

CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2013

PRESENT:- Councillors David Renard (Chair), Brian Mattock (Vice-Chair), Russell Holland, Mike Bawden, Fionuala Foley, Claire Ellis, Dale Heenan, Richard Hurley, Garry Perkins and Keith Williams.

Councillor Jim Grant attended the meeting in respect of Minutes 64, 65 and 67.
Councillor Stan Pajak attended the meeting in respect of Minutes 64, 65, 67, 71 and 74. Councillor Nadine Watts attended the meeting in respect of Minute 70.

60. Declarations of Interest

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

61. Minutes

Resolved –That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

62. Public Question Time

Questioner

Mrs Shirley Burnham, Old Town, Swindon

Question

Mrs Burnham asked if the Chair would advise Cabinet Members of the statistics for library book issues at Walcot Library over the five year period 2007/08 – 2011/12 and, given these, justify the Cabinet's approach to the Libraries Strategy and the proposal for the use of more volunteers and increased community involvement in the Borough's other smaller libraries?

Response

The Chair thanked Mrs Burnham for her question and comments and advised that a response had been prepared and circulated at the meeting.

Mrs Burnham asked a supplementary question relating to the written response and asked whether she was permitted to share information regarding Library provision provided to her by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure that was not currently in the public domain.

The Chair and Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure, responded at the meeting to the questions and comments.

Questioner

Mr Brian Cockbill, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon

Questions

Mr Cockbill asked a series of questions concerning -

- (a) Information provided under the Freedom of Information Act regarding complaints against Swindon Councillors; and
- (b) The wording of a Motion to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council;
- (c) The decision for Swindon Library to log details of people wishing to view the Swindon Electoral Register.

Response

The Chair thanked Mr Cockbill for his questions and comments and advised that a response had been prepared and circulated at the meeting.

Mr Cockbill asked supplementary questions relating to the written responses he had received to his questions.

The Chair and the Director of Law and Democratic Services responded at the meeting to the questions and comments.

Questioner

Mrs Martha Parry, Swindon Civic Trust

Question

Mrs Parry asked that, further to Agenda Item 15 concerning the Community Right to Challenge, could Cabinet Members confirm that the Council would not consider any approach made by a community or voluntary sector organisation as “an aggressive act” if it were to make an application under the Community Right to Challenge?

Response

The Chair thanked Mrs Parry for her question and comments. The Chair and the Director of Law and Democratic Services responded at the meeting to the question and to comments arising.

Questioner

Mr Tim French, Cassan Road, Swindon

Question

Mr French asked questions regarding the possible acquisition of new buses by Thamesdown Transport Ltd., and the traffic and pedestrian access arrangements associated with the Regent Circus development currently taking place in Swindon Town Centre.

Response

The Chair thanked Mr French for his questions. The Chair, Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure, and Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture responded at the meeting to the questions and comments.

63. Adult Community Learning - Outcome of Ofsted Inspection

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Board Director, Commissioning submitted a joint report setting out the findings of the Ofsted

Inspection of Adult Community Learning.

Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, referred to the importance of Adult Community Learning and the benefits it brought to Swindon and the individuals involved. She welcomed the success of Swindon's Adult Community Learning team and highlighted the improved Ofsted finding of Ofsted Grade 2 "Good". She emphasised the hard work and commitment of Ms Sally Burnett, Commissioner, Routes to Employment, and Mr Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning Economy and Attainment, who had guided the process and the team to this successful Ofsted result.

The Chair added his congratulations and thanks to the Adult Community Learning Team. He highlighted the service's focus on enhancing employment opportunities and drew attention to the significant progress that had been made in the three years since the last Ofsted inspection.

Resolved – (1) That the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection of Swindon's Adult Community Learning, particularly the overall grade and strengths identified, be noted, and the proposed future action endorsed.

(2) That the Board Director, Commissioning, the Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment, the Commissioner, Routes to Employment, and all the staff responsible for Adult Community Learning be congratulated on the very positive findings from the recent Ofsted Inspection of Adult Community Learning and thanked for their hard work.

