

SCRUTINY

MONDAY, 16 JULY 2018

PRESENT:- Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Emma Faramarzi (Vice-Chair), Steve Allsopp, Emma Bushell, Brian Mattock, Jane Milner-Barry, Barbara Parry, Maureen Penny, James Robbins, Tim Swinyard and Steve Weisinger.

Also in attendance were: Councillor David Renard (Leader of the Council), Councillor Russell Holland (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance), Councillor Oliver Donachie (Cabinet Member for Economy Prosperity), Councillor Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment), Councillor Brian Ford (Cabinet Member for Adults), Councillor Cathy Martyn (Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety), Councillor Garry Perkins (Cabinet Member for Town Centre) and Councillor Gary Sumner (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Des Moffatt, Vera Tomlinson and Chris Watts.

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.

Councillor Brian Mattock made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 6 (Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session – Cabinet Member for the Town Centre) as the Council's representative on the Board of the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery Trust.

9. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

10. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

11. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

The Committee considered a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 11th July 2018.

18. Budget Management 2018/2019

Resolved – That Minute 18 of the Cabinet be noted.

19. Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan

Councillor Cathy Martyn (Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety) responded to questions put by Councillors Emma Bushell, Brian Mattock and the Chair on the following matters:

- The number of social rent houses forecast to be sold under the Right to Buy scheme, and the number of social rent houses that will be lost under the redevelopment plans for Queens Drive.
- The reasons behind the projected under investment on capital (£116m spend compared to the £199m previously identified) and the projects likely to be affected by this under investment.
- The measures in place to ensure that income generated from Right to Buy sales is utilised by the Council rather than being returned to central government.
- The length of time projected to resolve issues with void management in the social rent stock within the 30 year plan.
- The plans for temporary accommodation for the residents of the David Murray John building when works begin.

Resolved – That Minute 19 of the Cabinet be noted.

20. Debt Management

Resolved – That Minute 20 of the Cabinet be noted.

21. Temporary Winter Housing Provision

Councillor Cathy Martyn (Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety) and Councillor Brian Ford (Cabinet Member for Adults) responded to questions put by Councillors Emma Bushell, Jane Milner-Barry and the Chair on the following matters:

- Why the Housing First model is not being used as part of the temporary winter housing provision proposals for 2018/19.
- How the development of the Rough Sleeper Strategy is fitting in with the strategy for the Housing First model.
- The budget proposed for the Housing First model, and the anticipated number of people who will receive assistance.
- The use of a triage model to assist rough sleepers within Swindon, rather than the Housing First model.
- The potential venue for the 2018/19 provision, the number of individuals the project will target, and the expected level of needs that those individuals will have.
- The level of support provided by partners to the 2017/18 project, how partner engagement may be improved for the 2018/19 project, and other available options for support such as the Salvation Army.
- The anticipated start date for the project.
- The service that will continue to be provided to the rough sleepers who do not join this project.

Resolved – (1) That Minute 21 of the Cabinet be noted.

(2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety notes the concerns raised by this Committee on how the Housing First model is being used in the plans for the temporary winter housing provision proposals for 2018/19.

22. Council Communications Strategy and 2018-20 Campaign Plan

Councillor David Renard (Leader of the Council) responded to questions put by Councillors Steve Allsopp, Emma Faramarzi, Jane Milner-Barry, Maureen Penny, Jim Robbins and the Chair on the following matters:

- The metrics for measuring delivery of a campaign to determine its success, and the measuring and recording of whether those campaigns are obtaining value for money and achieving the goals of the Swindon Programme.
- How the resident survey indicated that residents are dissatisfied with the way the Council runs services, and how those concerns can be addressed.
- The complaints about the Council's website not being user friendly and the length of time taken for Customer Services to answer telephone calls, and what can be done to address those complaints.
- Those residents with no digital access, and the plans to cater for them.
- The ongoing problems with the telephone lines and staff not being trained / retained, and the need for a timetable for resolution to be within any report going to Cabinet on this issue.
- How the Council's website is primarily transactional rather than a source of information, and the plans to review and update it.
- The issues being experienced by residents trying to organise a bulky waste removal or to sign up for green waste bins, and what is being done to address those problems.

Resolved – That Minute 22 of the Cabinet be noted.

23. Membership of England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Forum

Councillor David Renard (Leader of the Council) responded to questions put by Councillor Brian Mattock and the Chair on the following matters:

- The potential for capital / revenue funding to be drawn to Swindon as a result of the Council's membership of this Forum.
- Whether negative air quality and environmental issues are discussed and addressed by the Forum.

Resolved – (1) That Minute 23 of the Cabinet be noted.

