

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2016**

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Emma Bushell, Claire Ellis (Vice-Chair), Emma Faramarzi, Gemma McCracken, Cathy Martyn, Des Moffatt, James Robbins, Vera Tomlinson, Chris Watts, Peter Watts and Steve Weisinger

Councillors David Renard (Leader of the Council), Russell Holland (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services), Toby Elliott (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning), Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Children's Services), Brian Ford (Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care), Mary Martin (Cabinet Member for Communities) and Garry Perkins (Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration, and Skills)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Dempsey and Kevin Parry.

### **37. 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 Gemma McCracken made a prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 4 – Consideration of Cabinet Decisions – Minute 61 – Swindon Town Centre Property Acquisition and Disposal as she rents a property in the Town Centre. Councillor McCracken left the meeting during the consideration of this matter.

### **38. Public Question Time**

Mr Cockbill, a local resident, asked a question regarding the financial aspects of the Community Governance Review and the transfer of services to Parish Councils. Councillor Renard, Leader of the Council, responded at the meeting and also agreed to provide a written response in 10 working days.

Mr Cockbill asked a supplementary question about Electoral Services. The Director of Law and Democratic Services agreed to investigate the issue raised and provide Mr Cockbill with a response.

### **39. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions**

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

#### **57. 2016-17 Budget Management, 2017-18 Draft Budget and Medium term Resourcing Plan**

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Des Moffatt, Gemma McCracken, Jim Robbins and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- The financial stability of Swindon Borough Council compared to other Local Authorities.
- The proposed increase in rates in 2017/18 for allotments and the annual collection of green waste.
- The implications of the transfer of garages from the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund.
- The consultation on the removal of Council Tax discount for empty and unfurnished properties.
- The financial position of Public Power Solutions and the future challenges due to the Brexit vote.

Resolved – That Minute 57 of the Cabinet be noted.

#### 58. *Community Governance Review*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council, and Mary Martin, Cabinet Member for Communities, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Des Moffatt, Vera Tomlinson, Jim Robbins, Chris Watts and Gemma McCracken on the following matters:

- The precept for Band D properties and how this would be calculated.
- The consequences of boundary changes and the impact on the number of Band D properties and number of residents in a particular parished / unparished area.
- The proposed new parishes and suggestion that 5 ward members make up the membership of the Shadow Parish Councils.
- The process for distributing the transitional funding of £3m between the Parish Councils.
- The need for further consultation on the proposed changes to the boundary through the Abbey Meads Village.
- The transfer of assets and the possibility of condition surveys being made available to Parish Councils.
- The possibility of Parish Council's making a charge for the use of its building by the Local Authority.
- How unexpected costs to parish Council's would be funded.

Resolved – That Minute 58 of the Cabinet be noted.

#### 59. *Free School Bids - Update*

Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Jim Robbins and Des Moffatt on the following matters:

- The new primary school at Abbey Farm and details about one of the applicants bidding for the school.
- The use of Section 106 funding along with other funding streams to support Free Schools.
- The infrastructure for north Swindon developments and the impact of Section 106 funding.

- The establishment of alternative educational provision for secondary aged children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties.
- The possibility of applications being received for schools that were not free schools.

Resolved – That Minute 59 of the Cabinet be noted.

*60. Chapel Farm and Other Swindon Solar Schemes*

Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Transport, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Vera Tomlinson, Jim Robbins and Cathy Martyn on the following matters:

- The availability of shares for the Chapel Farm Solar Scheme and cost.
- The non-viability of the A419 Solar Sound Barrier and potential to lobby the Government.
- The potential for the sound barrier to be funded through Solar Farms and other energy storage schemes.
- The use of derelict land in the vicinity of the A419 for a Solar farm to fund a barrier for the A419.
- The operation of Community Interest Companies in relation to Solar Farms.

Resolved – That Minute 60 of the Cabinet be noted.

*61. Swindon Town Centre Property Acquisition and Disposal*

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Jim Robbins on the following matters:

- The funding for the redevelopment of town centre sites and future planning applications.
- The potential for future land swaps.
- The location of an iconic bridge for the North Star development.

Resolved – That Minute 61 of the Cabinet be noted.

**40. 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 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

The Chair reported that the Question and Answer Session with Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Streetsmart, due to be considered at this meeting had been rescheduled for 13<sup>th</sup> February 2017 as Councillor Williams was out of the country on business. The Chair invited officers to consider the use of video links in these circumstances in the future. The Chair also highlighted the opportunity for Members to be involved in pre-Scrutiny due to the delay in the consideration of the report.

Councillor Moffatt expressed a concern about the progress and sustainability of the proposed regional leisure destination at North Star and asked for representatives of the external company and council officers to update this Committee at a future meeting.

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

(2) That officers consider the benefits of using video link and how its use could be applied for future council meetings.

(3) That officers and representatives of Moiri be invited to give an update on the progress and sustainability of the proposed regional leisure destination at North Star to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

#### **41. 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.

Councillor McCracken referred to the requirement that responses to public questions be received within the ten day deadline and that these be circulated to Scrutiny Committee members.

Resolved – (1) That the report on the status of outstanding issues and member requests for information be noted.

(2) That the requirement for responses to public questions be received within the ten day deadline and circulated to Scrutiny Committee members be noted.