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

64. Proposed Changes to the Waste Collection Service

The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery), the Board Director, Service Delivery and the Head of Public Protection and Streetsmart submitted a joint report concerning the responses to the consultation that had taken place on proposed changes to the household waste collection services, in particular for the collection of green waste. (Minute 55 of the Cabinet refers.)

Councillor Richard Hurley, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery), reiterated the significant financial challenges the Council and the service faced. He explained the reasons for the proposed changes to waste collection services and referred to the findings of the consultations that had taken place. A revised updated Appendix 3 setting out an analysis of consultation responses had previously been circulated to Cabinet Members and was tabled at the meeting.

Councillor Hurley welcomed the high public response to the consultation and highlighted the issues that had been raised and the Council's response to these. He advised that the Cabinet had listened to residents concerns and thus was now recommending a revised approach to how interested residents should pay for the proposed new green waste service.

Councillor Jim Grant, Leader of the Opposition, noted the consultation results and the demographic of respondents. He asked if the Cabinet recognised

that the introduction of the charge would hit pensioners and those on low income hardest.

Councillor Hurley reiterated the significant financial challenges the Council faced. Residents had the choice whether to participate in the service or not. He reminded Members that up until 2006 the Council had charged £1 a bag for collection of green waste and that the current proposal would result in a charge equivalent to approximately £1 a week. This would be for a significantly improved service overcoming many of the problems residents experienced with the existing green bags about which they had expressed concerns. He highlighted that many other local authorities offered very similar services to that proposed in Swindon with charges that were also similar for participants.

Councillor Stan Pajak, Leader of the Minority Group on the Council, welcomed the excellent public response to the consultation and that he hoped the Cabinet would take the findings into account in its decision-making. He asked whether it would be practical for those residents who, because of the nature of their properties, would continue to receive a weekly household waste collection also to have their recycled waste collected at the same time to avoid storage problems. He also noted that some local authorities that provided a paid for green waste service offered concessionary discounts to entitled residents.

Councillor Hurley thanked Councillors for their contributions and suggestions that he would look into. He also reiterated his thanks to those who had participated in the consultation and his belief that the report's recommendations indicated that the Council had listened to the views expressed.

Resolved – (1) That the consultation responses received to date and those circulated prior to and tabled at the meeting, and as set out in (the revised) Appendix 3 to the joint report, be noted.

(2) That, having regard to the outcome of the consultation exercise referred to in the joint report and in the revised Appendix 3 to that report, the Head of Public Protection and Streetsmart be authorised to implement the changes to the household waste collection service on the basis set out within the joint report (paragraphs 3.9 and 3.17 refer).

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

**65. Budget Management 2013/14 and Draft Budget 2014/-15
(Minute for Confirmation - Minute 65(5))**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and the Board Director, Resources submitted a joint report setting out (a) the current forecast outturn position of the Council's Revenue Budget as at the end of October 2013, (b) issues impacting on the Council's finances, including Council Tax Support and the funding for development work associated with a possible Solar Sound Barrier development, (c) the current forecast position for the Housing Revenue Account and the Dedicated Schools Grant, (d) the context for the Council's Budget for 2014/15 and for the Medium Term Financial Plan, including funding assumptions for 2014/15, and (e) draft Budget proposals for 2014/15 for consultation with residents and stakeholders.

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the

report and highlighted the financial challenges that the Council and the country faced. He commented that Swindon was both a low tax and a low funded local authority and that this, together with the service pressures it faced as a developing Borough, but one that reflected the national trend of having an aging population, resulted in significant demands on the limited funding that was available to it. He referred to the Council's determination to offer quality services to the most vulnerable in Swindon, but that this came at a significant cost with the majority of the Council's budget being allocated in these areas. He commented on the significant efforts made by Councillors, officers and partners to identify efficiencies and drive down costs and to ensure that Council Tax was kept low to help residents. This work was continuing and he thanked Members and Council staff for their commitment to this. He believed that Swindon was in a better position than many other local authorities as it was on course to deliver a balanced budget at the end of this financial year and to propose a projected balanced budget for 2014/15. However, this was at a cost and there were implications for staff, some services and local residents. The Government was also yet to announce the Local Government Finance Settlement and thus the implications of that for Swindon were not known at this time. He drew attention to the decisions that the Council would need to make on Council Tax for 2014/15 and to whether the Council would wish to accept the Government's Council Tax Freeze grant and a 0% increase or to increase Council Tax for the next financial year.

