

CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2015

PRESENT:- Councillors David Renard (Chair), David Renard (Chair), Brian Mattock (Vice-Chair), Toby Elliott, Emma Faramarzi, Fionuala Foley, Brian Ford, Dale Heenan, Russell Holland, Mary Martin and Garry Perkins.

Councillor Junab Ali attended the meeting in respect of Minutes 24 and 25.
Councillor Bob Wright attended the meeting in respect of Minute 24.

21. Declarations of Interest

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

22. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

23. Public Question Time

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

Questioner

Mr Paul Sunners, Chiseldon, Swindon.

Questions

Mr Sunners asked a question concerning Agenda Item 5 (The Vision for Swindon) and sought clarity on how the Council intended to 'offer educational opportunities that lead to the right skills and the right jobs in the right places'.

Response

The Chair thanked Mr Sunners for his questions and comments. He advised that a written answer had been provided and circulated at the meeting.

Mr Sunners asked a supplementary question regarding the response to his original questions and to how the Council would ensure that it worked effectively with its partners to ensure the delivery of its Vision, particularly, with Academy Schools, the Youth Forum and Youth Parliament, and pupils and young people.

The Chair thanked Mr Sunners for his further question and comments. The Chair and Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, responded at the meeting.

Questioner

Ms Jane Milner-Barry, Old Town, Swindon.

Questions

Ms Milner-Barry asked a question concerning Agenda Item 5 (The Vision for

Swindon) and the Council's wish for Swindon to be a low carbon environment. She sought clarity on the percentage of renewable energy that would entitle Swindon to claim a low carbon environment, and on the progress of the Council's wish to see the construction of "a solar noise barrier along roads including the M4 at Wichelstow", particularly, the current status of the plan for a solar barrier along the A419.

Response

The Chair thanked Ms Milner-Barry for her questions and comments. He advised that a written answer had been provided and circulated at the meeting.

Ms Milner-Barry asked a supplementary question seeking clarity on the response to her original questions and in particular why the Council's Pledges did not set out more specific measurable targets for renewable energy and detail all the specific projects that it was hoped would be undertaken.

The Chair thanked Ms Milner-Barry for her further question and comments. The Chair and Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Transport, responded at the meeting.

Questioner

Mrs Martha Parry, Swindon Civic Voice.

Questions

Mrs Parry asked a question concerning Agenda Item 5 (The Vision for Swindon) and the level of consultation that had taken place to develop the proposed "Vision" and Pledges. She enquired whether the Council's Consultation Policy had been applied to this, and if not, would an appropriate public consultation exercise now be conducted.

Response

The Chair thanked Mrs Parry for her questions and comments. He advised that a written answer had been provided and circulated at the meeting.

Mrs Parry asked a supplementary question asking if the Council was prepared to work specifically with Swindon Civic Voice and other voluntary and community organisations as partners in the delivery of the Visions and its Pledges.

The Chair thanked Mrs Parry for her further question and comments, and responded at the meeting.

Questioner

Mrs Sue Birley, Wanborough.

Questions

Mrs Birley asked a question regarding whether the Planning consent for Redlands Airfield, Wanborough had been revoked in view of continuing breaches of conditions and noise problems.

Response

The Chair thanked Mrs Birley for her question and comments. The Chair, Councillor Toby Elliott, Cabinet Member for Communities and Strategic Planning,

and the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services, Heritage and Libraries responded at the meeting.

24. The Vision for Swindon

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive submitted a joint report setting out a proposed “Vision for the Borough of Swindon for the period to 2030”, four priorities the Administration intended to pursue that would contribute to delivery of this Vision and thirty Pledges the Administration sought to deliver for the people of Swindon in pursuance of the Vision over the next fifteen years.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and outlined the Vision and its associated four Priorities and thirty Pledges. He explained it set out how the Administration wanted to see Swindon by 2030. He emphasised that partnership working would be essential to the successful delivery of the Vision and its Pledges. It was intended that the Vision would provide a clear sense of place and direction that would encourage investment. He referred to the current challenging financial context facing local government and how expectations of what the Council could and would do were changing. He believed that, if adopted by the Council, the Vision, Priorities and Pledges would help to guide Council staff in the allocation of resources and the delivery of services, whilst a rigorous performance framework would be introduced to ensure that the Council could be held to account.

Councillor Bob Wright, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and Central Ward Councillor, commented on the report noting that residents had not given any indication to him of having lower or different expectations of what they expected from their Council, even if finances and Government policy indicated otherwise.

