

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 18 JULY 2016**

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

Councillors Toby Elliott (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning), Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Children's Services), Brian Ford (Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care), Mary Martin (Cabinet Member for Communities) and David Renard (Leader of the Council)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor John Haines.

### **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. No declarations were made.

### **9. Public Question Time**

The Chair reported that a written question had been received from Mr Brian Cockbill, a local resident, about a Highway and Transport public survey being carried out by Mori on behalf of the Council and whether the results of the survey, with comments, would be published on the Council's website.

Mr Cockbill was not in attendance. The Chair explained that a response from the Leader of the Council would be sent to Mr Cockbill.

### **10. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

(Note – The Chair raised a query about the content of minutes and would discuss the issue further with the Director of Law and Democratic Services outside of the meeting).

### **11. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions**

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

#### **23. *Adoption of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan***

Resolved – That Minute 23 of the Cabinet be noted.

## *24. Debt Management*

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

- The collection and write-off of Small Business Rates and the Small Business Rates arrangements for 2017.
- The effect of debt on wider family mental health.
- The impact of welfare reforms on residents, their ability to pay Council Tax when experiencing difficulties in repaying debts and the help and support offered by the Council.
- The debt and benefit advice offered to residents struggling to pay Council Tax and the resulting impact on families.

Resolved – That Minute 24 of the Cabinet be noted.

## *25. Securing a Sustainable Future for Swindon's Library Services*

Councillor Mary Martin, Cabinet Member for Communities, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Mark Dempsey, Claire Ellis, Cathy Martyn, Des Moffatt, Kevin Parry, Jim Robbins and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- The options available to support public access to Libraries beyond staffed hours and whether the overall whole life cost of the options include building costs.
- The formation of Trusts to operate Libraries facilities.
- The feedback received on the potential options available for the Library Service and whether this had been taken into account.
- The hope of residents for the best deal for the Library Service in their area.
- The impact on residents who rely on the Library Service to search for working opportunities.
- The use of transitional funding to extend the proposed core network of Libraries to include Parks and Wroughton Libraries for a temporary period.
- The essential role of the mobile library service and its volunteers, the support they offered to vulnerable people and the importance of their views during the production of the final report.
- The need for pro-active engagement during the consultation period.
- The style of the language used in the independent report prepared by Phil Black Associates Ltd.
- The timescales for transitional funding to be available to support the implementation of the delivery model.
- The timescales that existing Libraries would remain open.
- The sustainability of Libraries and the use of premises to create/attract additional revenue streams.
- The future ownership of the Library building as a community asset.
- The role of the Library as a meeting point and a way of overcoming isolation for many people.
- The delivery of Library Services in the future.

- The effect and impact of the proposed new Library Services on local ward networks.
- The positive outcomes from previous examples of co-locating businesses and libraries in the same building.

Resolved – That Minute 25 of the Cabinet be noted.

## 26. *Budget Management 2016/17*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Mark Dempsey, Emma Famarzi, Gemma McCracken, Jim Robbins and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- The consideration of alternative waste disposal options and associated gate fees.
- The ranking order of the Swindon schemes in the overall Swindon Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Bid 3.
- The shortfall in the current Revenue Budget and the Council's ability to retain Business rates from 2020 and the impact on Councils resources.
- The future of proposals for Metro Mayors following the recent changes in Government Cabinet roles and the impact of the Councils current Economic Strategy.
- The role of the Council in determining the collection and setting of Business Rates.
- The work being undertaken to identify the businesses exempt from business rates and the loss there would be to the Council.
- The location of the transport infrastructure proposals on the A350.
- The Councils ability to amend the current and future waste disposal gate fees.

Resolved – That Minute 26 of the Cabinet be noted.

## 27. *Fixed Penalty Notice Enforcement Policy*

Resolved – That Minute 27 of the Cabinet be noted.

## 28. *Education Transport Policy 2017/18*

Councillor Fionuala Foley Cabinet Member for Children's Services, responded to a question put by the Chair on the difficulty that some parents experience transporting their children to allocated schools when they did not own a car and there were no available bus routes.

Resolved – That Minute 28 of the Cabinet be noted.

## 29. *Council Tax Discretionary Discounts and Premiums*

Resolved – That Minute 29 of the Cabinet be noted.

