

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 20 JUNE 2016

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Emma Bushell, Mark Dempsey, Claire Ellis (Vice-Chair), Emma Faramarzi, John Haines, Cathy Martyn, Gemma McCracken, Des Moffatt, Kevin Parry, Vera Tomlinson and Chris Watts.

Councillors Oliver Donachie (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness), Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Children's Services), Brian Ford (Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care), Russell Holland (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services), Mary Martin (Cabinet Member for Communities), Garry Perkins (Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration, and Skills), David Renard (Leader of the Council) and Toby Elliott (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor James Robbins

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 Des Moffatt asked for it to be recorded that he did not receive an employment derived pension.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

3. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2016, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 16th June 2016 and the Cabinet Panel on School Organisation meeting held on 16th June 2016.

a) Cabinet Minutes – 16th June 2016

6. *Councillors' Allowances 2017/18 – Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel*

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

- The process used to undertake the review of Councillor's Allowances.
- The approach required to bring Councillors' Allowances in line with allowances nationally and progress being made to this effect.

Resolved – That Minute 6 of the Cabinet be noted.

7. *Medium Term Financial Context and Budget Strategy 2017/18*

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Chris Watts, Des Moffatt, Mark Dempsey and Vera Tomlinson on the following matters:

- The demands and pressures being placed on Children's Services due to the number of Asylum Seekers being placed in Swindon.
- The number of children taken into care but not receiving support by Children's Services.
- Council Tax revenue, the potential to raise additional funds and representations to Government on the position in Swindon.
- The Council's projected income in 2020 and its ability to fund essential services.
- The role of Housing Officers in the design of sheltered housing.
- The budget assigned to supporting vulnerable people by 2020 and the necessity to advance public health needs with the aim of reducing budgetary commitments.
- How the proposed fees for licensable activities are established.

Resolved – That Minute 7 of the Cabinet be noted.

8. *Future Direction – Transfer of Services to Parish Councils*

Councillor Mary Martin, Cabinet Member for Communities, and Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader, Vice-Chair of Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Des Moffatt, Mark Dempsey, Chris Watts, Emma Bushell and Gemma McCracken on the following matters:

- The deadlines for the removal of play and games equipment where on-going alternative services could not be put in place.
- The provision of the Library Service and whether this would be transferred to parish councils, businesses and communities in the future.
- The consultation exercise undertaken with residents on the proposed transfer of services to parish councils and reasons why some residents were not being included in this process.
- The process for agreeing increases in Council Tax rates for parished and non-parished areas.
- The views expressed by those responding to the Community Governance Review and how these would be taken into account by the Council, in particular views on parish boundaries and local community identity.
- Clarification on the process of conducting a Community Governance Review.
- Concern at the potential for significant increases in costs of providing services, the assessment of overheads that could be generated, the modelling of costs and appraisal of options following the Community Governance Review.
- The creation of parish council areas that contain the correct balance of housing in order to raise funding to provide services.

- The composition of shadow parish councils and possible ward member involvement.
- The potential services provided by parish councils.
- The possibility of parish council's undertaking services on behalf of other parish councils who decide against providing certain services.
- The duplication of services and how this will be reduced.
- The work of existing parish councils that could be used as a blueprint and examples of best practice to help with the smooth transition of the transfer of services to new parish councils.
- How the Council would provide support if the Borough was completely parished.

Resolved – That Minute 8 of the Cabinet be noted.

9. *Budget Management 2015/16*

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader, Vice-Chair of Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, responded to questions put by Councillor Gemma McCracken and Des Moffatt on the following matters:

- The proposed changes to Fees and Charges from 4th July 2016, in particular pre-application advice for licence applications.
- The funds held in the Council's Reserve's Account.

Resolved – That Minute 9 of the Cabinet be noted.

10. *Capital Programme Monitoring Out-Turn*

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader, Vice-Chair of Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Des Moffatt on the following matters:

- The Council's contribution towards superfast broadband and the current spend.
- The Council's Vision and the funding of major projects

Resolved – That Minute 10 of the Cabinet be noted.

11. *Treasury Management Performance 2015/16*

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader, Vice-Chair of Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, responded to a question put by Councillor Mark Dempsey about current debt repayments.

Resolved – That Minute 11 of the Cabinet be noted.

12. *Housing Revenue Account – Medium Term Financial Plan*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, responded to a question put by the Chair about the level of funding claimed by the Government following sales within the Council housing stock.

Resolved – That Minute 12 of the Cabinet be noted.

