken, Jane Milner-Barry, Des Moffatt, Maureen Penny, Chris Watts and Steve Weisinger.

Councillors David Renard (Leader of the Council), Brian Ford (Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care) and Mary Martin (Cabinet Member for Communities).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kevin Parry, Vera Tomlinson, Mark Dempsey, John Haines, Cathy Martyn and James Robbins.

15. 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.

16. Public Question Time

Mr Ian Jankinson (Chair of Blunsdon St. Andrew Parish Council) asked a public question regarding the evidence supporting a recommendation to Cabinet regarding boundaries for the proposed new Parish Council structure and in particular proposals to change the current Blunsdon St. Andrew Parish Council boundaries. Councillor Mary Martin, Cabinet Member for Communities, responded at the meeting.

Mr Ian Jankinson asked a supplementary question on the same issue. Councillor Mary Martin, Cabinet Member for Communities, responded at the meeting.

17. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 2016, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

18. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 17th August 2016.

37. *Community Governance Review*

Councillors David Renard, Leader of the Council and Mary Martin, Cabinet Member for Communities responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Emma Bushell, Emma Faramarzi, Nick Martin, Gemma McCracken, Jane Milner Barry, Des Moffatt, Maureen Penny, Chris Watts and Steve Weisinger on the following matters:

- The timetable for the creation of new Parish Councils.
- The method of distribution of the information leaflet to households and concerns that previous leaflet drops had omitted some areas of the borough.

- Issues relating to the form of words used in the information leaflet and the lack of consultation with the other political groups.
- The proposed Parish Council boundaries set out within the Cabinet papers.
- The Council's practice relating to the recording of Public Question Time.
- The use of other Council communication lists and social media feeds to promote the consultation and to advise households that an information leaflet will be distributed.
- The composition of the Parish Council transitions team, its funding and its proposed role in the process of establishing Parish Councils.
- Support available to newly created Parish Councils in the provision of services.
- The methodology and criteria for measuring the success of the project.
- The terms of office for newly elected Parish Councillors.
- Whether Borough Councillors would be appointed as Parish Councillors and what would happen should there not be enough volunteers standing for vacant Parish Councillor positions.
- Whether specific and general reserves would be identified for transfer to Parish Councils in line with functions that are transferred.
- Whether it was normal to split electoral polling districts as suggested in the under the Cabinet proposals.
- Whether the current data using high level modelling would provide sufficient data to allow an informed decision to be made.
- The financial impact in the variance in property valuation bandings and whether additional work was required to fully ascertain its implications.
- The effect on service provision should any Parish Council not agree to the transfer of specific services and whether Swindon Borough Council would need to take on such service provision as the principal authority.
- The particular financial pressures that might affect any parished area in the town centre.
- The ability of newly created Parish Councils to undertake or finance specialised services (for example the maintenance of lakes) and whether Parishes would be expected to take on responsibility for assets that were seen as having town wide benefits.
- The rationale behind the proposed boundaries for new Parish Councils set out within the Cabinet papers.
- How assets would be identified as Borough, strategic or Parish assets; the need to produce an accurate record of assets to be transferred together with their current condition and potential works required and which organisation is currently responsible for them.
- The need to identify as early as possible the likely cost of running services and maintaining assets in order to allow Parish Councils to make rational decisions on which responsibilities they may wish to undertake.
- The need for the final Cabinet report to address all the implications of transferring services to newly established or existing parishes, i.e. the impact on social deprivation or health implications, arising from the final proposals.
- The importance of allowing all Councillors and Parish Councillors access to lists of assets so they might have an input to ensure accuracy.
- The effect on current resilient communities following the creation of Parish Councils.

Resolved – That Minute 37 of the Cabinet be noted.

37. *SEQOL - Update*

The Chair advised the Committee that this item had been withdrawn from the Cabinet Agenda.

19. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Adult's Health and Social Care

Councillor Brian Ford, Cabinet Member for Adult's Health and Social Care, was in attendance and presented to the Committee a detailed report summarising progress and performance in respect of each of the following service areas within his portfolio of responsibility:

- Adult Services (older people with a learning disability, physical disabilities and mental health).
- Adult Voluntary Sector Contracts.
- Discharge duties under the Care Act 2014, Mental Health Act 1983, Mental Capacity Act 2005 and other relevant legislation.
- Adult Safeguarding Board.
- Public Health – Adults including Health Improvement and Sexual Health.
- Supported Housing.
- Learning Disability Partnership Board.
- Maintaining links between the Council and partner organisations in the Health Services.
- SEQOL Client Lead Member.
- Specific Strategic Projects.

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Ford, 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 in 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 Ford responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following matters.

- The role of carers and volunteers in relieving pressure on Council services and the social care budget.
- The need for housing and social carers to be involved in the design of any new accommodation for those in need of social care accommodation.
- The role of community navigators in placements.
- Delays in hospital discharges and work being undertaken by the Council and partner organisations to better synchronise this process (it also being noted that early discharge might affect carers' ability to undertake their role and lead to readmissions).
- The role of overview committees in influencing hospital discharge policies and practice.

- The engagement of Swindon's Members of Parliament in further promoting employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities.
- The benefits arising from work undertaken by the Council's Trading Standards team to prohibit the sale of illegal tobacco.
- The availability of reserves and one off capital monies for investment within the portfolio to mitigate demand.
- The current financial position of the portfolio and reserves available to off-set any deficit.
- The review of care package costs.
- Financial support available for voluntary or charitable organisations, either directly or through Central Government fund dispersal, which help mitigate social care demand.
- Work to address health inequalities through community support and where possible ensure a single point of access to services.
- The future of Enterprise Works including pilot projects for housing and work under the SEQOL contract.
- The need to ensure that programmes and/or projects are given enough time to prove their effectiveness.
- The potential of cross training to help address recruitment issues at the Great Western Hospitals and GP surgeries within the town.
- The need to examine culture and innovative messages and programmes to reduce level of obesity within the Borough.
- The use of dementia shaped atlas to help inform decision making.
- Staff training to ensure that allegations of abuse are not lost within the system and also the need to maintain appropriate oversight.
- Addressing quality issues regarding work with the CCG and ensuring transparency in relation to work and training.
- Concerns over GP recruitment in Swindon and measures such as access appropriate housing that might make Swindon a more attractive town to work in.
- The need to re-examine the availability of key worker housing.
- The possible subsidy of Swindon Dial-a-Ride by the Social Care Budget to improve mobility and reduce service pressures elsewhere within the portfolio.
- The use of the Public Health budget to promote the health benefits of smoking patches and vapours.
- The provision of better information as to the causes of, and links between, obesity and diabetes.

Resolved – (1) That Councillor Ford 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 the information requested by Members during the course of the Committee's consideration of this item be forwarded to Members via the Committee Officer.

20. Work Programme 2016/17

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services setting out the topics for inclusion in the 2016/17 Scrutiny Work Programme as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 20th June 2016.

Resolved – (1) That the draft work programme 2016/17 be noted.

21. 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 outstanding issues and member requests for information be noted.