*30. Adoption and Implementation of Financial Inclusion Policy*

Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet and Councillor Fionuala Foley Cabinet Member for Children's Services, responded to a question put by the Chair and Councillors Mark Dempsey, Jim Robbins and Chris Watts on the following matters:

- The membership of the Welfare Advisory Group and the need for specialist advice agencies to attend Group meetings.
- The role of the Council's newly appointed Social Inclusion and Welfare Manager.
- The necessary interaction with specialist organisations and the help and support they offer residents.
- The use of Credit Unions to encourage residents to save and apply for loans.
- The use of Libraries to offer financial advice to residents.
- The arrangements in place at Springfield Community Campus, Corsham and how they reach out to the local community.

Resolved – That Minute 30 of the Cabinet be noted.

*31. References from other Council Bodies – Health and Well Being*

Councillor Brian Ford, Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care, responded to a question put by the Chair and Councillor Cathy Martyn on the following matters:

- The high proportion of suicides within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community (LGBT) and how to engage with the community from a professional medical point of view.
- The difficulties experienced by the LGBT community and possible engagement with Members.
- The number of training courses offered for Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training suicide prevention and self-harm during 2016-18 and whether this was sufficient.
- The focus on mental health promotion and suicide prevention interventions for boys and men and whether this included transgender people.
- The review of the self-harm Register at the Great Western Hospital Emergency Department and how children's and young people's self-harm was being tackled at an earlier stage.
- The support offered to family and friends of people who self-harm to enable them to offer better support.
- How to ensure that mental health needs are given equal consideration to physical health needs in those with a long term mental health condition.
- How the number of people who self-harm is measured, the accuracy of figures obtained and the evidence available to verify that a reduction in the number of children who repeat self-harm in the current year.

- Responsibility for the provision of urgent and emergency access to crisis care.

Resolved – (1) That Minute 31 of the Cabinet be noted.

(2) That arrangements be made for a Members Development Session on the difficulties experienced by the LGBT community that ultimately lead to suicide.

(3) That the Adult's Health, Social care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider setting up a Task Group, involving officers and health professionals about suicide rates within the LGBT community.

## **12. Work Programme 2016/17**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services setting out the topics for inclusion in the 2016/17 Scrutiny Work Programme as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

The Committee were informed that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, arranged for 8<sup>th</sup> August 2016 was being rescheduled to Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2016 to accommodate a change in the meeting date of the Cabinet.

The Director of Law and Democratic Services advised that the Averages court case was likely to be considered towards the end of 2016, and that following its conclusion, the Averages Task Group would meet to consider the preparation of its final report.

Resolved – (1) That the draft work programme 2016/17 be noted.

(2) That, the change of date for the next Scrutiny Committee meeting from 8<sup>th</sup> August 2016 to 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2016 be noted.

## **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 outstanding issues and member requests for information be noted.

## **14. Scrutiny Process Flowchart**

The Committee considered the report of the Chair of Scrutiny Committee and Director of Law and Democratic Services about the contribution of non-executive Members to policy development, and how the Scrutiny Committee and Overview and Scrutiny committees might promote an awareness amongst members of such opportunities.

The Chair referred to a Scrutiny Process Flowchart, attached at Appendix A to the report, that he had prepared in consultation with the Committee and Member Services, aimed at assisting members in identifying how they could influence policy development. He referred to the current process for clearing reports and the pressures on staff in terms of the timeliness of the preparation and delivery of reports.

The Director of Law and Democratic Services reminded members that they had access to the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan which highlighted the issues to be considered by the Cabinet up to July 2017. This document would aid members in determining if they wished to contribute towards a report prior to its consideration by Cabinet. It was suggested that if a member did wish to contribute to a report prior to Cabinet this could be undertaken through their Group or Group Spokesperson who would be the link to the report author.

- Resolved – (1) That the report be noted,  
(2) That all non-Executive Members be made aware of the flowchart and the points at which they could seek to contribute to the Council's policy formation,  
(3) That the Director of Law and Democratic Services include the flowchart within all future agendas of Scrutiny, and Overview and Scrutiny, committee papers.  
(4) That non-Executive Members wishing to contribute and influence policy development, undertake this through their Group or Group Spokespersons.