The Chair advised of the contents of letters that had been received from Haydon Wick and Covingham Parish Councils dated 11th December 2013 concerning Council Tax Support Grant. These had been tabled at the meeting.

Councillor Jim Grant, Leader of the Opposition, commented on the estimated gap in the Council's Budget before Council Tax Freeze Grant or a Council Tax increase had been agreed. He wondered how the Cabinet was going to consult on any savings that would be required to meet any shortfall in the budget once these decisions had been made and given that the Local Government Finance Settlement had not yet been announced.

Councillor Holland advised that it would be the decisions of the Council in February 2014 that would determine this but that the Council would either have an increase in Council Tax or the Council Tax Freeze Grant and therefore any "gap" would reflect this. The Cabinet had looked to identify potential contingencies should any shortfall be identified at that late stage in the budget setting process.

Councillor Stan Pajak, Leader of the Minority Group on the Council, welcomed the recognition that there were benefits in seeking an affordable increase in Council Tax. He suggested that residents' views should be sought on that issue. He expressed his support for funding feasibility work on the creation of a solar sound barrier. He referred to the issue of Council Tax Support Grant and his hope that the Council would decide to recommend that more than 50% of this should be passed to Swindon's parish and town councils for 2014/15. He also hoped that sufficient funding could be identified to support and enhance all of Swindon's libraries.

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, referred to the increases in car parking season ticket income and in planning application income and his belief that this was an indication of the local

economy's growing strength and the increasing effectiveness of the Council's economic policies.

The Chair welcomed the report and the hard work undertaken by Council Members and Officers to get to the current position. The Council was facing significant financial challenges but he believed it was well equipped to respond to those challenges and to continue to offer quality services to residents.

Resolved – (1) That the Cabinet notes the Projected Out-turn by Service 2013/14, as set out in Appendix 1 to the joint report, and the projected in-year General Fund underspend as summarised in Table 1 to that report, noting in particular:-

(a) That officers expect to be able to manage the Council's in-year finances within the 2013/14 Budget and that there is no need to make an allowance in the 2014/15 Budget to replenish General Reserves; and

(b) The in-year financial forecasts for the Housing Revenue Account and Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in the joint report.

(2) That the proposed budget virements, as set out in Appendix 2 to the joint report, be approved.

(3) That, in response to Minute 22 of Council, up to £20,000 be released from the Council's Corporate Contingency Fund to explore the feasibility of a solar sound barrier along the A419.

(4) That, in respect of the 2014/15 Budget, it be noted that –

(a) The financial implications of those proposals set out within Appendices 3 and 4 of the joint report and which either result from decisions taken by the Cabinet at previous meetings or by the Cabinet earlier in the meeting (Minute 64) will be progressed to implementation;

(b) The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2014/15 has yet to be published and therefore the funding assumptions in the joint report contain levels of uncertainty;

(c) The current gap between the assumed funding levels for 2014/15 and the current proposed cost of services is as set out in Table 3 to the joint report and that work is continuing to identify further options to close this gap for consideration by Members once actual funding levels are confirmed and before the Final Budget is recommended to Council in February 2014;

(d) The current draft Budget proposals assume a level of contingency of £1.62m and that the Council will need to take a view on the level of contingency it should hold to support the 2014/15 Budget in February 2014, based on the advice of the Section 151 Officer at that point;

(e) Severance payments in line with existing policy will be made to those individuals affected by the Budget proposals and that these will include payments to partner and external organisations where the payments will result in on-going savings for the Council;

(f) The impact on minority groups has been considered for all savings proposals and a full Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken where an impact was perceived;

(g) Work is progressing on the 2014/15 Budgets for the Housing Revenue Account and the Dedicated Schools Grant;

(h) A cost pressure of £1m has been included within the Draft Budget for 2014/15 to cover the cost of new Borrowing to support capital expenditure that is being incurred in 2013/14 and the likely amount required for 2014/15 (subject to Members' decision on new schemes in February 2014) plus additional financing costs for new longer-term Borrowing costs which are currently being financed

through cheaper short-term loans.

