

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 19 JUNE 2017

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Ray Ballman, Mark Dempsey, Claire Ellis, Emma Faramarzi (Vice-Chair), Dale Heenan, Kevin Parry, James Robbins, Gary Sumner, Timothy Swinyard, Vera Tomlinson and Chris Watts

Councillors David Renard (Leader of the Council), Toby Elliott (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability) and Cathy Martyn (Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Des Moffatt

1. 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 Emma Faramarzi made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 5 (11. Swindon Housing Company Governance Arrangements) in her capacity as a Shareholder Panel member, referred to in the report.

2. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

3. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd May 2017, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. Consideration of Cabinet and Cabinet Panel on School Organisation Decisions

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 14th June 2017.

a) Cabinet Minutes – 14th June 2017

5. *Budget Management 2016/17*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Emma Faramarzi, Dale Heenan, Gary Sumner and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- Involvement of the public and non-Cabinet Councillors in the budget process.
- Budget consultation process.
- Inclusion of Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the budget process and policy development.
- The potential use of Cabinet Member Advisory Groups for budget discussions.

- Involvement of the Chamber of Commerce and other umbrella organisations in budget discussions.
- Process of engaging and initiating discussions with residents and businesses.
- Consideration of alternative methods of contacting residents and business.

Resolved – That Minute 5 of the Cabinet be noted.

6. *Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan*

Councillor Cathy Martyn, Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Ray Ballman, Mark Dempsey, Claire Ellis, Emma Faramarzi, Dale Heenan, James Robbins, Gary Sumner and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) debt interest and annual payments.
- Valuation of HRA stock.
- Shortfall in housing stock investment and recent events in London.
- Installation of sprinkler systems in the housing stock of the Borough.
- The status of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Investigations into the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, London and subsequent Government report.
- The safety of Swindon residents living in Council housing properties.
- Future review of the HRA Medium Term Financial Plan report contents.
- Disparities between the Housing funding period and the Business Plan period.
- Additional funding from Government for Social Housing safety.

Resolved – (1) That Minute 6 of the Cabinet be noted.

(2) That the Adult's Health, Adult's Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider, at its meeting on 19th September 2017, an interim report on the funding available to provide appropriate fire safety standards for residents of Council homes, in light of the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, London.

(3) That the Adult's Health, Adult's Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments and recommendations be considered by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting to be held in October 2017.

7. *Capital Monitoring Outturn 2016/17*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Dale Heenan and James Robbins on the following matters:

- Report printing issues.
- Review of Capital Budget Monitoring 2016/17 Schemes.
- The current status of the Tabernacle Stones.

Resolved – That Minute 7 of the Cabinet be noted.

8. *Treasury Management Performance 2016/17*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, responded to a question put by Councillor Mark Dempsey about debt repayments and periods of repayment.

Resolved – That Minute 8 of the Cabinet be noted.

9. *Swindon Dial a Ride Service Options*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Dale Heenan and James Robbins on the following matters:

- Users of the Dial a Ride service and potential alternative providers of the service.
- The rising number of users and future needs of the service.
- Performance data provided by Dial a Ride.
- The development of alternative new income streams for the Dial a Ride service
- Potential future use of bus lanes and bus gates by Dial a Ride.

Resolved – That Minute 9 of the Cabinet be noted.

10. *School Place Planning – Tadpole Garden Village*

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

- Process of delivering and funding new school provision.
- Timescales for identifying future school place needs.
- Financial provision for building new schools.

Resolved – That Minute 10 of the Cabinet be noted.

11. *Swindon Housing Company Governance Arrangements*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, responded to a question put by Councillor James Robbins about the membership of the Housing Company Board of Directors.

Resolved – That Minute 11 of the Cabinet be noted.

12. *Councillors Allowances 2018/19 – Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel*

Resolved – That Minute 12 of the Cabinet be noted.

13. *Condolences*

Resolved – That the Leaders comments be noted.

