

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2016

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Emma Bushell, Mark Dempsey, Claire Ellis (Vice-Chair), Emma Faramarzi, Cathy Martyn, Gemma McCracken, Des Moffatt, Kevin Parry, James Robbins, Vera Tomlinson, Chris 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), Oliver Donachie (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness), Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Children's Services), Mary Martin (Cabinet Member for Communities) and Keith Williams (Cabinet Member for StreetSmart, Highways and Transport)

42. 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 Keith Williams made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 5 Consideration of Cabinet Decisions – Minute 66 – Outcomes of the Local Government Association Peer Review, as his brother was an employee of Capita.

Councillor Chris Watts made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 5 Consideration of Cabinet Decisions – Minute 67 – Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Library Service, as he was Chair of the new shadow Central Swindon South Parish.

Councillor Steve Weisinger made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 5 Consideration of Cabinet Decisions – Minute 67 – Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Library Service, as he was the Chair of the new Shadow Blunsdon St. Andrew Parish.

Councillor Des Moffatt made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 5 Consideration of Cabinet Decisions – Minute 67 – Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Library Service, as he was the Chair of the new Shadow Central Swindon North Parish.

Councillor Gemma McCracken made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 5 Consideration of Cabinet Decisions – Minute 70 – Commercial Investment Strategy, as she rents a commercial unit in the Town Centre with her husband.

Councillor Kevin Parry made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 5 Consideration of Cabinet Decisions – Minute 67 – Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Library Service, as he was a Nythe Parish

Councillor and a Trustee of Covingham Parish Council.

43. Public Question Time

Mr Brian Cockbill, a local resident, asked a question about a response he had received to a question asked at the Cabinet meeting held on 7th December 2016. The Cabinet Member for Communities agreed to provide a written response.

Mr Cockbill, asked an additional question about the vacancies created at Nythe Parish Council. The Director of Law and Democratic Services responded at the meeting and the Cabinet member for Communities agreed to provide additional information, via a written response.

Mrs Shirley Burnham, a local resident, had submitted a written question about the library service. As Mrs Burnham was not present, the Chair requested she be provided with a written response.

Mr Keith Smith, a local resident representing the Highworth Community Partnership Group, asked a question about the libraries strategy. The Cabinet Member for Communities responded to the question at the meeting.

Mr Smith, asked a supplementary question about the opening hours of libraries. The Cabinet Member for Communities agreed to provide a written response.

44. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 10th October and 24th October 2016, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

45. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 7th December 2016.

65. 2016-17 Budget Management, 2017-18 Draft Budget

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice-Chair of Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors James Robbins, Des Moffatt, Mark Dempsey, Vera Tomlinson and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- Funding available in the Youth Service Provision budget.
- Potential to raise additional income for Adult Social care through an increase in Council Tax.
- Opportunities to develop land.
- Proposals for charging employees to use car parks during their working day.
- Savings achieved by closing children's centres.
- The number of children in care.
- Reduction in Revenue Support Grant since 2010.
- The length of time that a car parking season ticket is valid at Stanton Country Park.

- Reasons for the School Improvement Fund and whether the Fund was adequate.
- The extension of the loan to Public Power Solutions (PPS)
- The intended use of hay bales by PPS if they were not fit for purpose.
- The Environment Agency and the need to seek costs.
- Format of Diversity Impact Assessments.

Resolved – That Minute 65 of the Cabinet be noted.

66. *Outcomes of the Local Government Association Peer Review*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors James Robbins, Emma Faramarzi, Mark Dempsey and Chris Watts, on the following matters:

- Timescales and delivery of the digitalisation of services.
- The role of One Swindon and how to realise town centre ambitions.
- Reasons to engage further with communities, seeking views and opinions in a structured manner.
- Peer Review process and interviews with Councillors and Staff.
- Use of clear resourcing plans when choosing development partners for regeneration programmes.

Resolved – That Minute 66 of the Cabinet be noted.

67. *Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Library Service*

Councillor Mary Martin, Cabinet Member for Communities, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors James Robbins, Des Moffatt, Mark Dempsey, Chris Watts, Steve Weisinger, Gemma McCracken and Kevin Parry on the following matters:

- Options available to secure a sustainable future for Swindon Libraries.
- Timescales and delivery of the Library Strategy.
- Feasibility of community groups adopting a trust model for the operation of libraries.
- Concern at the timescales for new Parish Councils to adopt a library service and also the need to prepare and deliver their precept by the end of January 2017.
- Process for establishing a community run library.
- Potential for a commercial enterprise to operate within a library building and the impact on the payment of non-domestic rates.
- Accuracy of Diversity Impact Assessments.
- The mechanism for transitional funding to help Parish Councils retain community libraries.
- Covingham Parish Council's decision to investigate the trust model of operating a community library.
- The assessment of long term costs and conclusions drawn.

- The financial framework for the funding of the core provision, transitional funding and staffing hours.
- Flexibility in the structure and delivery of a library service.
- The potential for new Parish Councils to retain precept funding for libraries in their reserves until a library service is provided.
- The outcomes of the meeting between the Cabinet Member and the Libraries Minister.
- Transitional support being offered to Parish Councils following the transfer of the libraries.
- Transitional funding available for groups interested in operating a library.
- The impact of transferring a library building to a Parish who no longer wished to share the building with a particular community group.