(5) That the Council be recommended to agree at its meeting on 23rd January 2014 that the Council Tax Support Scheme adopted by the Council for 2013/14 should continue unchanged throughout 2014/15.

(6) That consultation with service users, staff and other stakeholders on the detailed Draft Budget proposals for 2014/15 affecting front-line services, as set out in Appendix 4 to the joint report, that have yet to be approved by the Cabinet should commence, with feedback to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 6th February 2014 in advance of proposing the 2014/15 Final Budget to Council.

(7) That the letters received from Haydon Wick and Covingham Parish Councils be noted, and the passporting of £75,000 of Council Tax Support Grant from the Borough Council to Swindon town and parish councils in 2014/15, be supported.

(8) That the proposed 2014/15 Council Fees and Charges, as set out in Appendix 5 to the joint report, be approved.

(9) That, at this stage, the minimum level of General Reserves should be maintained at £5m, acknowledging that a decision on the level to be held to support the 2014/15 Budget will be taken in February 2014 with full knowledge of the details of the Local Government Finance Settlement and known risks at that time.

(10) That £140,000 be set aside from the existing one-off Community Enterprise Fund, set-up to support local community initiatives in support of the Stronger Together programme, to act as an innovation fund for Ward Councillors to spend in their local areas to support community capacity building activities.

(11) That the allocation of one-off funding from specific Council reserves, as set out in Table 4 of the joint report, be approved to support the implementation of 2014/15 Budget proposals, noting that some of this funding will need to be spent in the 2013/14 Financial Year.

(12) That officers be authorised to implement as soon as practicable those proposals for the 2014/15 Budget that represent efficiency measures, including those impacting on staff.

(13) That the Board Director, Service Delivery, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure, be authorised to enter into and conclude negotiations with Halcrow (CH2M), the current provider of Highways and Transport Consultancy services to the Council, for the extension of the existing contract for these services for a period of up to twelve months beyond the current contract expiry date of June 2014, and that the Director of Law and Democratic Services be authorised to enter into any relevant agreement or documentation on such terms and conditions as he considers necessary to protect the Council's interests.

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

66. Leisure and Culture Change Programme - Create Studios

The Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture and the Board Director, Service Delivery submitted a joint report concerning detailed proposals to establish Create Studios as an independent not for profit company and put in place a three year Funding Agreement 2014/ 2017 (Minute 14 refers).

Councillor Gary Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, referred to the background to the proposal to seek to establish Create

Studios as an independent not for profit company and to the process that had been adopted to establish it as a legal entity including consultation with a wide range of interested parties. He described the work undertaken by the Create Advisory Board to determine the best legal entity to take Create forward and explained why the proposed route was considered the most advantageous to Create, the Council and for service users. He commented on the recent correspondence sent to Cabinet Members from Swindon Viewpoint concerning the proposal. He was sure that Create would continue to work closely and build links and partnerships with local media arts providers to deliver the outcomes that residents and users wanted.

Resolved – (1) That the outcome of the additional consultation undertaken with local and regional users, stakeholders and partners, including the recent correspondence from Swindon Viewpoint, be noted.

(2) That, on the basis of the detailed business plan developed by Create Studios, the Director of Law and Democratic Services be authorised, in consultation with the Board Director, Service Delivery, Board Director Resources, and the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, to complete the relevant legal documentation on such terms as he considers necessary to protect the Council's interests, to enable Create Studios to transfer to a new, independent, Community Interest Company with a planned date for the transfer of staff to the new company of no later than 1st April 2014.

(3) That the proposed three-year Funding Agreement, referred to in the joint report, to be put in place with the new Create Studios company be approved and the Board Director, Service Delivery and the Director of Law and Democratic Services be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, to complete the final steps for the transfer of the relevant undertaking to the new company.

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

67. Swindon Museum and Art Gallery Relocation

The Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture and the Board Director, Service Delivery submitted a joint report concerning proposals to seek to identify a new home for the Swindon Art and Museum collections in order to meet the Council's aspirations.

