

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 6 JUNE 2012

PRESENT:- Councillors Kevin Small (Chair), Peter Heaton-Jones (Vice-Chair), Toby Elliott, Claire Ellis, Brian Ford, Richard Hurley, Colin Lovell, Des Moffatt, Maureen Penny, James Robbins and David Wood

Councillors Roderick Bluh, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet, David Renard, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Mark Edwards, Cabinet Member for Finance, and Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for One Swindon, Localities and Housing, were also in attendance.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor John Ballman

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.

2. Public Question Time

No public questions were asked.

3. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 12th and 26th March be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. Presentation by the Leader of the Council

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Councillor Roderick Bluh, the Leader of the Council, attended this first meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in the Municipal Year 2012/13 to report to the Committee on the Council's performance in 2011/12, particularly in relation to delivery against the Administration's specific priorities and targets, and on the Cabinet's plans and priorities for 2012/13 and beyond.

Councillor Bluh introduced his report, placing it in the context of a continuing challenging economic and financial situation and summarising outcomes in 2011/12 and priorities for the year ahead in relation to each of the four One Swindon themes (set out in the report), the "Stronger Together" organisational restructure and the financial management of the Council.

Following his presentation of the report, members were given the opportunity to put questions to the Leader of the Council. Issues raised by members included:

- the Leader's view of the role of overview and scrutiny in the Council's decision making and policy development framework and its involvement in the furtherance of One Swindon objectives
- policy development specific to the rural areas
- the mechanism for Overview and Scrutiny's contribution to policy development

- the involvement of Cabinet Members in the development of Overview and Scrutiny work programmes
- the anticipated nature of the future working relationship between the Council and the new Police and Crime Commissioner, to be appointed in November 2012
 - the achievement of a correct balance between rural and urban policing arrangements
- work to improve the major gateways to the town, particularly in relation to poorly maintained and redundant signage
- the Council's duty to protect vulnerable members of the community, the increased emphasis towards independent living and the lack of provision of new sheltered accommodation
- the level of cross-party working in relation to policy development
- the increasing levels of expenditure on litter collection and the reduced resources available to combat fly tipping
- the effectiveness of the Core Strategy as the main strategic document for the future development of the "Greater Swindon" area
- the Council's proposals to create new jobs locally, particularly for young people
- the future of the "old College" on Victoria Hill
- the Council's consideration of a permanent commemoration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee
- the "Stronger Together" restructuring and the availability of detailed information for members regarding appropriate officer contacts
- media reports regarding the Chief Executive's voluntary pay limitation
- the funding of proposed improvements to the appearance of Commercial Road and the timescale for the improvements
 - the implications for the redevelopment of Granville Street
- the lobby for fairer rail ticket prices for journeys to and from Swindon and the recognition of Scrutiny's role in lobbying for a changed fare structure
- the planning and consultation processes in relation to the Croft School site and lessons learned that might be applied to the proposed new town centre school development
 - the likely effect of controversy around the Croft School decision on admissions
- the future of the Health Hydro and the retention of the swimming baths
- the role of the Locality Leads, the devolution of budgets to localities and the precise nature of the relationship between Ward Councillors and Locality Leads
- the Scrutiny review of the operation and decision making processes of the localities
- the sub-contracting of work by Swindon Commercial Services

The Chair thanked Councillor Bluh for his informative presentation and for his full and open responses to members' questions.

5. Work Programme 2012/13

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services on the results of the 2012/13 Overview and Scrutiny work programme consultation exercise and inviting the Committee to agree a rolling work programme for the

Scrutiny Committee for 2012/13, taking into account the issues raised in the Leader of the Council's presentation to this meeting, the results of the consultation exercise and presentations by the Cabinet Members for Finance and One Swindon on their own identified priorities for the year.

Resolved – (1) That, subject to the minor amendments to the programming of items referred to during the debate of this item, the draft work programme 2012/13, tabled at the meeting, be approved.

(2) That it be noted that the approved work programme is necessarily flexible in order to accommodate any issues arising, or changes in priorities, over the period of the year.

(3) That it be noted that a report on the establishment of a "Localities Sub-Group" of the Scrutiny Committee, to consider the decision making processes of the various Localities, and the appointment of members to that Sub group and the Budget Working Group would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

(4) That the following review topics, identified by Councillor Moffatt, be referred to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Chairs for consideration for inclusion in their respective work programmes for 2012/13:

- Capital Provision for schools
- Use of the Housing Revenue Account and Housing rent Account to address the current housing crisis.