

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 17 JULY 2017

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Ray Ballman, Mark Dempsey, Claire Ellis, Dale Heenan, Emma Faramarzi (Vice-Chair), Des Moffatt, Kevin Parry, James Robbins, Gary Sumner, Chris Watts and Steve Weisinger

Councillors David Renard (Leader of the Council), Toby Elliott (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability), Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Attainment), Brian Ford (Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care) and Russell Holland (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercialisation)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Timothy Swinyard and Vera Tomlinson

8. 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 Kevin Parry made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 5 Consideration of Cabinet Decisions – Minute 23 – References from other Council Bodies – Health and Wellbeing Board, as he was a Governor at the Great Western Hospital.

9. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

10. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2017, be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to minute 4(a) 6(2) being amended as follows:

‘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 fire safety standards for residents of tenants in high rise blocks, in light of the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, London’.

11. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

16. *Grenfell Tower, London*

Resolved – That Minute 16 of the Cabinet be noted.

20. *Budget Management Update*

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercialisation, responded to questions put by the Chair and

Councillors Mark Dempsey, Dale Heenan, Des Moffatt, James Robbins, Gary Sumner and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- Savings associated with the first phase of the headcount reduction programme.
- The increase in demand for support for people with a physical disability following the transfer of clients previously funded by Health to the Housing Revenue Account Shelter Schemes.
- The funding of the transfer referred to above.
- Housing acquisition programme, improvements to properties and the cost floor continuing to apply to these properties.
- Updates on the identification of savings opportunities in relation to procurement and proposals being developed for digitisation.
- Delivery of savings and proposals to maintain targets.
- Overspend on the Housing Revenue Account and reasons for the variances.
- Streetsmart budget pressures and proposals to balance the budget.
- Collection of waste from community centres run by Parish Councils.
- Overspends within the General Fund and identification of savings to bridge gaps.
- Pressures created in Housing Services budgets by the loss of the £60 admin fee on private sector leasing properties.
- Reduction in funding to the council following the introduction of the Flexible Homeless Support Grant.
- The impact of the Support Grant tenants leasing private sector properties.
- Universal Credits and a reduction in the level of rental income collected.
- The affordability of new homes for potential purchasers on low incomes.
- Housing developments on land not included in the Local plan.
- Affordable housing and more realistic solutions for purchasers.
- Provision of affordable housing within small developments.
- Lead in times for Universal Credits and work undertaken by the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- The pressures on the Adult Services budget due to the unexpected demand from young people with physical difficulties.
- The underlying causes for the increased number of applications to court for care orders to protect children.
- Collection of car parking penalty charge notices compared with the collection of Council Tax debts.

Resolved – That Minute 20 of the Cabinet be noted.

21. *Education Transport Policy 2018/19*

Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Attainment, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Mark Dempsey, Dale Heenan and Gary Sumner on the following matters:

- The impact of the changes within the Education Transport Policy 2018/19.
- Transport support for 16 to 18 year olds.
- The delivery of the digitalisation of the service and travel apps to assist parents when taking up personalised travel budgets.
- Maintaining the existing transport arrangements within the Ridgeway transport area.

- Decisions on discretionary support made on a case by case basis.

Resolved – That Minute 21 of the Cabinet be noted.

22. *Debt Management*

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercialisation, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Des Moffatt and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- The records held by the Council of housing tenants who were or currently are on a debtors list due to arrears in paying rent.
- Comparisons between private tenants and Council tenants and future access to Council housing lists if they are in arrears with their rent.
- Use of additional resources to contact customers prior to summonses being issued for non-payment.
- The use of bailiffs to collect outstanding Council Tax from repeat offenders as a last resort.
- The reduction in number of summonses issued for Council Tax recovery in 2016/17 compared to 2013/14

Resolved – That Minute 22 of the Cabinet be noted.

23. *References from other Council Bodies – Health and Wellbeing Board*

Councillor Brian Ford, Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Dale Heenan on the following matters:

- The discussions held with partners in relation to the Better Care Fund.
- Improvements to the care provided, in particular the re-ablement service.
- The use of the fund by the Sustainable Transformation Partnership.
- Potential uses of the £215,000 unallocated in the contingency fund.
- Opportunities to support people in hospital suffering from loneliness and isolation.

Resolved – That Minute 23 of the Cabinet be supported and noted.

24. *Site in South East Swindon – Proposed Disposal and Collaboration Agreement*

Councillor Toby Elliott, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Ray Ballman, Mark Dempsey, Dale Heenan and Des Moffatt on the following matters:

- Support for the development proposal and collaboration agreement.
- Affordable housing within the scheme and the potential for income generation to Swindon through Housing Associations.
- Rental amounts for the Sheltered housing element of the scheme.
- The ability of first time buyers to purchase properties within the development.
- Payment of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

- The geographical scope of the community fund and the locally driven initiatives to improve the conditions and life chances for residents within the prescribed area.
- The parcels of land within the development.
- The future of the Oakfield Project and evening club for people with learning disabilities

Resolved – That Minute 24 of the Cabinet be noted.

12. 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 as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 19th June 2017 and copies of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Work Programmes for 2017/18.

The Committee were reminded that discussions had taken place about the development of the Scrutiny process and the introduction of a government style 'Green Paper' approach. 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 Chair informed the Committee that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Work Programmes had been circulated so that the Committee could consider the most appropriate way to deal with those topics that appeared on more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme, in order to reduce duplication and the production of multiple reports by officers.

Resolved – (1) That the work programme 2017/18 be noted, subject to the inclusion of a review of Full Council decisions and their implementation.
(2) That the Scrutiny Committee review reports/topics of the five Overview and Scrutiny Committees' work programmes when requested to do so by a Member of the Council.

13. 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.