

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 29 JULY 2013

PRESENT:- Councillors Kevin Small (Chair), Andrew Bennett, John Ballman, Michael Dickinson (Vice-Chair), Emma Faramarzi, Brian Ford, Cindy Matthews, Des Moffatt, Maureen Penny, Stan Pajak, Robert Wright, Michael Bray and Steve Weisinger

Councillors Brian Mattock, Deputy Leader of the Council , Vice-Chair of Cabinet, and Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, Claire Ellis, Cabinet Member for Customer Support and Corporate Services, Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Richard Hurley, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery), and Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Culture, were also in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Mary Friend and Colin Lovell and from Councillors David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet, and Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure.

12. Declarations of Interest

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

13. Public Question Time

No public questions were asked.

14. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 17th June and 1st July 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

15. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 24 July 2013.

26. *Education Matters - School Transport*

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Councillor Garry Perkins, the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Culture, responded to questions put by Councillors Bob Wright, Andrew Bennett and Maureen Penny regarding:

- the highway and transportation impact of the Council's School Place Planning Strategy and the associated Education Transport Policy
 - the suggestion that the provision of a greater number of good quality local schools is the most appropriate way of reducing educational transport costs

- the success of the consultation exercise in influencing the development of the revised Education Transport Policy
- the position of parents in rural areas whose first choice for school places cannot be met
- demographic factors influencing the availability of school places
 - the exacerbation of future placement pressures when children continuing to attend a school after the family has moved out of the catchment area
- the feasibility of providing free public transport to all schools across the borough
- the importance of ensuring that parents are aware of potential education transport costs when making their school placement choices

Resolved - That Minute 26 of the Cabinet be noted.

27. *Swindon Borough Council Housing Tenancy Strategy*

Councillor Richard Hurley, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery), responded to questions put by members regarding:

- action proposed to be taken by the Council to assure vulnerable tenants, particularly residents of Category 1 and Category 2 sheltered housing schemes, that their tenancies will be unaffected by any revised Housing Allocations Policy
- the requirement under the Localism Act for Councils to prepare housing tenancy strategies and the level of discretion available to individual Councils in developing that strategy
- the initial period of fixed term tenancies, as proposed in the draft strategy document appended to the Cabinet report
- the nature and extent of the proposed consultation to inform the Housing Allocations Policy
- the Council's response to tenants' groups initial, negative reception of the draft housing strategy document
- the implications of the proposed strategy for the housing accommodation aspirations of current Band C applicants and the importance that any strategy should prioritise those individuals with the greatest genuine housing need
- the recognition of the significant benefits that can accrue from extended familial support for vulnerable adults and the potential for this support to be recognised within the allocations policy
- the definition of the term "formal volunteer", used in the report
- the option to review tenancies and the relative insecurity of a fixed tenancy period of even 10 years
 - criteria for the review of fixed term tenancies
- the potential for political gain as a result of a reduced housing waiting list following the introduction of a revised allocations policy
- the proposed housing tenancy strategy and the potential for legal challenges on grounds of inequality of opportunity
- the continuing review of the housing tenancy strategy in relation to income ratios and other pertinent housing market factors
- the average length of a council housing tenancy
- the position of the majority group on the Council on the issue of future Swindon expansion

Resolved - That Minute 27 of the Cabinet be noted.

28. *Sussex Square Regeneration*

Councillor Richard Hurley, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery), and Councillor Brian Mattock, Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice-Chair of Cabinet, and Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, responded to questions put by Councillors Andrew Bennett, Des Moffatt and Bob Wright regarding:

- the availability of Section 106 Planning Agreement monies to support this project
- the source of the £2.5m capital receipts to be used to support the project
- the total number of residential units to be provided through the regeneration project
- the role of the HRA in funding the scheme and the retention within the HRA of receipts accruing from the lease of the retail units
- the proposal that the social housing element of the project will be based on affordable rents
- the likelihood of HCA monies being made available to support the scheme

Resolved - That Minute 28 of the Cabinet be noted.

29. *Budget Management 2013/14*

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, responded to a question put by Councillor Andrew Bennett regarding the agreement to delay the requisite increase in the pension deficit payments to be made by Thamesdown Transport Limited.

Resolved - That Minute 29 of the Cabinet be noted.

30. *Capital Programme Monitoring - Fourth Quarter 2012/13*

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, supported by the Board Director Finance, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors Bob Wright and Des Moffatt regarding:

- the decision to reduce the village centres budget as part of the revenue budget process to reduce the impact on debt charges
 - the implications of that decision for village centre capital schemes, particularly the Toothill centre scheme
 - the lottery money given to the Toothill community and confirmation that this should not be used to subsidise local authority expenditure in that area
- the increase in the budget for highway works at Islington Street and the need to ensure that expenditure of Section 106 monies is used for the benefit of the community in the area of the associated development
- the use of unallocated "Sustrans" grant to support the budget increase
- the revenue effect of increased capital spend in the town centre

Resolved - That Minute 30 of the Cabinet be noted.

31. *Investing in a Families Contact Point, Clarence House, Swindon*

Resolved - That Minute 31 of the Cabinet be noted.

32. *Public Sector Transformation*

Resolved - That Minute 32 of the Cabinet be noted.

33. *Swindon Town Centre Car Parking Rationalisation - Phase 2*

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Culture, responded to questions put by Councillors Bob Wright, Brian Ford, Stan Pajak, Des Moffatt and Mick Bray regarding:

- the annual operational costs associated with the new Whalebridge multi-storey car park
 - the capital cost of the new car park in relation to the on-going financial pressures faced by the Council
 - options to the proposed decommissioning and landscaping of smaller surface car parks in the town centre
- the design of new and replacement town centre buildings to make them more secure and less open to criminal invasion and damage
 - the use of Police Authority architectural services to aid in the “designing out” of crime
- the current level of the Council’s Regeneration Reserve budget
- the Cabinet Member’s projections regarding the future commercial occupancy of the Kimmerfields site
- the status of Cabinet Member’s previously expressed hope that the Wyvern Theatre might be extended as part of the town centre development proposals
- the implications of the proposed closure of the Wyvern multi-storey car park for the many disabled drivers who use that car park and for patrons of the Menzies Hotel who also use that car park

Resolved - That Minute 33 of the Cabinet be noted.

34. *Options Appraisal - Leisure and Culture Commissioning*

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Culture, responded to questions put by the Chair and Councillors John Ballman, Bob Wright:

- backlog maintenance and clarification of the backlog maintenance total
- the cost of the refurbishment and future maintenance of the Milton Road facility as the main driver for the proposed options appraisal and the possibility that an alternative solution, specifically focussed on the future of that facility, might have been neglected
- the absence from the report of information about the revenue implications of the elements of capital spend detailed in the report
- the implications of the proposals for the future ownership of the Milton Road facility

Resolved - That Minute 34 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.

16. Cabinet Member Question and Answer - Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure

It was noted that Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure, was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments and that, consequently, this item would be deferred for consideration at a future meeting.