

## **CABINET**

**WEDNESDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2012**

PRESENT:- Councillors Roderick Bluh (Chair), David Renard (Vice-Chair), Mark Edwards, Fionuala Foley, Dale Heenan, Russell Holland, Brian Mattock, Garry Perkins, Vera Tomlinson and Keith Williams.

Councillors Michael Dickinson and Bob (Robert) Wright attended the meeting in respect of Minute 60.

### **57. 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 Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of Agenda item 5 (Community Governance Review) as he had made formal submissions to the Council as part of the Community Governance Review Process.

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for One Swindon, Localities and Housing, made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of Agenda item 5 (Community Governance Review) as he was a resident of Stratton St Margaret and a ward councillor for St Margaret and South Marston.

### **58. Minutes**

Resolved – (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

(2) That, further to Minute 51 concerning the Pre-Submission Draft of the Swindon Borough Local Plan, the Cabinet reiterates its support for the designation on the Proposals Map for Martins Farm, Moredon Rec and Pickards Field as Strategic Green Corridors (Policy EN1).

### **59. Public Question Time**

The following questions were asked in accordance with Standing Order 28 –

#### Questioner

Mr Brian Cockbill, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon.

#### Question

(1) Can the Council explain why, as the result of a non-response to an email to an officer of the Council, the opportunity to review the submissions made in respect of the Community Governance Review of Swindon had been restricted to a few minutes prior to this meeting?

(2) Would the submissions made as part of the Community Governance Review of Swindon be made publically available on the Council's website?

- (3) Further to the outcome of a recent Standards Committee hearing reported in the local press, who will be responsible for delivering the training referred to and how will the success of that training be measured?

Response

The Chair thanked for Mr Cockbill his questions. The Chair and the Director of Law and Democratic Services responded at the meeting to the questions. The Chair advised that he would arrange for a fuller written response to be provided to the questions relating to the Community Governance Review.

Questioner

Mr Paul Russell, Parish Clerk on behalf of Stratton St Margaret Parish Council, Swindon.

Question

Can the Leader of the Council confirm that Cabinet Members and members of the Corporate Governance Review Working Group have received copies of the submission made by Stratton St Margaret Parish Council setting out the parish council's concerns and comments on the recommendations contained in Agenda Item 5 on the Community Governance Review of Swindon?

Mr Russell, on behalf of Stratton St Margaret Parish Council, highlighted key aspects of the submission and the concerns held by his parish council. In particular he drew attention to the proposals for Stratton Woods, properties in Hyde Road and for the Headlands Grove area. He circulated proposal plans associated with these areas.

Response

The Chair thanked for Mr Russell and Stratton St Margaret Parish Council for their questions and submission. The Chair and the Director of Law and Democratic Services responded at the meeting to the questions and comments. The Chair advised that a fuller discussion would take place during the Cabinet's deliberations on Agenda item 5 on the Community Governance Review.

**60. Community Governance Review: References from Corporate Governance Review Working Group**

The Leader of the Council and the Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a joint report setting out recommendations arising from a meeting of the Corporate Governance Review Working Group held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012, that had considered the draft proposals to be issued for consultation as the next stage of the Community Governance Review of Swindon.

The Chair explained the background to the Community Governance Review of Swindon and highlighted the statutory criteria that governed the process which the Council was required to follow. He commented on the progress of the Review and the related consultation process. He referred to the work undertaken by the "cross-party" Corporate Governance Review Working Group at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and explained the reasons why the Working Group had agreed the recommendations for the draft proposals for future parish arrangements in Swindon. He emphasised that the Working Group had made its recommendations having

regard to the submissions received from interested parties to the Community Governance Review and on the evidence made available to it.

The Chair referred to the recent submission made by Stratton St Margaret Parish Council, that had been circulated to members of the Cabinet and the Corporate Governance Review Working Group, and to the comments of the Parish Clerk made earlier in the meeting and by parish representatives at the Cabinet Open Forum. He welcomed the parish's submission and expressed his belief that the Working Group had shown a consistency in approach when reviewing all the submissions it had received. He emphasised the importance of the provision of evidence to support submissions and statements within submissions and his belief that the publication of the draft proposals for consultation would enable interested parties to gather further information and support for their preferred options. The provision of such information in support of proposals, or in favour of alternatives, or amended proposals would ensure a robust review and make the Council's role in reaching final recommendations much more straightforward.

Councillor Michael Dickinson, member of the Corporate Governance Review Working Group, referred to the way in which the Working Group had considered the submissions received in respect of the first phase of the Community Governance Review of Swindon. He gave his personal view on the submissions received and on the recommended draft proposals. He reiterated the importance of evidence to support statements in submissions and referred to the recent submission by Stratton St Margaret Parish Council and the comments made earlier in the meeting. He commented on the need to "secure more effective and convenient community governance" and referred to submissions that sought to change polling districts or establish ones with no electors. He could not see how such actions would result in either effective or convenient community governance. He noted that the Working Group had considered some submissions that appeared logical and sensible but had failed to provide the necessary supporting evidence that would enable the Working Group to promote them as draft proposals. He hoped that all those who had made submissions would do further work during the phase two consultation process to provide clear evidence in support of their proposals.

Councillor David Renard, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, advised that he had been requested by the Seven Fields Nature Conservation Group to place on record their support for the Haydon Wick Parish Council submission regarding the area of the Seven Fields Nature Reserve. The Chair advised this would be noted for the second phase of the Review.

Councillor Bob Wright, deputy member serving on the Corporate Governance Review Working Group, referred to the discussions that had taken place at the Working Group prior to it making recommendations to the Cabinet on the submissions it had received. He emphasised the need for evidence to be provided in support of submissions, and for those wishing to see changes to consult with and gain the support of the communities affected. He also referred to the population size of parish councils and how this linked to their ability to deliver real outcomes for their residents. He hoped that the Council would take this into account when considering proposals for "new" parishes or amended parish council boundaries.

The Chair expressed his thanks to the officers and to the members of the Corporate Governance Review Working Group for their hard work in respect of the

Community Governance Review. As a member of that Working Group he was aware of how involved all Members had been in the process and how seriously they had undertaken the analysis of the submissions made. He believed the next stage of the consultation process provided the opportunity for all interested parties to come forward with evidence in support of the draft proposals, or to reject or support alternatives to those proposals.

Resolved – (1) That the contents of the report on the Community Governance Review of Swindon submitted to the Corporate Governance Review Working Group on 11th October 2012, as set out in Appendix 1 to the joint report be noted.

(2) That the recommendations arising from the meeting of the Corporate Governance Review Working Group on 11th October 2012, as set out in Appendix 2 of the joint report, be approved as the Council's draft Proposals in relation to the Community Governance Review of Swindon.

(3) That the Director of Law and Democratic Services be authorised to finalise and issue the draft Proposals as referred to in (2) above for consultation as the next stage of the Community Governance Review of Swindon.

(Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of the above item as he had made formal submissions to the Council as part of the Community Governance Review Process.)

(Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for One Swindon, Localities and Housing, made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of the above item as he was a resident of Stratton St Margaret and a ward councillor for St Margaret and South Marston.)

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.