13. The Council Plan and Performance Dashboard 2016-2020

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Mark Dempsey on the following matters:

- The latest position in relation to the Union Square/Kimmerfields and North Star developments.
- The mechanisms employed by the Council to monitor performance against the work programme outlined in the Council Plan.

Resolved – That Minute 13 of the Cabinet be noted.

14. Swindon Country Parks – Future Operational Model

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

- The effect of introducing car parking charges at Lydiard House and Park and Coate Water Country Park.
- The support provided by the Council to local communities impacted indirectly by the introduction of the car parking charges.
- The options for local residents to receive discounts to park at Lydiard House and Park and Coate Water Country Park.

Resolved – That Minute 14 of the Cabinet be noted.

15. Swindon Local Transport Plan – Implementation Plan 2016/17

Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Highways and Transport, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Mark Dempsey on the following matters:

- The latest position regarding the road replacement scheme for Fleming Way.
- The latest position regarding Cricklade Road and Akers Way.

Resolved – That Minute 15 of the Cabinet be noted

16. Local Bus Services and Strategy Review

Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Highways and Transport, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillor Vera Tomlinson on the following matters:

- Concern at the number of people reaching state retirement age using bus passes when they had the ability and available finances to pay for their bus journey and the impact on the subsidies provided by the Council to bus operators.
- The interpretation of a 'main area' in relation to the commercial bus network provided during the daytime.
- The bus services proposed to be withdrawn and the timescales for implementation.
- The amount of notice being given to Parish Councils of the withdrawal of services.

Resolved – That Minute 16 of the Cabinet be noted.

17. Waste and Recycling Service

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, and Councillor Brian Ford, Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care, responded to a question put by the Chair and Councillors Vera Tomlinson, Des Moffatt and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- The impact of the proposed changes to the Waste and Recycling Service on service levels, the expected budget savings and impact on the number of available vehicles and staff.
- How the Council disposes of its redundant fleet vehicles.
- The impact of the changes on reliability and resilience of the service.
- The ability of the new vehicles to navigate a challenging road system.

Resolved – That Minute 17 of the Cabinet be noted.

18. Use of Compulsory Purchase Powers in the New Eastern Villages (NEV), Swindon

Councillor Toby Elliott, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, responded to questions put by the Chair about the current volume of traffic, flooding in the area and the long term effects of flash flooding and rivers.

Resolved – That Minute 18 of the Cabinet be noted

19. Regeneration Opportunities at Cheney Manor Employment Area

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills, responded to questions put by Councillor Vera Tomlinson on the following matters:

- The reasons for capital improvements to a Council building at Cheney Manor Industrial Estate and the associated 20 year lease to the current tenant.
- The outcome if the current tenant moves to new premises or closes its business.

Resolved – That Minute 19 of the Cabinet be noted.

b) Cabinet Panel on School Organisation

5. Lowering the Age Range at Crowdys Hill School from 11-19 to 4-19 from September 2016

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

- The impact of the proposals to lower the age range at Crowdys Hill Special School on the special education provision currently provided by mainstream schools
- The possible transfer of Swindon children with special educational needs currently educated outside of the town to Crowdys Hill Special School

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 2016, to report to the Committee on (a) the Authority's achievements in 2015/16 and (b) the Administration's priorities for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

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

- The progress made with superfast broadband and sites for the placement of masts.
- The concern of Councillors for Priory Vale and St Andrews about the Leader's statement that they had been party to the suggestion for new sites for the masts, when in fact they had not made any suggestions for the new sites.
- The signing of the agreement from the Council's private sector development partners to secure new homes in West and Middle Wichel.
- The completion of Phase One of the Community Governance Review and the Administration's desire to have more engagement and consultation with residents.
- The need to remove the sentence in paragraph 3.12 of the Leaders report referring to political opportunism.

Resolved – 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.

6. Work Programme 2016/17

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services suggesting topics for inclusion in the 2016/17 Scrutiny Work Programme.

Resolved – (1) That, subject to (3) and (4) below, the draft work programme 2016/17 be approved.

(2) That, the Resources and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to include consideration of the Council's financial plan up to 2020, in its Work Programme 2016/17.

(3) That, the Scrutiny Committee considers the Chair's suggestions on possible changes to the role played by the Scrutiny Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee's in the Cabinet decision making process, at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 18th July 2016.

(4) That consideration of the final report of the Averies Task Group be included in the Committee's Work Programme.

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 outstanding issues and member requests for information be noted.