

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2017**

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Claire Ellis (Vice-Chair), Emma Faramarzi, Cathy Martyn, Gemma McCracken, Des Moffatt, James Robbins, Vera Tomlinson, Chris Watts, Timothy Swinyard, Teresa Page, Maureen Penny and Steve Allsopp

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Emma Bushell, Mark Dempsey and Kevin Parry

### **63. 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.

### **64. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions submitted or asked during the meeting.

### **65. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **66. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions**

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

#### *86. Budget 2017/18 and Beyond*

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council and Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice Chair of the Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Steve Allsopp, Des Moffatt, Jim Robbins and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- Financial assistance available to schools within the Borough that might be under financial pressure following their Central Government financial settlement.
- The inclusion of the “Old Swindon Special Expenses” within the 2017/18 Council Budget.
- The sustainability of the Council budget and level of financial reserves held by the Council in the proposed 2017/18 Budget.
- The percentage increase in Council Tax proposed for the Financial Year, 2017/18.

- The rationale for different areas of the Borough paying different levels of Council Tax and having different percentage increases in Council Tax.
- The Central Government financial settlement for the Council.
- Additional funding for adult social care through monies seconded from the New Homes Bonus scheme and through allowing Council's to raise Council Tax by an extra 3%.
- The need to lobby Central Government to receive the same reported financial settlement offered to Surrey County Council.
- Representations made to Central Government in regard to the Council's financial settlement.

Resolved – That it be noted that Minute 86 of the Cabinet is a Minute for Confirmation by the Full Council.

#### 87. Capital Programme 2017/18

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

- The current budget for maintain Council buildings, and in particular, those being transferred to parish councils.
- The need to ensure all parish councils are invited to discussions relating to the transfer of assets from this Council to parish councils.

(Councillor Tim Swinyard made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda this item in his capacity as a Trustee of Roughmoor Community Centre.)

Resolved – That it be noted that Minute 87 of the Cabinet is a Minute for Confirmation by the Full Council.

#### 88. Treasury Strategy Statement 2017/18

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice Chair of the Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services responded to questions put by the Chair on the risk to the Treasury management Strategy should Government policies change.

Resolved – That it be noted that Minute 88 of the Cabinet is a Minute for Confirmation by the Full Council.

#### 89. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – Rents and Charges 2017/18

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice Chair of the Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Steve Allsopp on the following matters:

- Pressures on the Housing Revenue Account arising from changes in the private rent sector.

- The benefits of purchasing additional private properties for inclusion within the Housing Revenue Account portfolio.
- The different payback period for building private, affordable and social housing stock.
- The potential for revenue generation through the Council building houses which could help off-set rises in the cost of adult social care provision.
- The payback period associated with the cost of building affordable or social housing.

Resolved – That it be noted that Minute 88 of the Cabinet is a Minute for Confirmation by the Full Council.

#### 90. School Admission Arrangements 2018/19

Resolved - That Minute 90 of the Cabinet be noted.

#### 91. Youth Engagement Worker Provision Review

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Steve Allsopp, Claire Ellis, Emma Famarzi and Gemma McCracken on the following matters:

- The effect of engagement with young people with difficulties arising from the provision review.
- The use of community centres as a safe environment for people with depression or other medical issues.
- The need to review the budget provision for facility support.
- The use of new technology, including social media, to reach young people requiring Council services.
- Residents' Groups set up within the Borough to offer support to those in need of assistance.
- The types of assistance available to young people and adults to support themselves.

Resolved - That Minute 90 of the Cabinet be noted.

#### 92. Updated Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention Strategy

The Leader of the Council responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Cathy Martyn and Jim Robbins on the following matters:

- The importance that all Councillors to attend Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention training.
- The Council's current policy is respect of providing children in care with taxis, where appropriate, to ensure their safety.
- The appearance of "pop-up brothels" within the Borough and work to ensure young people were not exploited through these.

Resolved – That it be noted that Minute 92 of the Cabinet is a Minute for Confirmation by the Full Council.

