

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2015

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Richard Hurley, Des Moffatt, Kevin Parry, Stan Pajak, Vera Tomlinson, Oliver Donachie, Carol Shelley, Chris Watts, Michael Bray, Caryl Sydney-Smith and Steve Weisinger.

Councillors David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet, Brian Mattock (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Adult Health and Social Care), Toby Elliott, Cabinet Member for Communities and Strategic Planning, Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Brian Ford, Cabinet Member for Streetsmart, Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Transport, Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, People and Performance, Mary Martin, Cabinet Member for Corporate, Customer and Digital Services, and Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Ballman, Colin Lovell, Gemma McCracken and Maureen Penny.

37. 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.

38. Public Question Time

Ms Shirley Burnham, a local resident, asked a number of questions about the libraries service budget proposals, particularly in relation to Liden Library and Central Library. The Chair asked that Ms Burnham be provided with written responses to her questions.

39. Minutes

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

40. Consideration of Cabinet decisions

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 9th December 2015.

44. *Delivering the Vision – Growing Swindon's Economy*

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

- Forward Swindon and the delivery of the Vision objectives and associated projects.
- The role of the Cabinet Member in supporting the delivery of the Vision.

- The development of Higher Education at a cost of £50,000 in preference to the development of Secondary Education.
- The European Structural Investment Fund contribution of £98,000 would be subject to the impact of any future EU Referendum.
- The plans in place in the event that European investments did not materialise.
- The continuing reduction of funding from Central Government and the increasing dependence on Business Rates to help fund future projects.
- The focus of Forward Swindon on the promotion of projects, particularly the delivery of Town Centre projects, in the short term.

Resolved – That Minute 44 of the Cabinet be noted.

45. *2016-2020 Direction of Travel, Financial Context and Budget Proposals*

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, People and Performance, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Stan Pajak, Chris Watts and Des Moffatt on the following matters:

- The proposed Council Tax increase of 1.94%, and support for an increase of a further 2% to fund shortfalls in social care budgets.
- The need to ask residents about the services they wish the Council to provide, in particular the provision of the children service centres
- The breakdown of the £100m.
- Proposals to achieve the savings on Grounds and Street Cleaning Services and Leisure, Community Assets and Culture.
- The use of the New Homes Bonus as a source of base budget funding.
- Concern that the amount received from Business Rates would be a reduction in funding compared to the current Grant received from the Government.
- The delivery of local services by Parish Councils and the effect on budgets should the Parish Councils decide to not deliver these services
- The proposal to discontinue the Localities Fund and the effect on the One Swindon Partnership Fund.
- The detailed facts and figures to justify the savings put forward in the Council's budget proposals.
- The need for a risk assessment to be carried out on the potential consequences of any reduction and closure of services.
- The effect on the safety in the Town if anti-social behaviour services were streamlined.

Resolved – That Minute 45 of the Cabinet be noted.

46. *Capital Programme Monitoring – Second Quarter and Treasury Management 2015/16*

Resolved – That Minute 46 of the Cabinet be noted.

47. *Result of the Consultation on Short Breaks for Disabled Children, Young People and their Families*

Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Des Moffatt on the following matters:

- The funding decisions previously made about the service.
- The connection between the reduction in support for families and the level of pressure and anxiety they experience.
- Benchmarking with other local authorities and how they manage the demand for their short breaks service.

Resolved – That Minute 47 of the Cabinet be noted.

48 Future of Swindon Borough Council Operated Nurseries

Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Stan Pajak on the capital investment required to complete immediate maintenance at the Children's Nursery in Euclid Street and proposals for the site.

Resolved – That Minute 48 of the Cabinet be noted.

49. Changes to Swindon Borough Council's Fostering Agency Foster Panel Membership

Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Oliver Donachie, Vera Tomlinson, Mick Bray and Carol Shelley on the following matters:

- The removal of the need to appoint elected members to the Swindon Foster Panel and the new members of the Panel.
- Concern that the role of the local member was being reduced.
- The role of members as corporate parents and the relevance of members on the Foster Panel.
- Concern that lay members of the Foster Panel would have a limited view point based on their professional background, whereas Council members have a broad range of understanding that would be beneficial to the Panel.
- The details about recent changes in the regulations governing Foster Panels.

