

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2017**

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

Councillors David Renard (Leader of the Council), Oliver Donachie (Cabinet Member for the Economy and Skills), Toby Elliott (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability), Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Attainment), Garry Perkins (Cabinet Member for Regeneration) and David Renard (Leader of the Council)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Robert Wright (Chair)

### **21. 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.

### **22. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

### **23. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2017, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **24. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions**

#### **30. *Budget Management Update***

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, and Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Attainment, responded to questions put by Councillors Ray Ballman, Mark Dempsey, Dale Heenan and Des Moffatt on the following matters:

- General Fund base budget figures for 2017/18.
- Responsibility for services previously provided at Newburgh House by SEQOL.
- Capital projects and Housing Revenue Account parking.
- Identified savings in respect of Digitalisation, Procurement and Headcount Reduction projects.
- Underspends and overspends within the Capital Programme 2017/18.
- Pressures on Children's Services' budgets due to external placements and plans in place to deal with future placement demands.
- Underlying causes for increased external placements.

Resolved – That Minute 30 of the Cabinet be noted.

31. *Social Enterprise and Inclusion*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, responded to a question put by Councillor Dale Heenan regarding the review of the existing post of Social Inclusion and Enterprise manager.

Resolved – That Minute 31 of the Cabinet be noted.

32. *Swindon Skills and Employment Strategy and the Outcome of the Post 16 Area Review*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, Councillor Oliver Donachie, Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills, and Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Attainment, responded to questions put by Councillors Mark Dempsey, Des Moffatt, James Robbins and Gary Sumner on the following matters:

- Higher Education Centre bid outcome and future options.
- Potential for a University to be located in Swindon.
- Update on funding issues for the Villiers Park project.
- Provision of higher education and accommodation in Swindon town centre.
- The role of MP's in supporting the potential provision of a University for Swindon.
- Membership of the Skills and Employment Board.

Resolved – That Minute 32 of the Cabinet be noted.

33. *Draft Economic Strategy (Minute for Confirmation)*

Resolved – That Minute 33 of the Cabinet be noted.

34. *References from the Health and Wellbeing Board*

Resolved – That Minute 34 of the Cabinet be noted.

35. *Swindon Borough Local Development Scheme 2017*

Resolved – That Minute 35 of the Cabinet be noted.

36. *Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review 2016/17*

Resolved – That Minute 36 of the Cabinet be noted.

37. *Kimmerfields: Central Business District*

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, responded to questions put by Councillors Mark Dempsey, Dale Heenan, Des Moffatt, James Robbins and Gary Sumner on the following matters:

- Potential for the creation of a Cabinet Member Advisory Group for regeneration projects in the town centre and other areas.
- Reasons for the termination of the Development Agreement and associated costs.
- Contributions to the project by the Council.
- The delivery of regeneration projects in Swindon.
- Transfer of 'A' Grade commercial property to residential property.
- Update on Fleming Way development project.

Resolved – That Minute 37 of the Cabinet be noted.

38. *Swindon & Wiltshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Functional Economic Market Area Assessment*

Councillor Toby Elliott, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, and Councillor Oliver Donachie, Cabinet Member for the Economy and Skills, responded to questions put by Councillors Gary Sumner, Tim Swinyard and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- Delivery of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment needs for Swindon and meeting target build figures.
- Delays in bringing developments to completion.
- The basis of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Swindon within the planning appeals process.
- Land values in Swindon.
- Achieving affordable housing needs as part of the total projected housing needs in Swindon.

Resolved – That Minute 38 of the Cabinet be noted.

**25. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills**

Councillor Oliver Donachie, Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills, 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:

- Switch on to Swindon
- Economic Development
- Strategic (Commercial and non-Commercial Council-owned Property Portfolio)
- Adult Learning
- Higher/Tertiary Education

- Skills
- Country Parks
- Strategic Parking assets
- Parking Services
- Apprentices
- Securing business growth and investment
- Tourism

In overseeing these areas, the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills is responsible for delivering the following Priorities:

- Priority one: Improve infrastructure and housing to support a growing, low carbon economy:
  - Pledge 16: Improve the reputation and image of Swindon to attract inward investment
- Priority two: offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places:
  - Pledge 17: Improve educational attainment, in particular at ages 16-19 so we are above the average in England within five years.
  - Pledge 18: Increase the number of businesses employing young people as an apprentice from 15% to 20% (an additional 280).
  - Pledge 19: Secure a range of options to access higher education in Swindon.

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 responded to the observations and questions put by the Chair and Councillors Steve Allsopp, Emma Faramarzi, Dale Heenan, Gemma McCracken, Nick Martin, James Robbins, Gary Sumner and Tim Swinyard on the following matters:

- Lack of town centre investment.
- Funding for “Switch On To Swindon”.
- Marketing the strengths of Swindon as a place to live, work, invest and visit.
- The future of “Switch On To Swindon”
- Involvement of small business in Switch On To Swindon.
- The role of the Inward Investment Manager.
- The future of the UTC within Pledge 17: Improving educational attainment.
- The Economic Strategy and impact of BREXIT on the local economy.
- Higher education and opportunities to reinforce its role as an expansion of current provision.

- Connections between the Outlet Village and the masterplan for the town centre.
- The use of available employment land in the eastern villages and upgrades to current infrastructure.
- The economic strength of Swindon and how this could be utilised for the benefit of the wider town.
- The benefits to the town of Switch On To Swindon.
- Relocation of foreign supply chains to Swindon.
- Increasing the attractiveness of higher education.
- Further support required from Councillors in the development of the Switch On To Swindon initiative.
- Utilising digital signage to promote Swindon in other towns and cities.
- Support available to businesses to encourage growth.
- The increase in issuing Penalty Charge Notices and subsequent appeals.
- Development of the proposal for an Institute of Technology in Swindon.
- The targets in place for Switch On To Swindon and measures to gauge its success.
- The ongoing work to transfer assets to Parish Councils.

Resolved – (1) 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.

(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.

## **26. 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 17<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

The Committee received an update about the scheduling of the Review of Full Council Decision report, requested at a previous Scrutiny Committee meeting, within the Work Programme 2017/18. It was noted that this report would now be considered at the meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2017.

Resolved – That the work programme 2017/18, as revised, be noted.

## **27. 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.