93. Swindon Pay Policy Statement 2017

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

- The rationale employed by the Council in determining gaps between pay bands.
- The Council's consideration of work undertaken by the Equality Trust with regard to pay structures.
- The need for the Council to be pro-active in identifying potential inequalities to prevent legal action being taken against it.
- The explanation of the reasons for the lowest level of employee pay identified within the report.

Resolved – That it be noted that Minute 92 of the Cabinet is a Minute for Confirmation by the Full Council.

94. Libraries Strategy – Alternative Delivery Models

The Leader of the Council responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Des Moffatt, Maureen Penny, Jim Robbins and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- The current work being undertaken between the Council and parish councils to preserve non-core libraries within the Borough.
- The timetable for interested groups to submit expressions of interest and business plans for running non-core libraries within the Borough.
- The alternative delivery models being considered for non-core libraries within the Borough.
- The potential use of a trust to run non-core libraries and whether such an option would require additional consultation.
- The need for closer liaison between the Council and parish councils to ensure money was available within parish precepts for additional hours or services within non-core libraries.
- The need for clear service level agreements to be provided as soon as possible to parish councils or other interested parties for running non-core libraries.

Resolved - That Minute 94 of the Cabinet be noted.

95. Commercial Investment Strategy – Governance Arrangements

Resolved - That Minute 95 of the Cabinet be noted.

96. Reference from Other Council Bodies: Health and Wellbeing Board

Councillor Brian Ford, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, responded to questions put by the Chair on the inclusion of "Active Steps" within the Health Watch Event to be held on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

Resolved - That Minute 96 of the Cabinet be noted.

97. Swindon Housing Development

Resolved – It was noted that this item had been withdrawn from consideration by the Cabinet.

98. Wichelstowe District Centre

Councillor Toby Elliott, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Steve Allsopp, Maureen Penny and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- The degree of development activity currently being undertaken in Wichelstowe.
- The current process to approving development and whether this could be streamlined.
- The role of Cabinet Member Advisory Groups in promoting development within Wichelstowe.
- The need for the diversification of property development in Wichelstowe.
- The need to ensure the quality of development undertaken within Wichelstowe.
- The period of time between approval for development and completion within the Wichelstowe development.

Resolved - That Minute 98 of the Cabinet be noted.

99. Town Centre and Housing Delivery – Business Case

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Des Moffatt on the following matter:

- Changes to the design of the layout of the development named in the report and how this might affect development.
- The development mix and materials used during development.
- The role of the development as part of the wider Master Plan.
- The current status of the Tabernacle stones.

Resolved - That Minute 99 of the Cabinet be noted.

**67. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness**

Councillor Oliver Donachie, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, 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:

- Allocations and Advice Services
- Empty Homes
- Estate and Tenancy Management

- Housing Enabling and Strategic Services
- Homeline Services
- Homelessness
- Housing Right to Buy/Sales Services
- Neighbourhood Wardens
- Private Sector Housing Renovation Grants
- Repair and Improvements to Council Housing Stock
- Sheltered Accommodation
- Police Authority/Police and Crime Commissioner liaison
- Community Safety Partnership including young offenders and reducing anti-social behaviour
- Environmental and Public Protection Services Gypsies, Travellers and Unauthorised Encampments
- Reducing Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse
- Control Room Operations
- Principal Member for consultation on Public Space Protection Orders
- Licensing
- Community Safety Partnership including young offenders and reducing anti-social behaviour
- Reducing Domestic Violence and Abuse

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Donachie, 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.

Councillor Donachie expressed his recognition of the work undertaken by the tenant and leaseholder representatives and Councillors with respect to the valuable work undertaken by the Housing Advisory Forum.

Following his introduction of the report, Councillor Donachie responded to the observations and questions from the Chair and Councillors Steve Allsopp, Claire Ellis, Emma Famarzi, Gemma McCracken, Teresa Page, Maureen Penny, Jim Robbins, Tim Swinyard, Chris Watts and Keith Williams on the following issues:

- The enforcement of the Public Spaces Protection Order to cover the control of dogs in Lydiard Park.
- The review of the Public Spaces Protection Order to cover the control of dogs to ascertain whether it may be applied Borough wide.
- Assistance available from the Council to tenants who are the victim of revenge evictions by landlords.
- Work currently being undertaken in liaison with the Community Safety Partnership to close pop up brothels within the Borough.
- The current Housing Maintenance contract and the replacement double glazing for Old Age Pension Bungalows in Highworth as part of the contract.
- The enforcement of the use of dog leads within public areas and the acceptable definition of such leads.