Resolved – That Minute 49 of the Cabinet be noted.

50. Response to Council Motion on Refugees

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Stan Pajak, Chris Watts and Oliver Donachie on the following matters:

- The support available to groups helping refugees who arrive in Swindon, particularly, the availability and use of support grants.
- The identification of empty properties and potential renovation projects that could house refugees.
- Details about the four migrations dispersal centres in the South West and the number of refugees being helped in Swindon.

Resolved – That Minute 50 of the Cabinet be noted.

51. References from other Bodies

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet, responded to a question put by the Chair on the progress being made in relation to the Swindon Safety Partnership Board making a priority of domestic abuse

Resolved – That Minute 51 of the Cabinet be noted.

52. Mr Gavin Jones, Chief Executive and Ian Willcox, Committee and Member Services Manager

The Chair and members of the Committee expressed their appreciation for the help and support of the Chief Executive and Committee and Member Services Manager over the years, in particular for the contributions made in relation to the development of the Councils Scrutiny function.

The Director of Law and Democratic Services reported that Steve Jones, Committee Officer, had been appointed as Interim Committee and Member Services Manager and consequently he would take on the role of the Councils Statutory Scrutiny Officer.

Resolved – That Minute 52 and 53 of the Cabinet be noted.

It was agreed that information requested by individual members during the course of the Committee's consideration of the Cabinet decisions should be forwarded to the Committee Clerk for distribution to Scrutiny Committee members.

41. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Corporate, Customer and Digital Services

Councillor Mary Martin, the Cabinet Member for Corporate, Customer and Digital Services, was in attendance and presented a detailed report summarising progress and performance in respect of each of the following service areas within his portfolio of responsibility:

- Member Development
- Customer Services, including the One Stop Shop
- Health and Safety
- Digital by Design
- IT Strategy and Delivery
- The Customer Experience
- Operational Buildings
- Swindon Traded Services
- Schools ICT
- Superfast Broadband
- Leisure (residential services e.g. Highworth, County Ground etc.)
- Public Power Solutions Ltd (PPS)

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Martin, in her presentation of the report, commented specifically on those elements within her portfolio which she 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 she expected to be faced by the Council relation to these service areas in the coming year and beyond, particularly in relation to on-going budgetary constraints.

Following her presentation of the report, Councillor Martin responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following topics:

- The lifecycle for Windows 7.
- The investment needed in Wat Tyler for server hosting.
- The cost of returning a significant part of the Capita ICT service to the Council's direct control.
- The website and the ability to easily navigate to appropriate Council website pages.
- The next phase of the 'digital by default' approach to customer services.
- Concern that some parts of the new website directs users to documents still stored on the old Sharepoint site.
- The response from urban communities to the launch of superfast broadband.
- The comparison between the Members Hotline and Customers Hotline, in particular the responses received by customer to issues reported and enquiries logged.
- Problems encountered by users of particular broadband service providers when connecting to customer services and possible solutions.
- The migration of Council emails to Office 365 and the associated benefits.
- The look and feel of the new council website.
- The ownership of the Highworth Recreation Centre and its continuation as a local asset for the Highworth area.
- The potential increase in Refuse Derived Fuel usage and the associated savings.
- The work being undertaken by Network Rail at The Sidings, Swindon
- Information Asset Management and details about the ownership of data.
- The total cost of setting up Public Power Solutions.
- The considerations, including public consultation, in relation to the appointment of UKBN to provide superfast broadband in Swindon.
- Concern about the mixed reaction received from the residents of Swindon about the superfast broadband solution provided by UKBN and the potential uptake of the service.
- The evidence that the silent majority support the delivery of the superfast broadband service by UKBN.

Resolved – (1) That Councillor Mary Martin be thanked for attending the meeting to present her performance report and for her 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 members via the Committee Clerk.

42. 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 outstanding issues and member requests for information, including the information included in the update tabled at the meeting, be noted.