

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2012**

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Kevin Small (Chair), Peter Heaton-Jones (Vice-Chair), John Ballman, Toby Elliott, Claire Ellis, Brian Ford, Richard Hurley, Colin Lovell, Des Moffatt, James Robbins, Robert Wright and John Haines.

Councillors Roderick Bluh, Dale Heenan, Russell Holland, Brian Mattock, Garry Perkins, David Renard, Vera Tomlinson and Keith Williams were also in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Maureen Penny and Councillors Mark Edwards, Cabinet Member for Finance, and Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Streetsmart and Corporate Services.

### **27. Councillor Keith Williams**

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair welcomed Councillor Keith Williams to the meeting, following his recent injury, and wished him a speedy and full recovery.

### **28. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

### **29. Public Question Time**

Mr Brian Cockbill put questions regarding:

1. the details of petitions submitted as part of the Community Governance Review;
2. the position on the recovery of monies owed to the Council in respect of its initial Wi-Fi project;
3. damage to the Mechanics Institute;
4. the implications of the Standards Committee Hearing Panel decision of Friday 19 October 2012 and the likelihood of changes being made to the composition of the Council's Cabinet as a result of that decision, and the status of an application by a family member for housing grant;
5. comments that Mr Cockbill attributed to the Leader of the Council regarding the Council's investment in the Wi-Fi project.

Mr Cockbill's question nos. 1 and 4 were answered by the Chair at the meeting. The Chair asked that a written response be made regarding his question no. 3 and advised that his questions regarding the Wi-Fi project would be deferred to be answered at the next meeting of the Committee, when the Wi-Fi project update report was to due be considered.

30.

## Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

31.

## Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 17 October 2012.

49. *Adoption of the Corporate Strategy 2012/13*

Resolved - That Minute 49 of the Cabinet be noted

50. *An Economic Strategy for Swindon*

Resolved - That Minute 50 of the Cabinet be noted

51. *Swindon Borough Local Plan - Pre-Submission Draft (Minute for Confirmation)*

Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, and Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture, responded to members' questions and observations on the following matters:

- the inclusion of Martins Farm, Moredon Rec and Pickards Field within the proposed extended green strategic corridor
- the first phase of the town centre redevelopment
- the eastern development and the impact of an expanding growth area for the town on private businesses
- the impact of local plan proposals on land values
- delivery of the necessary infrastructure to support the delivery of housing
- the timing and extent of the proposed consultation period.

Resolved - That Minute 51 of the Cabinet be noted

52. *Financial Update 2012-13 and 2013-14*

The Board Director Finance, Revenues, Benefits and Property was asked to provide a written response to a query by Councillor Des Moffatt regarding an apparent virement of funding to support the Big Arts Day.

Resolved - That Minute 52 of the Cabinet be noted.

53. *Draft Local Bus Strategy 2012*

Resolved - That Minute 53 of the Cabinet be noted.

54. *Draft Statement of Community Involvement*

Resolved - That Minute 54 of the Cabinet be noted.

55. *Review of Town Twinning*

Councillor Brian Ford remarked on the considerable work and effort of the late Councillor Doreen Dart in support of the council's town twinning aspirations. The Chair acknowledged and welcomed Councillor Ford's comments and expressed his own appreciation of Councillor Dart's efforts and also his hope that the Cabinet and senior members would continue to build on Councillor Dart's work in this area.

Resolved - That Minute 55 of the Cabinet be noted

56. *Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes 2012/13*

Resolved - That Minute 56 of the Cabinet be noted.

It was agreed that information requested by individual members during the course of the Committee's consideration of this item should be forwarded to the Committee Clerk for distribution to Scrutiny Committee members.

**32. Question and Answer - Cabinet Member for a Safer and Stronger Borough**

Councillor Vera Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for a Safer and Stronger Borough, was in attendance and made a position statement to the meeting in which she summarised performance in respect of the various service areas within her portfolio of responsibility, focussing especially on community safety and environmental services. Councillor Tomlinson's presentation included her assessment of what she felt had been done well, what might have been done differently and what challenges her portfolio would face over the next year. On the conclusion of her presentation, Councillor Tomlinson, supported by the Council's Head of Public Protection and Streetsmart and its Environmental Services Manager, responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following topics:

- community safety and reduced crime levels in the Swindon area
- the apparent decline in recorded instances of anti-social behaviour and the method of recording such incidents
- the status of legislation to facilitate work with the police in relation to the merger of community safety teams and their alignment with licensing issues and activities
- the funding for a focused project to tackle an area of alcohol harm
- Swindon as the lead pilot programme for the Ministry of Justice in developing neighbourhood Justice Panels
- the positive parliamentary response to the policing of the supply of so-called "legal highs", this partly as a result of the work done by the Community Safety Teams in Swindon
- the safe storage and sale of fireworks from temporary locations and the inspection of such high risk premises
  - the officer's commitment to notify ward members of the identification and inspection of premises used for the temporary sale of fireworks
  - the Cabinet Member's commitment to review the issue of the licensing of premises used for the temporary sale of fireworks
- issues around the re-designation of categories of anti-social behaviour

- the community safety service, the proposed merger of community safety teams and the case for the retention and continuation of the dedicated Swindon Community Safety Team
- the effect of Government changes to anti-social behaviour orders
- proposed changes in relation to the future positioning of the Council's planning enforcement service
- the effectiveness of the neighbourhood policing team
- the extent of drug and alcohol misuse and the effectiveness of current strategies in dealing with drug and alcohol misuse related problems
- issues around the licensing of premises to sell alcohol, particularly regarding the position of smaller independent traders
- noise nuisance abatement and food standards services
- proposals to control of the use of A Boards
- the Streetwatch pilot project and briefings for members regarding the project
- the failure to properly brief ward members on the development of the Neighbourhood Justice Panels pilot programme
- issues around the safe and warm scheme
- domestic violence and partnership working to better identify and respond to incidences of domestic violence
  - consultation on the Domestic Violence Strategy and the incorporation into the associated action plan of the recommendations of the Safer and Stronger Overview Committee's Task Group on this issue
  - provisions for safeguarding male victims of domestic violence
- the lack of "flexibility" and manoeuvrability within the existing town centre CCTV network and improvements that might be facilitated by the new 4G project
- the transfer of budgets currently controlled by the Council to the new Police and Crime Commissioner (to be appointed in November 2012) and related funding issues
- the Council's particular involvement in policing the Olympics for counterfeit items and ambush marketing

Resolved - (1) That Councillor Vera Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for a Safer and Stronger Borough, and her support officers, be thanked for attending the meeting and for their full and open responses to members' questions on service areas and issues within the Cabinet Member's portfolio of responsibility.

(2) That the Head of Streetsmart's commitment to convening ward member briefings on the details of the pilot Streetwatch scheme be welcomed.

(In accordance with the National Code of Local Government Conduct, Councillor Bob Wright made a non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of the Committee's consideration of matters relating to domestic violence. Councillor Wright's declaration was in his capacity as a trustee of an organisation concerned with cases of domestic violence.)

### **33. Budget Advisory Task Group**

Resolved – (1) That a Budget Advisory Task Group of the Scrutiny Committee be established, to scrutinise and inform the Council's budget setting processes. That the membership of the Task Group reflect the overall political balance on the Council at present (2 Conservatives, 1 Labour and 1 Liberal Democrat).

(2) That the political groups advise the Committee Clerk of their group's appointments to the Task Group at the earliest opportunity.