- The provision of dog waste bins and the potential use of bye-laws to combat dog fouling within the Borough.
- Work to reduce the sale and use of legal highs within the Borough.
- The award of food hygiene stars to premises within the Borough and the current inability of the Council to enforce their display in a public area on the premises.
- The work currently being undertaken to extend the scheme for licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation in the Borough.
- The work currently being undertaken to maintain the Decent Homes Standard in respect of Council housing.
- The evaluation of the use of technology as part of housing provision for those residents requiring adult social care.
- Representations made by the Cabinet Member to the Housing Minister in respect of the Government policy to reduce social housing rents by one percent annually and the effect this has on the Council's Housing Revenue Account Budget.
- The current status of the air within the Borough and work to ensure pollution doesn't exceed legislated standards.
- Representations to Government in respect of the Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence Bill 2016/17.

Resolved – That Councillor Donachie be thanked for attending the meeting to present his performance report and for his full and open responses to members' questions and observations on the issues raised.

#### **68. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Streetsmart**

Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for StreetSmart, Highways and Transport, 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:

- Strategic Transport Network;
- Traffic and Transport Forward Planning (including Local Transport Plan and Implementation of Local Transport Plan);
- Highways Maintenance and Repair Works;
- Street Lighting;
- Public Transport (including Concessionary Fares, Specialist Transport, Council Transport and Fleet Management);
- Streetsmart
- Waste Disposal / Waste Minimisation and Recycling
- Refuse Collection and Street Cleaning
- Grounds, Open Spaces, Parks, Verge and Tree Maintenance
- Envirocrime, Graffiti and Abandoned Vehicles
- Public Toilets, Cemeteries and Crematoria Assets, Waterside Depot Management;
- Building & Engineering;
- Building Services, cleaning, catering & security services; and
- IT Strategy, Delivery and Digital by Design

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Williams, 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 introduction of the report, Councillor Williams responded to the observations and questions from the Chair and Councillors Steve Allsopp, Cathy Martyn, Gemma McCracken, Des Moffatt, Teresa Page, Maureen Penny, Jim Robbins and Chris Watts on the following issues:

- The redesign of the Bruce Street Bridges road layout and liaison with utility companies regarding any proposals.
- Budget savings proposed within his portfolio and in particular under Theme 2 “Going Local” identified within the Cabinet Papers.
- The devolution of services to parish councils as part of the Council’s budget proposals.
- The scope of proposed services to be transferred to parish councils.
- The Council’s response to parish council concerns regarding service transfers and funding.
- Recent work undertaken on the Greenbridge Roundabout and road layout.
- Infrastructure work to support and facilitate the Eastern Villages expansion and the budgets available to fund this work.
- Work undertaken, including prosecutions, by the Enviro Crime team to combat fly tipping.
- The responsibilities, in the new Municipal Year, of the Council and parish councils in preventing fly tipping and in clearance of fly-tipping where necessary.
- The criteria for prioritising the resurfacing and repair of roads within the Borough.
- The transfer of responsibility for grass cutting to parish councils.
- Future plans for the redevelopment of Fleming Way road.

Resolved – That Councillor Williams be thanked for attending the meeting to present his performance report and for his full and open responses to members’ questions and observations on the issues raised.

(Councillor Tim Swinyard made a personal and prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of the Committee’s consideration of this item as he was employed by Halcrow.)

(Councillor Keith Williams made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of the Committee’s consideration of this item as his brother was employed by Capita.)

## **69. 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 requested that the Committee Officer arrange a meeting of the Chair and members of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees prior to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting to discuss the Committee's workloads.

Resolved – That the work programme 2016/17 be noted.

**70. 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.