

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Ray Ballman, Claire Ellis, Dale Heenan, Emma Faramarzi (Vice-Chair), Des Moffatt, Kevin Parry, Gary Sumner, Timothy Swinyard and Vera Tomlinson

Councillor Garry Perkins (Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Dempsey, James Robbins and Chris Watts

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. Councillor Timothy Swinyard made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 5 ("Cabinet Member Question and Answer session - Cabinet Member for Regeneration"), as he was a Board Member for the Lydiard Park Trust.

38. Public Question Time

Mrs Deborah Lewis, a local resident and Business owner, asked questions about the town centre regeneration, in particular Fleet Street and Bridge Street. The Chair asked for a written response be sent to Mrs Lewis.

39. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October 2017, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

40. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, was in attendance and presented to the Committee a report summarising progress and performance in respect of each of the following service areas within his portfolio of responsibility:

- Current Museums, including STEAM
- Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
- Community Heritage
- Regeneration
- Client Member for FSL Ltd
- Town Centre regeneration (including inter alia, Aspen House, Kimmerfields, and the Carriage Works, bus station, town centre parking strategy, Fleming Way)
- North Star
- Securing capital investment

- Lydiard Park project

In overseeing these areas, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration is responsible for delivering the following Priorities:

- Priority one: Improve infrastructure and housing to support a growing, low carbon economy:
 - Pledge 3 – Demolish the obsolete Carlton Street and Wyvern car parks and use the space for regeneration.
 - Pledge 5 – Replace the current health centre in the town centre with a new and improved facility.
 - Pledge 6 – Establish effective and appealing pedestrian links from the town centre to North Star and enhance Wellington Street as a prime thoroughfare for the town.
 - Pledge 10 – As part of the town's regeneration: Redevelop the former Aspen House site/Granville Street area, to extend on the successful Regent Circus development; and make Havelock Square an attractive, safe open space to complement local shops.
 - Pledge 11 – Replace the current bus station with a new and modern facility.
 - Pledge 12 - Improve the town centre road network to pave the way for the Kimmerfields development.
 - Pledge 22 – Support the development of the new regional leisure destination and North Star.
 - Pledge 23 – Long term: to secure a sustainable future for the Mechanics Institute and support the redevelopment of the Corn Exchange.
- Priority three: Ensure clean and safe streets and improve our public spaces and local culture.
 - Pledge 21 – Secure a new museum and art gallery that can showcase the high quality art and exhibits that we possess.

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Perkins, 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 Perkins responded to the observations and questions put by the Chair and Councillors Ray Ballman, Claire Ellis, Emma Faramarzi, Dale Heenan, Des Moffatt, Gary Sumner, Tim Swinyard and Vera Tomlinson on the following matters:

- The progress made in delivering projects over the last twelve months.
- The evidence identifying the Carriageworks being a suitable location for start-up businesses and how it would differ from other nearby business 'incubation centres'.
- The reasons for businesses using the Carriage Works as a location for hot desking.
- The success of the Carriage Works and its positive impact on businesses in other areas within the Town centre.
- Railway station regeneration and the impact of season tickets prices on the number of businesses using the Carriage Works.
- Documentary evidence about the clients likely to relocate businesses to the Carriage Works.
- Negotiation timescales with Network Rail in relation to land swaps in the vicinity of the railway station and duration of the lease.
- Grant funding for the railway station regeneration project.
- Members attendance at the Cabinet Members Advisory Group on Town Centre Regeneration.
- The use of independent advisors to analyse and review strategies and the delivery methods for the Town centre Review.
- The local knowledge and impartiality of the independent advisors.
- 13 screen cinema at North Star and its impact on other cinemas within the town.
- Economic value of the North Star development and income generation.
- Assurances that projects would be delivered.
- LEP funding for railway station improvements.
- North Star development and discussions on associated traffic issues.
- Timescales for the Kimmerfields Business District and the Bus Exchange and Fleming Way.
- Review of the Town centre masterplan required and development mix.
- Progress being made on Aspen House, Falcon House and the Corn Exchange projects.
- Council support for the new Swindon Museum and Art Gallery.
- Parking facilities for residential developments in the town centre.
- Timescales on town centre development and the effect on potential retail business investors.
- Utilising the town centre as a distribution hub.
- Understanding the spend-per-head in town centre businesses in preference to footfall.
- The need for a range of high end and small individual shops in the town centre.
- Meeting the legal requirements of Councils receiving best value assessments for the North Swindon and Kimmerfields sites.

Resolved – (1) That Councillor Perkins 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.

41. Review of the 2016/17 Municipal Year - Scrutiny Annual report

The Committee considered its Annual Report for 2016/17 prepared by the Director of Law and Democratic Services.

The Annual Report highlighted the work of the Scrutiny Committee and its five Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the Municipal Year 2016/17, in their role of supporting the Council's decision-making and policy development processes and the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee explained in his foreword to the report that for Overview and Scrutiny to remain a powerful check and balance for Council decisions, Members also have to scrutinise service delivery which sits outside of the traditional delivery model. It is also important that decisions are made in a transparent way which involves those responsible for the decisions as well as those implementing decisions.

To keep pace with this potentially fragmented form of service delivery the Overview and Scrutiny process has adapted with the ability to pre-scrutinise reports with the potential to stop repeated wasted scrutiny time on the same report in different committees.

The Committee asked for the Annual Report to include, where it was appropriate, details of specific requests and how the outcomes have been delivered during the year.

The Committee thanked the Director of Law and Democratic Services for a very good report that highlighted the work of Scrutiny in Swindon.

Resolved – (1) That the Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2016/17 be noted, subject to typographical amendments and the addition of specific requests outcomes being included in the report where appropriate; and
(2) That the amended Annual report 2016/17 be referred to Full Council for information.

42. 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 17th July 2017.

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

43. 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.