24. Kimmerfields Update

Councillor Garry Perkins (Cabinet Member for the Town Centre) responded to questions put by Councillors Steve Allsopp, Maureen Penny, Jim Robbins, Tim Swinyard and the Chair on the following matters:

- The proposals within the Town Centre Movement Strategy to draw more businesses to the town centre and improve footfall.
- Consideration of the potential impact on traffic flow of the Fleming Way bus boulevard proposal.
- The number of bus bays proposed, and whether the number is enough to effectively manage the turnaround of services.
- The cost for producing the Kimmerfields plans, how much public money has been spent on the project so far, and how much private money has been attracted to the project.
- The potential location of parking spaces for out of town buses.
- The blocking of roads by buses, and plans to address this problem within the plans.

- Concerns over access to the rear of the Parade for the larger shops and how buses will be brought back on to Fleet Street.

Resolved – (1) That Minute 24 of the Cabinet be noted.

In response to a query raised by Councillor Jim Robbins, Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment, confirmed that consideration of the petition to take action to resolve the traffic issues in the Rodbourne area has now been added to the Cabinet Forward Plan.

12. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Town Centre

Councillor Garry Perkins (Cabinet Member for the Town Centre), 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:

- Provide the political leadership for:
 - the continued economic and cultural development and well-being of the Town Centre; and
 - key partners, e.g. InSwindon, Old Town Business Association.
- Ensure that the Council's agreed priorities within the portfolio are delivered.

In overseeing these areas, the Cabinet Member for the Town Centre is responsible for delivering the following Priorities and Pledges of Swindon's vision for 2016-2020:

- 3. Demolish the obsolete Carlton Street and Wyvern car parks and use the space for regeneration.
- 5. Replace the current Health Centre in the town centre with a new and improved facility.
- 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.
- 10. As part of the town's regeneration:
 - Re-develop the former Aspen House site / Granville Street area, to extend on the successful Regent Circus development.
 - Make Havelock Square an attractive, safe open space to complement local shops.
- 11. Replace the current bus station with a new and modern facility.
- 12. Improve the town centre road network to pave the way for the Kimmerfields development.
- 21. Secure a new Museum and Art Gallery that can showcase the high quality art and exhibits that we possess.
- 22. Support the development of the new regional leisure destination at North Star.
- 23. Long term to:
 - Secure a sustainable future for the Mechanics Institute; and
 - Support the redevelopment of the Corn Exchange.

Councillor Perkins responded to the observations and questions put by Councillors Emma Famarzi, Brian Mattock, Jane Milner-Barry, Maureen Penny, Jim Robbins, Tim Swinyard, Steve Weisinger and the Chair on the following matters:

- The potential use of 'Swindon Works' as a strapline for the Council.

- Whether the returns predicted by Forward Swindon in terms of attracting new custom in to the Carriage Works has been realised.
- The attractiveness of the rents at the Carriage Works compared to Reading or Bristol, and if new clients have been attracted as a result.
- Improving the signage around the Carriage Works area to indicate where to park and where the main entrance is.
- Cranfield University being a potential client for the Carriage Works.
- The plans to improve the tracts of unused land across the Borough to make the sites look more attractive.
- The proposal from a private company to temporarily use the Kimmerfields site which would have generated income for the Council, and the reasons why this proposal was turned down.
- The potential temporary uses of the museum site which could generate income for the Council, which the Cabinet Member agreed to pursue subsequent to the meeting.
- If advertising for Steam will increase with the aim of increasing footfall.
- Why the last private company to have title for the Mechanic Institute now appears to be active again.
- The latest position with regards to the commercial interest in the hotel plot on the Kimmerfields site.
- Potential sites for the new museum building, including the former Wilkinson's building and the House of Fraser building.
- Whether the Health Hydro will fall within the boundaries of the Heritage Action Zone. The Cabinet Member undertook to pursue this further with planning officers subsequent to the meeting.
- The plans for improving the environmental offer for the residents of the proposed 2000 units of residential housing that will be built in the town centre.
- The number of shops expected to be lost from the town centre.
- The expected length of time it will take to seek recompense for the expenditure on the Mechanics Institute that the Council had to spend during the time the company was not operating, and its potential use as the new museum.

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.

13. Work Programme 2018/2019

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services setting out the topics for inclusion in the 2018/19 Scrutiny Work Programme as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 18th June 2018.

The Chair referred to the attendance of the relevant Police Inspector at a future meeting of this Committee, and advised that the invitation had been declined. The Committee noted that the Leader of the Council will be following up on this matter.

The Committee noted that the Chair had met with the new Chief Executive to discuss the update report on the outsourcing and delivery of services, and that it is on track to be discussed by this Committee during the current Municipal Year. The Averages Task Group should also be convening again shortly.

Resolved – That the Work Programme for 2018/2019 be noted.

14. 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.

It was queried and confirmed that UK Broadband has not yet provided a heatmap of its consumers as requested by this Committee at its meeting on 18th June 2018, and that it will be circulated to members of this Committee once available.

Resolved – That the report on the status of outstanding issues and member requests for information be noted.