14. *Wichelstowe Parcels 2 and 3*

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

- Infrastructure costs of the project.
- Development land and associated enhanced land values.
- Circulation of design briefs for Wichelstowe Parcels 2 and 3 to all members.
- Successful developments enabling further investment and development success.
- Progress with the development of new homes and meeting targets.

Resolved – That Minute 14 of the Cabinet be noted.

b) Cabinet Panel on School Organisation Minutes – 14th June 2017

5. *Proposal to Lower the Age Range at Westrop Primary School from 4 to 11 years to 2 to 11 years from September 2017*

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

- The differences between a pre-school play group and a nursery.
- The curriculums followed by the pre-school play group and nursery and potential for duplication.
- Capacity of the pre-school playgroup to provide 30 hours of early year's provision.
- Current playgroup educational standards.
- Outcomes of the public consultation.

Resolved – That Minute 5 of the Cabinet Panel on School Organisation be noted.

5. Leader of the Council: Annual Report

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, attended this first meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2017/18, to report to the Committee on (a) the Authority's achievements in 2016/17 and (b) the Administration's priorities for the 2017/18 Municipal Year.

The Leader highlighted the following achievements during 2016/17, challenges for 2017/18 and the progress being made on the Council's four priorities for 2017/18:

- The successful implementation of the Community Governance Review.
- Sale of Thamesdown Transport Ltd to Go South Coast, part of the GoAhead Group.
- The redevelopment of Sussex Square.
- Raising education standards and attainment.
- Building new homes across the Borough

- Working with Forward Swindon Ltd in regenerating the Town Centre
- Infrastructure improvements such as the new bus station, supported by Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership funding.
- Sustainable uses of heritage buildings in Swindon.
- New Swindon Museum and Art Gallery.
- Continued pressures on Council finances following the continual rise for personal care services.
- Expansion of the Council commercial activities to provide new sources of income and to help support the local economy.
- Pledges
 - 1 – Improve infrastructure and housing to support a growing, low-carbon economy.
 - 2 – Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places.
 - 3 – Ensure clean and safe streets and improve our public spaces and local culture.
 - 4 – Help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults.

The Leader responded to a number of questions asked by Members on the following:

- Progress on the Council's four Priorities.
- Lottery funding for works on the Mechanics Trust building.
- The challenges and the successes of 2016/17.
- Land supply for strategic projects.
- Housing demand and location of future housing developments.
- Digitisation of services and the reporting of missed waste collections.
- Funding, marketing, consultation and support for the new Swindon Museum and Art Gallery project.
- Solar barriers alongside M4.
- Progress on major developments in Swindon and lessons learnt from the past to deliver projects in the future.
- The successful delivery of projects in comparable towns.
- The delivery of development projects by Forward Swindon Ltd, in particular the Fleming Way area of the town centre.
- Potential to review traffic arrangements around the town centre and the masterplan.
- Improving land values by creating linkages to potential development areas.
- Consideration of housing development at the North Star leisure site.

Resolved – (1) That Councillor Renard, the Leader of the Council, be thanked for his informative presentation of his half-year update report and for his full and open responses to members' questions on the issues raised.

(2) That information requested by members during the course of the Committee's consideration of this item be forwarded to them via the Committee Clerk.

6. **Work Programme 2017/18**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services setting out the topics for inclusion in the 2017/18 Scrutiny Work Programme.

The Chair reminded the Committee that discussions had taken place about the development of the Scrutiny process and the introduction of a government style 'Green Paper' approach. The Committee was informed that this approach would allow Members the opportunity to be involved in the oversight and development of matters of interest detailed in the Cabinet Forward Plan, prior to Cabinet consideration. The Chairs of Scrutiny and Overview and Scrutiny Committees were encouraged to consider the Cabinet Forward Plan to identify matters that might be of particular relevance to Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Chair suggested that the following areas could be included in the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2017/18:

- Public Safety - a review of the Council's civil resilience and response in emergency situations.
- Policing in Swindon – Half yearly update reports.
- Outsourcing of Services – Update report on the outsourcing and delivery of services.

Resolved – That the draft work programme 2017/18 and comments by the Chair be noted, subject to the inclusion of the three additional reports as detailed above.

7. 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.