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, explained the Council's aspirations for seeking a new home for its art and museum collections. He referred to the benefits to Swindon's economy of being seen to have a strong cultural offer in Swindon's Town Centre in order to increase its attractiveness to residents, potential residents and visitors alike. He highlighted how the proposals set out in the report would seek to achieve the Council's vision. He emphasised that a new facility was not likely to be achieved quickly and a great deal of work would have to be done but he believed by the commitment already shown by the Council, its partners and potential local benefactors it would be possible to deliver a new Art Gallery and Museum for Swindon. He referred to the work already undertaken around site selection and the link to the Town Centre Masterplan and Economic Strategy. He explained that work also affected the revised car parking proposals for the area and in particular for improving accessibility for those with disabilities to the Wyvern Theatre. Consideration was also being given to the storage and display of Swindon's museum and art

collections, particularly for those items not currently on public view.

Councillor Jim Grant, Leader of the Opposition, expressed his support for the project and stressed the importance of cultural transformation to the success of the Borough. He hoped that, at the appropriate stage, consideration could be given to holding an architectural competition to design a, hopefully, iconic building to house the collections.

Councillor Brian Mattock, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, welcomed the report and commented that whilst he would be sorry to see Old Town lose the Museum and Art Gallery he was pleased to see the commitment for it remaining at Apsley House in the interim.

Councillor Stan Pajak, Leader of the Minority Group on the Council, confirmed his support for the project and hoped that it would be successful.

Resolved – (1) That the recommendation in the Options Appraisal Report that Princes Street is the preferred location for a new Swindon Museum and Art Gallery, be approved.

(2) That the Board Director, Service Delivery and the Board Director, Commissioning be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, to commission further detailed feasibility work for a new Museum and Art Gallery within the context of a 'cultural quarter', that includes a new theatre at Princes Street, Swindon.

(3) That it be noted that that up to £20,000 of the proposed £50,000 feasibility budget will be funded by the Homes and Communities Agency Town Centre Master Plan budget, held by Forward Swindon Ltd., and it be agreed that the remainder be funded from the Council's Capital Feasibility budget.

(4) That the Board Director, Service Delivery and the Board Director, Commissioning, be authorised in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, to establish an appropriate project management and governance structure for the new Museum and Art Gallery Development Project, removing this activity from the Leisure and Culture Change Programme and transferring it to the Growing Economy Programme.

(5) That until a new Museum and Art Gallery facility is delivered the museum and art collections remain at Apsley House, Bath Road, Old Town, Swindon, and that the facility remain open to the public.

(6) That the Board Director, Service Delivery be authorised to use up to £50,000 of the previously agreed sum for a public realm scheme on the site of the Wyvern Multi Storey Car Park to fund the highways related costs of the site and to deliver access improvements to the newly designated Blue Badge car park at Regents Close near to the Wyvern Theatre, for customers with physical disabilities.

(7) That the cleared site following the demolition of the Wyvern Car Park be reinstated as a surface car park for Blue Badge holders for the time being, at a cost estimated at £50,000, allowing £250,000 of capital funding previously earmarked for a public realm scheme on the site to be saved.

(8) That the Board Director, Service Delivery and the Board Director, Commissioning be requested to report back to the Cabinet in the early summer 2014 on the detailed findings and recommendations of the Swindon Museum Storage feasibility work.

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

68. Capital Programme 2013/14 Second Quarter 2013/14

The Cabinet Member for Finance and the Board Director, Resources submitted a joint report setting out the 2013/14 Capital Programme position as at the end of September 2013.

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, referred to the report and explained that it addressed the projected outturn position of the Council's Capital Budget for 2013/14, highlighted proposed changes to the current Capital Programme, set out a proposed Equity Share Properties scheme, and detailed Mid-Year Treasury Management Performance.

Resolved – (1) That the 2013/14 Capital Programme position, as set out in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.5 of the joint report, be noted.

(2) That the changes to the Council's Capital Programme as set out in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.6 of the joint report, be approved.

(3) That a capital budget of £250,000 be approved to fund the proposal relating to equity share properties as set out in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.7 of the joint report.

(4) That the 2013/14 Mid-Year Treasury Management Performance, as set out in paragraphs 6.1 to 6.14 of the joint report, be noted.

