

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2014**

**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, Vera Tomlinson and Steve Weisinger.

Councillors David Renard, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet, Claire Ellis, Cabinet Member for Customer Support and Corporate Services, Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Richard Hurley, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery), Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Culture, and Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure were in attendance.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mary Friend.

### **53. Declarations of Interest**

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

### **54. Public Question Time**

Mr Brian Cockbill put a question regarding the Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference, particularly with regard to the scrutiny review of answers to public questions at meetings of other Committees. The Chair responded to Mr Cockbill's question.

Mr Cockbill put several other questions regarding the Council's draft budget proposals for 2014/15 and beyond, as referred to in the agenda for the Cabinet meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014. At the invitation of the Chair, the Council's Board Director Resources responded to Mr Cockbill's questions.

### **55. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2013 and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2014 be confirmed and signed.

### **56. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions**

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 5 February 2014.

#### **83. *Budget Management 2013/14***

Resolved – That Minute 83 of the Cabinet be noted.

*84. Special Expenses 2014/15 (Minute for Confirmation)*

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, responded to a question put by the Chair regarding the Council's policy with regard to voting by members on issues relating to Special Expenses.

Resolved – That Minute 84 of the Cabinet be noted.

*85. Budget 2014/15 and Beyond (Minute for Confirmation)*

Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, responded to a question by Councillor Andrew Bennett regarding the transfer of funding to Parish Councils to mitigate the impact of changes to the Council Tax Base implemented in 2013/14, linked to changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme.

Resolved – That Minute 85 of the Cabinet be noted.

*86. Capital Programme 2014/15 to 2016/17 (Minute for Confirmation)*

Resolved – That Minute 86 of the Cabinet be noted.

*87. Treasury Strategy Statement 2014/15 (Minute for Confirmation)*

In response to a question by Councillor Michael Dickinson, Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, provided an update regarding the Council's procurement of banking services.

Resolved – That Minute 87 of the Cabinet be noted.

*88. Housing Revenue Account - Rents and Charges 2014/15 (Minute for Confirmation)*

Resolved – That Minute 88 of the Cabinet be noted.

*89. Draft Consultation Policy 2014-2017*

Resolved – That Minute 89 of the Cabinet be noted.

*90. Pay Policy Statement (Minute for Confirmation)*

Resolved – That Minute 90 of the Cabinet be noted.

*91. Bringing Empty Shops Back Into Use - Motion at Council (Minute for Confirmation)*

Resolved – That Minute 91 of the Cabinet be noted.

*92. Proposed Compulsory Purchase Order - Kimmerfields (Formerly Union Square), Swindon*

Resolved – That Minute 92 of the Cabinet be noted.

**93. *References from Other Council Bodies - Report of Digital City (UK) Ltd Task Group***

Councillor David Renard, the Leader of the Council, responded to questions put, and comments made, by the Chair and Councillors Cindy Matthews, Des Moffatt, Bob Wright and Brian Ford, regarding the information made available to the Wiltshire Police when the Digital City (UK) Ltd matter was referred to them after the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2014 and the decision of the Wiltshire Police not to investigate the matter further.

**Resolved** – That Minute 93 of the Cabinet be noted and that the Cabinet's positive response to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations be welcomed.

**57. Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure - Question and Answer Session**

Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure, was in attendance and presented a detailed report summarising progress and performance in respect of each of the following service areas within his portfolio of responsibility:

- Leisure Services, including Sport Participation and Health Improvement Team
- Libraries
- Strategic Transport Network, including
  - Public Transport (including concessionary fares, community and specialist transport, education and social care transport, and fleet management)
  - Traffic and transport forward planning (including Local Transport Plan and the implementation of the Local Transport Plan).

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Williams, in his presentation of the report, commented specifically on those elements within his portfolio which he felt had been most successful, those where a different approach might have produced better results and the lessons that might have been learned as a consequence, and the challenges he expected to be faced by the Council relation to these service areas in the coming year and beyond.

Following his presentation of the report, Councillor Williams, supported by his officer team, responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following topics:

- budget provision for resolving potential health and safety issues at bus stops
  - the timescale for dealing with health and safety issues at bus stops
  - the Cabinet Member's expectation that his officers' would attend localities meetings, where such attendance had been requested by elected members
- the planning and co-ordination of major roadworks across the borough

- the on-going national flooding crisis and flood prevention measures for Swindon
  - the maintenance of surface and foul water distribution systems across the borough
- the Council's commitment to delivering a borough-wide high quality public transport network
  - the appropriate location of bus stops
- the status of the bidding process in relation to the future operation of the Council's Leisure Centres
- the new websites being developed for STEAM Museum and Lydiard House and Park and opportunities to enhance the commercial viability of these facilities
- future collaborative working with the Wyvern Theatre
- the long term viability of bus routes established using S106 monies
- the forward planning of school safety zones
- the delay to the "Western Flyer" project as a result of SSE cable upgrade
- the Council's recently inherited responsibilities as a Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Act and the availability of additional Government funding to support the Council in fulfilling these responsibilities
- the review of the reasons for the problems encountered in relation to the Foxham Way project
- levels of participation in leisure activities and Swindon's net cost of service compared with other authorities achieving similar or greater shifts in participation levels
- the Council's decision to invest capital funds in car parking provision rather than the enhancement of its leisure services provision
- the proposed leasing arrangements and lease period for the operation of the Council's Leisure Centres and golf courses
- bus routes in the vicinity of the Mechanics Institute and the potential conflict of interest of the Cabinet Member
- the maintenance of bus shelters/stops provided by Parish Councils
- flood management in the rural areas and the enforcement of transgressions of riparian law
- the flood risk management strategy and opportunities to highlight local priorities
- the Local Plan Examination in Public (EIP), the transport strategy, the assessment of the capacity of the transport infrastructure and the delivery of any required improvements
- the assessment of proprietary materials used for highway maintenance
- the co-ordination of maintenance work by local utility companies
- the cost of updating the strategic highway traffic planning model for the borough
  - the estimated cost of the Northern Relief Road engineering works
- the payment of compensation to the owners of land that is purposely flooded as part of the Environment agency's flood relief strategy
- the allocation of concessionary bus passes
- the impact of on-street car parking on highway safety in Redhouse Way and the availability of funding for car parking improvements in that area
- the match-funding of facilities provided at the Croft Sports Centre and the recovery of loan monies
- the mobile library service

- the requirement for a pedestrian crossing facility in the vicinity of the Kimmerfields car parking site
- the future operation of the Link Centre and the protection of the long term viability of the Centre
- the commercial viability of bus routes and the continuation of subsidy for non-commercial routes
- the on-going work in relation to school safety zones and the prioritisation of work
- the priority timeline for highway repairs (potholes) according to the management of the risk of injury and/or accident and also the timeline between temporary and permanent repair
- options for maintaining non-commercially viable bus routes
- issues relating to the Council's highways resurfacing programme for 2013/14
- the management and promotion of the Swindon Half-Marathon in 2013 and the number of participants in 2013
- cycling for health and the enhancement of the cycle network
- the range of services included in the Cabinet Member's portfolio

It was agreed that information requested by members during the course of the Committee's consideration of this item be forwarded to members via the Committee Clerk.

Resolved – That Councillor Williams be thanked for attending the meeting and for his full and open responses to members' questions and observations.