Resolved – That Minute 67 of the Cabinet be noted.

68. Affordable Housing Development Programme

Councillor Oliver Donachie, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homlessness, responded to questions put by the Chair on the following matters:

- The transfer of garages to private users.
- The use of redundant garage sites for social housing.

Resolved – That Minute 68 of the Cabinet be noted.

69. Changes to Household Waste Recycling Centre and recycling Bring Sites

Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Streetsmart, Highways and Transport, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Des Moffatt, Mark Dempsey, Vera Tomlinson, Chris Watts and Emma Faramarzi on the following matters:

- Confirmation that Parish Councils would not be charged for fly tipping occurrences within their parish boundaries.
- Waste collection charges for residents living in social housing.
- The weighing of waste materials received at recycling sites.
- The publication of green waste savings to the Council.
- The storage of RDF waste at Waterside.
- Restrictions and controls on commercial waste and household waste brought to the Household Waste recycling Centre, and potential for increased fly tipping.
- The potential use of the 'Buy With Confidence' website listing reputable waste disposal companies.
- Current levels of fly tipping.
- The numbers of out of town users of the Waste Recycling facility.

Resolved – That Minute 69 of the Cabinet be noted.

70. Commercial Investment Strategy (Minute for Confirmation by Full Council)

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice-Chair of Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Des Moffatt and Cathy Martyn on the following matters:

- Concern about oversight, the safeguards in place to ensure security of the Investment Strategy.
- The delivery of income generating initiatives.
- The need for additional assurances for members in relation to the assessment process and investment criteria.
- The impact on the investment programme due to delays in the process.

Resolved - That it be noted that:

- (a) Minute 70 of the Cabinet is a Minute for Confirmation by the Full Council.
- (b) The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services would discuss with Councillor Des Moffatt the wording of any amendment to that minute.
- (c) In the event of any property acquisition being considered prior to the next Full Council meeting, and its determination of the minute referred to in (b) above, the Cabinet Member agreed that such acquisition would be dealt with under the Cabinet Member Decision Notice process.
- (d) The September Cabinet Minute 42(5) noted by full council allows the spend of £15m of the proposed £50m funding, this agreed spend is to be authorised by decision note.

71. Capital Monitoring Quarter 2 2016/17

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice-Chair of Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, responded to question put by Councillor James Robbins about the overspend on the Bruce Street Bridges project.

Resolved – That Minute 71 of the Cabinet be noted.

72. Mid-Year Treasury Performance 2016-17

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice-Chair of Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, responded to questions put by Councillors Des Moffatt and Mark Dempsey on the following matters:

- The Council's debt liability and how it would be repaid.
- How the Council's debt liability compared to other Local Authorities.

Resolved – That Minute 72 of the Cabinet be noted.

73. Polling District and Places Review

Resolved – That Minute 73 of the Cabinet be noted.

74. School Organisational Changes for September 2017

Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Vera Tomlinson, Mark Dempsey, James Robbins and Gemma McCracken on the following matters:

- The additional budget requirement to fund proposals to lower the age range and increase the admission numbers across seven schools in Swindon.
- The Council's response to concerns raised by Ofsted about performance standards in Swindon schools.
- The potential impact of the concerns raised by Ofsted on the number of children admitted to each Swindon school.
- The targeted visits of residential areas made by academies in relation to the expansion of the early year's provision.
- The attendance of a Secondary Head representative at the Children's' Health, Social Care and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved – That Minute 74 of the Cabinet be noted.

75. Renewable Investment

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Mark Dempsey on the following matters:

- The outcomes of proposals for solar panels alongside the M4 and A419, and the installation of solar panels on dwellings owned by the Council.
- The use of derelict land in the vicinity of Dean Street and Newburn Crescent for a solar farm to fund a sound barrier on the A419.

Resolved – That Minute 75 of the Cabinet be noted.

76. Changes to Arrangements for Appointment of an External Auditor

Resolved – That Minute 76 of the Cabinet be noted.

77. Insurance for Community Groups

Councillor Mary Martin, Cabinet Member for Communities, responded to questions put by the Chair about the impact on schools and community groups in obtaining Public Liability Insurance for providing voluntary litter collection services to the community.

Resolved – That Minute 77 of the Cabinet be noted.

46. Leader of the Council Update

Resolved – That the Leader of the Council Update report be deferred until 9th January 2017.

47. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for

Communities

Resolved – That the Cabinet Member for Communities report be deferred until 9th January 2017.

48. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Highways and Transport

The Chair advised the Committee that following the resignation of Councillor Heenan as the Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Highways and Transport, this report had been withdrawn. The Committee noted that the Leader of the Council had reassigned the Cabinet Portfolio's responsibilities as follows:

- Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability – Councillor Elliott
- Cabinet Member StreetSmart, Highways, and Transport – Councillor Williams

The Chair confirmed that the Cabinet Member for Streetsmart, Highways and Transport would now include issues relating to Highways and Transport in his Question and Answer Session due to be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 13th February 2017.

Resolved – That the reassigned Cabinet responsibilities be noted, and the Committee's Work Programme be updated accordingly.

49. 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 – That the work programme 2016/17 be noted and updated to reflect the changes detailed in minute 48 above.

50. 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 of outstanding issues and member requests for information be noted.