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

69. Swindon Borough Council Housing Allocations Policy

The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery) and the Head of Housing Services submitted a joint report concerning a proposed new Swindon Borough Council Housing Allocations Policy to support the Tenancy Strategy that was agreed by the Cabinet in July 2013 (Minute 27 refers).

Councillor Richard Hurley, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery), referred to the proposed new Housing Allocations Policy and to what the new criteria would mean for new tenants and for those on the existing Council Housing Waiting List. He explained how the Tenancy and Allocations policies sought to work together to enable the Council to help those most in need of social housing. He highlighted the outcome of the consultation that had been undertaken to seek the views of tenants and other stakeholders on the proposed policy and explained how he believed the proposed Policy responded to concerns raised.

Resolved – (1) That the Swindon Housing Allocations Policy, as set out in Appendix 1 to the joint report be adopted.

(2) That the Head of Housing Services be authorised to implement the new Housing Allocations Policy in the financial year commencing on 1st April 2014 on such a date as he shall determine in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery).

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

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure and the Board Director, Service Delivery, submitted a joint report concerning proposals to update the Council's existing Library Strategy adopted in early 2011.

Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure, referred to the changes that had impacted the Council and the library service since 2011 and the significant financial challenges and service pressures the Council now faced. He commented on the experiences of local authorities around the country and the widespread closures of libraries that had been proposed or had occurred. He also noted the success elsewhere of developing greater community involvement in the running of local libraries. He highlighted the way libraries were changing with less demand for book loans and more emphasis on access to e-books, downloads, the internet and on events and learning activities. This trend was seen across the country and also in Swindon. He explained the plan to revise the existing strategy and the proposed consultation exercise and timetable associated with the updating of the strategy.

Councillor Nadine Watts, Old Town Ward Councillor, referred to the transfer of the Art Centre to the management of a private provider and to the concerns of local residents at the possible implication of this for the operation of the Studio Café and Library, particularly for opening times.

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, explained that the Council would still continue to operate the library service in the Arts Centre and the private provider would be responsible for the Café and that negotiations were currently taking place with the new operator about how this would work. It was expected that any new operator would seek to make improvements and changes over time, but the Council would be continuing to work with the company on many issues and this would be raised with them.

Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, referred to the continued success of Covingham Library and how visitor numbers increased once the library was open on Saturday mornings. He welcomed the involvement of volunteers to enhance services and noted that currently there were only three "Friends of" groups in Swindon supporting their local library.

Resolved – (1) That the Board Director, Service Delivery, be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure, to undertake consultation for twelve weeks to seek the views of the public and those interested in libraries on the draft updated Library Strategy as attached as Appendix 1 to the joint report.

(2) That a further report on the outcome and findings of the consultation on the draft updated Strategy, together with a final proposed revised Library Strategy be submitted to the Cabinet in June 2014.

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

71. Swindon Heritage Strategy (Minute for Confirmation)

The Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture and the Board Director, Service Delivery submitted a joint report concerning the outcome of the consultation exercise on the proposed Swindon Heritage Strategy and setting out a resulting updated Strategy for adoption by the Council (Minute 74, 2012/13 refers).

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, referred to the importance of protecting and promoting Swindon's heritage and to the many social and economic benefits that could result from the delivery of an effective Heritage Strategy across the Borough. He commented on the strategy and emphasised that its Action Plan sought only to set out the first steps to the delivery of the Strategy. This would be the first time that the Borough would have a clear strategy that could be taken into account as decisions were made across a range of subjects like planning and building design. He referred to the interest that already existed within Swindon for heritage issues as indicated by the interest in the consultation, in the work of the Heritage Board, and by the success of the locally produced Swindon Heritage magazine. The Strategy would aim to develop this interest for all residents over time.

Councillor Stan Pajak, Leader of the Minority Group on the Council, expressed his support for the Strategy and for the protection of Swindon's heritage, the diversity of which, he believed, was not that well known by the majority of its residents and should be promoted.

Resolved – (1) That the outcomes of the consultation undertaken with local and regional residents, stakeholders and partners on the draft Swindon Heritage Strategy, be noted.

