

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 28 APRIL 2014**

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stan Pajak

### **68. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. There were no declarations made.

### **69. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

### **70. Minutes**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2014, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **71. Consideration of Cabinet Decisions**

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report introducing decisions arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 23 April 2014.

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

Resolved - That Minute 111 of the Cabinet be noted.

#### *112. One Swindon Public Service Transformation in Partnership*

Resolved - That Minute 112 of the Cabinet be noted.

#### *113. Affordable Housing Programme 2015-18*

Councillor Richard Hurley, the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Housing and Streetsmart (Delivery) and Michael Ash, Head of Housing Services responded to questions from Councillor Des Moffatt and Councillor Bob Wright about the Affordable Housing Programme 2015-18 and the proposed development bids.

Resolved - That Minute 113 of the Cabinet be noted.

#### *114. Swindon's Energy Future – Part 2*

Councillor Dale Heenan, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability responded to a number of questions from Councillors about large scale solar farms on Council owned land and the progression of a low carbon Local Development Order. The Director of Law and Democratic Services advised the Committee about the Members Code of Conduct in particular personal and prejudicial interests in relation to Councillors possible investment in solar farms on Council land.

Resolved - That Minute 114 of the Cabinet be noted.

#### *115. Public Health Services with the Great Western Hospital*

Resolved - That Minute 115 of the Cabinet be noted.

#### *116. References from other Council Bodies*

Resolved - That Minute 116 of the Cabinet be noted.

### **72. Cabinet Member Question and Answer - Cabinet Member for Strategic Projects and Transformation**

Councillor Mike Bawden, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Projects and Transformation, 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:

- SCS Client (Commissioning and Tendering)
- Capita Strategic Client
- Stronger Together
- The Council's Transformation Agenda
- Localities and Devolution
- Parish and Town Councils/Community Council Engagement Strategies
- Community Strategy
- Services to the Community and Voluntary Sector
- Swindon Community Compact
- Community Engagement Strategies
- Developing the medium term financial strategy (with the Cabinet Member for Finance)
- Cross cutting strategic projects at the direction of the Leader of the Council
- Changes to the Borough's boundaries to support economic development
- Wichelstowe

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Bawden, 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 in relation to these service areas in the coming year and beyond.

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

- The current position regarding the future management of Redhouse Community Centre
- Details about the future management of the Redhouse Community Centre in election leaflets
- Issues relating to the Croft Sports Centre and surrounding playing fields
- References to the Wichelstowe development and the need to hold discussions with joint venture operators about the M4 tunnel link.
- Discussions about the successful establishment of the Commonhead Parish Liaison Working Party and wish to replicate this for the Wichelstowe project and the eastern villages.
- The future operation of the proposed 'Bus Gate' at 'Rylane, Wichelstowe
- How the funding available to localities and how this is allocated to progress local projects and priorities within a locality.
- Issues relating to broadband speeds within the Borough and the involvement of Swindon in the national roll-out of superfast broadband.
- The high costs of printing and the need to regularly monitor the partnership contract with Capita.
- Concerns that Community Centres operated by faith groups or used by a majority of people from a particular country could dissuade others from attending Centres.

The Chair acknowledged that this was the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee that Councillor Bawden would be attending, as he was not standing as a Councillor in the forthcoming local elections. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Councillor Bawden for his long and distinguished service to Swindon and wished him the best for a very long and happy retirement. The Chair also wished Councillor Bawden a speedy recover back to full health following a recent illness.

**Resolved:**

That Councillor Bawden be thanked for attending the meeting to present his performance report and for his full and open responses to members questions and observations on the issues raised.

**73. Cabinet Member Question and Answer - Cabinet Member for Finance**

Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, was in attendance and presented a detailed report summarising the success, challenges and future direction of the portfolio, along with highlights of the following key performance indicators:

- Council tax collection rates
- Rent collection rates
- Housing benefit and Council tax support claims
- Job seeker claims

- Benefits capped families
- Local welfare applications
- Referrals to the Homeless Team

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Holland, 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 in relation to these service areas in the coming year and beyond.

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

- The amount of funding Swindon Borough Council could expect from the Governments £200m 'Pothole' Fund
- The effects of welfare reductions on local resident's health, especially those that relied on the local housing allowance to fund accommodation and the type of accommodation available to them.
- Details about the housing allowance and how it was calculated.
- The value in monetary terms of a reduction of 1% in the collection of council tax and 0.5% in the collection of housing rents for 2013/14 compared to the figures for 2012/13.
- The impact on the Council in relation to the funding of local welfare applications
- Details about the current structure of the Procurement Team and its position within the organisation.
- The impact on the Procurement Team of the implementation of the revised EU Public Procurement Directive.
- Details about the demolition of Aspen House
- Details about how many local welfare applications could be made by the same individual within a twelve month period
- Details about how many referrals could be made by the same individual to the Homeless Team within a twelve month period

#### **Resolved:**

That Councillor Holland be thanked for attending the meeting to present his performance report and for his full and open responses to members questions and observations on the issues raised.

## **74. Scrutiny Committee Thanks**

The Chair reminded members that this was the last meeting of the Committee for this municipal year. He thanked the Committee for its hard work over the year and in particular thanked officers for their advice and support. He also wished those members of the Committee standing in the forthcoming local elections all the best.

Councillor Tomlinson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair for their sterling efforts and excellent leadership of the Committee during the year. She also thanked officers for the advice and support to the Committee.

**Resolved:**

That the Chair's comments along with those of the Committee be noted.