

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 27 APRIL 2020**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Emma Faramarzi (Vice-Chair), Steve Allsopp, Emma Bushell, Matthew Courtliff, Jim Grant, Steve Heyes, Vinay Manro, Barbara Parry, James Robbins, Carol Shelley, Roger Smith and Timothy Swinyard.

Also in attendance were: Councillors David Renard (Leader of the Council), Russell Holland (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, Education and Skills), Oliver Donachie (Cabinet Member for Economy and Place), Dale Heenan (Cabinet Member for the Town Centre), Mary Martin (Cabinet Member for Children's Services), Cathy Martyn (Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety), Maureen Penny (Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment), Gary Sumner (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning) and Keith Williams (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Operational Excellence).

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Brian Mattock and Vera Tomlinson.

### **68. Declarations of Interest**

Members were reminded of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

The Chair made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 6 (Response to Covid-19 – an update) as his stepfather currently resides in a care home in Swindon.

### **69. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **70. Public Question Time**

Mr Colin Finch, a resident of Swindon, asked the following:

The total number testing positive for Covid-19 in the UK from the start is now over 138,000. The total number to die in hospital who tested positive by today (23/04/20) is 18,786. That is roughly 1 in 7 tested die. The number in Swindon testing positive has now gone over 300 (307 in fact) and so far there has now been 71 of those that have died. That is roughly 1 in 4 tested die. Comparing Swindon to national figures, almost twice as many die in Swindon as the national average. Yet less die in the South West, as the charts say we have a relatively low number of cases. Can these figures be explained?

The Chair invited the Clerk, in the absence of Councillor Brian Ford, the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, to read out the response to the question at the meeting. The question and the response would be added to the Council's website as an Annex to the Minutes.

The Committee considered a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020.

*Minute 77. Budget Management Update (March)*

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, Education and Skills, responded to a question put by Councillor Steve Allsopp regarding the timeline for bringing to Members attention any additional financial costs incurred from responding to Covid-19.

Resolved – That Minute 77 of the Cabinet be noted.

*Minute 78. Capital Programme Monitoring 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2019/20*

Councillors Holland, Maureen Penny, Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment, and Gary Sumner, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, were asked questions by the Chair on the following matters:

- Reviewing capital spend as a result of the Covid-19 disruption, and extensions beyond the 2020 deadline.
- Increases in the projected overspend for the Wellington Street Improvement Scheme.
- Proposals regarding local sports pitch provision for Badbury Park residents.

Resolved – (1) That Minute 78 of the Cabinet be noted.

(2) That written responses containing the information requested by the Chair during consideration of this item be circulated by the Committee Clerk subsequent to the meeting.

*Minute 79. Affordable Housing Programme*

Councillor Cathy Martyn, Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety, responded to questions put by Councillor Emma Bushell on the following matters:

- Revised timescales and costs of the projects set out in the Cabinet report.
- The number of units proposed for lower social rent across the Windmill Hill and Queens Drive developments addressing the housing need of those in low paid or temporary work, and whom are most likely to be financially adversely affected by Covid-19.

Resolved – That Minute 79 of the Cabinet be noted.

*Minute 80. Town Centre Movement Strategy*

Councillor Penny responded to questions put by Councillors Jim Grant, James Robbins and the Chair on the following matters:

- Expectations as to the result from future spend on Bruce Street Bridges, particularly with regards to behaviour changes.
- Opportunities that will be provided for multi-Ward member consultation / involvement prior to any intervention work on Bruce Street Bridges commencing, including the possible creation of advisory groups to assist with development.

- Anticipated timescales for the intervention work on Bruce Street Bridges following the allocation of funds.
- The improvement works planned to Rodbourne Road feeding in to any future intervention work for Bruce Street Bridges.
- Revised timescales for the improvement work to Rodbourne Road, incorporating delays caused by Covid-19.
- Stronger emphasis being placed on walking, cycling and public transport options within proposals for the area with supplementary measures, such as a park and ride, continuing to be considered alongside the Town Centre Strategy.

Resolved – That Minute 80 of the Cabinet be noted.

*Minute 81. Swindon Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan 2020/21*

Councillor Penny responded to questions put by Councillor Timothy Swinyard and the Chair on the following matters:

- Proposed revisions to the Local Transport Plan, including budget adjustments from central government, as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.
- The revised timescale for the conversion of streetlights to LED (for which the contract and funding are already in place) given the current import restrictions.

Resolved – That Minute 81 of the Cabinet be noted.

*Minute 82. Heritage Action Zone*

Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for the Town Centre, responded to questions put by Councillor James Robbins and the Chair on the following matters:

- The expected timeframe within which a third party, with the necessary capacity and capabilities to restore the Mechanics Institute, will be identified.
- The financial risks for the Council associated with pursuing a Compulsory Purchase Order for the Mechanics Institute.
- Funding expectations that may be placed upon any third party identified, and the Council's role in fulfilling those obligations.
- Opportunities for the relevant councillors to be involved, via a Cabinet Member Advisory Group or Task Group, to assist in identifying a suitable third party to oversee restoration of the building.

Resolved – That Minute 82 of the Cabinet be noted.

*Minute 83. Reference from the Health and Wellbeing Board - Homeless Prevention and Reduction Strategy (Minute for Confirmation)*

Councillor Martyn responded to questions put by Councillor Emma Bushell regarding the recently refreshed Rough Sleeping Strategy and Homelessness Strategy, and the personal housing plans in place to assure continued accommodation for rough sleepers following the Covid-19 crisis.

Resolved – That Minute 83 of the Cabinet be noted.

*Minute 84. Amendments to the Constitution and Delegated Decision-making*

Resolved – That Minute 84 of the Cabinet be noted.

**72.**

**Response to Covid-19 - an update**

The Committee considered a report setting out information relating to the Council's response to the coronavirus pandemic, particularly the context and structure of the Gold, Silver and Bronze Groups set up to respond to the crisis.

Susie Kemp, Chief Executive at Swindon Borough Council, introduced the report and indicated her pride in officer colleagues for their response to Covid-19, and expressed her gratitude to Members for their support and encouragement.

Ms Kemp referred to the written questions submitted by Members prior to the meeting which had been grouped into themed topics. The details of those questions, along with the responses and supplementary questions asked during the course of the meeting, are set out in the Annex to these Minutes.

Resolved – To note the report.