(2) That the proposed Swindon Heritage Strategy, as set out in Appendix 1 to the joint report, be adopted by the Council as the key document that will guide all future decisions affecting the heritage of Swindon.

(3) That the Board Director, Service Delivery and the Swindon Heritage Board be supported in enabling the effective delivery of the Swindon Heritage Strategy.

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

72. Skills and Employment Strategy

The Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Board Director, Commissioning submitted a joint report concerning (a) a proposed Skills and Employment Strategy that had been developed to summarise the skills and employment priorities and activities that needed to take place to achieve the vision contained in the Council's adopted Economic Strategy, and (b) the governance arrangements for a Skills and Employment Board, a partnership group established to oversee the implementation of the proposed Strategy.

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Culture, and Councillor Fionuala Foley, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, commented on the purpose of the proposed Strategy and how it was

essential to support the delivery of the Council's Economic Strategy.

Councillor Perkins referred to the importance of the Council's strategic priority of "right skills, right jobs, in the right places" and how the Strategy was designed to address that priority. He emphasised that it was essential to have a skilled workforce to drive forward the local economy and that it was clear that Swindon did not have all the skills it needed. He commented on how the Strategy would address this and explained the role of the Skills and Employment Board in taking the matter forward. He referred to the contributions made at the Open Forum held prior to the Cabinet meeting by Mr Andy Tait, Business Enabling Manager, Europe, Middle East and Africa, Intel and Mr Stephen Uden, Head of Corporate Citizenship, Nationwide Building Society. These representatives of large employers within the Borough spoke in support of the proposed Strategy and highlighted the requirement that local businesses had for a skilled local workforce.

Resolved – (1) That the draft Skills and Employment Strategy for 2014-2016, as set out in Appendix 1 to the joint report, be approved.

(2) That the purpose of the Skills and Employment Board and its sub groups and the arrangements to deliver the Skills and Employment Strategy be noted and endorsed.

(3) That the Board Director, Commissioning be authorised to make arrangements for the implementation of the delivery of the Skills and Employment Strategy through the Skills and Employment Board and its sub groups.

(4) That the comments made at the meeting of the Open Forum held prior to the Cabinet meeting by Mr Andy Tait, Business Enabling Manager, Europe, Middle East and Africa, Intel and Mr Stephen Uden, Head of Corporate Citizenship, Nationwide Building Society, in support of the proposed Skills and Employment Strategy, be noted and welcomed.

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

73. Community Right to Challenge (Minute for Confirmation)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and the Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a joint report concerning (a) the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 that introduced the Community Right to Challenge that allowed communities to request that they deliver certain services currently provided by the Council or provided on behalf of the Council, (b) the requirements of The Community Right to Challenge (Expressions of Interest and Excluded Services) (England) Regulations 2012, (c) proposed revisions to the Council's Standing Orders Relating to Contracts to reflect the requirements, (d) a protocol and guidance note explaining the Community Right to Challenge and the Council's roles in relation to the "Right".

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, referred to the introduction of the Community Right to Challenge and that the Council would not wish to stop or hinder any organisation, group or individual who would like, under the Community Right to Challenge, to seek to deliver a service provided by the Council or provided on its behalf.

Resolved – (1) That the Council be recommended to (a) adopt a revision to the Contract Standing Orders, as set out in paragraph 3.10 of the joint report, dealing with the Community Right to Challenge, and (b) authorise the Director of Law and Democratic Services to make the necessary changes to the Council's

Constitution.

(2) That the Board Director Commissioning be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, the Director of Law and Democratic Services and the relevant Board Director and Head of Service:-

(a) to develop and maintain an appropriate Community Right to Challenge protocol and internal guidance to assist in the commissioning and procurement processes to ensure that expressions of interest are duly considered, and to ensure that this is placed on the Council's website with appropriate links to the procurement process pages;

(b) where considered appropriate for particular relevant services, to publish details of any specified period in which expressions of interest may be submitted, including on the Council's website; and

(c) to assess and either reject, accept or request modification to all expressions of interest submitted.

(3) That the Head of Commercial Services be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Law and Democratic Services, to co-ordinate a list of relevant services and existing contracts in order to facilitate identifying appropriate relevant services, and where considered appropriate to provide a link on the Council's website for the public to view the list.

(4) That the Community Right to Challenge Guidance Note as set out in Appendix 1 to the joint report be approved for publication on the Council's website, and the Director of Law and Democratic Services be authorised to periodically review and update the Guidance as necessary.

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

74. Independent Remuneration Panel on Councillors' Allowances - Recommendations 2013/14 (Minute for Confirmation)

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 Independent Remuneration Panel on Councillors' Allowances.

The Chair advised that the Cabinet was required to consider recommendations arising from a meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Councillors' Allowances and to make appropriate recommendations to the Council. He highlighted the key recommendations of the Panel in particular that there should be a 1% increase in the level of Councillors' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance for 2014/15 and that this should be backdated to April 2013 (the equivalent of 1% each year for two years), and the recommendation relating to the future index linking of such allowances to the percentage increase awarded nationally to local government staff.

Councillor Stan Pajak, Leader of the Minority Group on the Council, advised that his group believed it would be inappropriate at this time for there to be any increase in Councillors' Allowances and would vote against such an increase at the Council meeting.

Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, referred to the Parliamentary system adopted for the approval of MPs allowances and welcomed the opportunity provided to Councillors to vote on the

recommendations received from their Independent Panel.

Resolved – (1) That the Council be requested to consider and determine the recommendations arising from the meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Councillors' Allowances held on 7th October 2013, as set out in Appendix 1 to the joint report.

(2) That it be noted that the proposal of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Councillors' Allowances is that -

(a) the level of Councillors' Basic Allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances for the 2014/15 Municipal Year be increased by 1% to align with the 1% increase in pay awarded to local authority staff in April 2013;

(b) the Council be encouraged to agree that the 1% increase be backdated to April 2013, but paid from May 2014 (the equivalent of a 2% increase for 2014/15);

(c) the level of Councillors' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances be indexed linked to the percentage increase in pay awarded to local authority staff nationally.

(d) index linking can apply for three municipal years before any further review is undertaken of such linkage by an independent remuneration panel.

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

75. References from Other Council Bodies: Swindon Children's Trust Board / Equalities Advisory Forum / Health and Wellbeing Board

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, the Cabinet Member for Customer Support and Corporate Services, the Leader of the Council and the Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a joint report concerning recommendations arising from the Swindon Children's Trust Board held on 19th September 2013, from the Equalities Advisory Forum held on 6th November 2013, and from the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 13th November 2013.

Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, expressed her support for the recommendations arising from the Children's Trust Board. She explained that the proposed change to the Trust Board's terms of reference was to enable it to concentrate on key high-level strategic issues in future. She referred to the successes of the Council's Youth Offending Team and how the Restorative Youth Services Plan sought to help maintain and enhance that success.

Councillor Claire Ellis, Cabinet Member for Customer Support and Corporate Services, offered her support for the recommendations arising from the Equalities Advisory Forum and for the adoption of the Charter. She expressed her thanks to the Forum and the Change Lead for their work in developing the Charter, the implementation of which would be an indication of this Council's commitment to delivering best practice.

The Chair expressed his support for the recommendations arising from the Health and Wellbeing Board and explained the background to and objectives of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Resolved – (1) That, further to Minute 12(2) of the Swindon Children's Trust Board, the revised Terms of Reference for the Swindon Children's Trust Board, be approved and adopted.

(2) That, further to Minute 18(2) of the Swindon Children's Trust Board, the

Restorative Youth Services Plan 2013/14 for Swindon, as attached as Appendix 1 to the joint report of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Board Director, Commissioning, be approved.

(3) That, further to Minute 28(2) of the Equalities Advisory Forum, approval be given to (a) Swindon Borough Council signing the Wiltshire and Swindon Equality and Human Rights Charter, and (b) the Change Lead: Equality and Diversity being authorised to work with partner agencies to implement the Equality and Human Rights Charter.

(4) That, further to Minute 34(3) of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and subject to the endorsement of the Governing Body of the Swindon Clinical Commissioning Group, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, as attached to the report of the Acting Director of Public Health, be approved and adopted.

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