Councillor Wright raised a number of concerns about specific pledges. In particular, he referred to feedback from businesses about the lack of appropriate housing to encourage key workers to live in Swindon. He was concerned about uncompetitive business rates compared to other towns within the region. He believed that the Vision needed to change the social culture within the Borough and the behaviours of its residents so that Swindon could succeed in becoming a “Clean Borough” rather than simply seeking to transfer responsibility for street cleaning to parishes and communities. In respect of the development of the Central area, he retained concerns about the security of the proposed new health centre and its proposed 24-hour operation. He emphasised the importance of education within Swindon and noted that the performance of some of the local Academies and their results were lower than the regional average. He wondered how the Vision would address this. He noted and welcomed the work that had been undertaken with stakeholders to find a solution to the future of the Mechanics Institute and believed that this should be made at least a medium term goal in view of its importance to the Borough.

The Chair thanked Councillor Wright for his comments and questions. He reminded Councillors that the Council’s usual business including the delivery of its adopted policies and strategies would continue alongside the Pledges. He would seek further information on the issue of business rates levels across the region.

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration, and Skills, provided an update on the efforts to find appropriate and long term

solutions for the future of the former Corn Exchange and Mechanics Institute sites. He explained that it was a personal goal to find sustainable solutions for both of these by 2020. However, experience with other development and regeneration projects involving partnership working suggested that it was prudent for the Council to maintain these as long-term goals even though it was hoped that they could be delivered earlier.

Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, referred to the answer provided to an earlier public question on education and skills, and commented on the Council's collaboration with schools and the Education Strategy Board to raise attainment.

Councillor Brian Ford, Cabinet Member for Streetsmart, advised that complaints to the Council for his service area had already fallen by 40%. However, he clearly recognised that it required the public to act as partners to ensure that Swindon could successfully combat litter and graffiti to become a "Clean Borough".

Councillor Toby Elliott, Cabinet Member Communities and Strategic Planning, commented out how work within his portfolio area was helping to build capacity in local communities and, through pilot projects with a number of town and parish councils, seeking to improve the local delivery of Services such as street cleaning and grounds maintenance.

Councillor Wright noted the experience of Milton Keynes, in that town centre parishes in an urban area might not always prove effective in delivering solutions and services for local residents.

Councillor Junab Ali, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Group and Central Ward Councillor, noted the contents of the report and asked whether there would be adequate measures put in place to monitor the delivery of the Pledges and to hold the Administration to account. He also wondered whether the Vision, Priorities and Pledges were sufficiently ambitious and inspiring and why the Administration and the Council had not consulted on the content. He was concerned whether sufficient attention had been given to the Borough's culture and heritage.

The Leader of the Council commented that there would be a rigorous performance framework associated with the Vision with all Cabinet Members being assigned specific Pledges for which they would be held to account by the Cabinet, at the Scrutiny Committee, and beyond. Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, People, and Performance, would be responsible for overseeing the performance measurement system. He was confident the Vision, Priorities, and Pledges would make a significant difference to Swindon once delivered. He outlined some of the main references to culture or heritage that were within the Pledges. He noted that the Pledges did not replace the commitment to the delivery of the existing Heritage Strategy.

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, People, and Performance, welcomed the proposed Vision, which he believed would help shape Swindon for the future.

Councillor Brian Mattock, Cabinet Member for Adult Health and Social Care, noted that there had been general acceptance of the proposed Vision when it had

been outlined to stakeholders. He welcomed that there would be a clear mechanism to measure performance that would enable all to mark the Council's progress as Pledges were delivered.

Resolved – (1) That the Council be recommended to consider and adopt:-

(a) The proposed Vision for the Borough of Swindon as set out in paragraph 3.8 of the joint report

(b) The proposed Council Priorities as set out in paragraph 3.13 of the joint report; and

(c) The 30 Pledges as set out at Appendix 1 to the joint report.

(2) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Director of Law and Democratic Services, be authorised to make minor non-material changes to the content of the Vision and Pledges prior to consideration by the Council.

(3) That, if approved by the Council, the Chief Executive be authorised to commission a new Council Plan for 2016-2020 based on the Vision and Pledges, for submission to the Cabinet and Council for consideration in early 2016.

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

25. Budget Management 2015/16

The Cabinet Member for Finance, People and Performance and the Board Director, Resources submitted a joint report setting out (a) the current forecast out-turn position of the Council's Revenue Budget as at the end of July 2015, (b) issues affecting the Council's finances, (c) proposed virements, (d) proposed Fireworks and Explosives Licensing fees, (e) the proposed submission of a joint bid to achieve Enterprise Zone status for parts of Swindon Town Centre, (f) the on-going delivery of Budget Savings for 2016/17, (g) the current forecast out-turn position of the Council's Housing Revenue Account and Dedicated Schools Grant 2015/16, and (h) possible alternative Bus provision for Ermin Street, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon.

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, People and Performance, introduced the joint report and commented on the projected out-turn position explaining that the demand for services for children, the elderly and asylum seekers remained high. He referred to the efforts being made to deliver Budget savings for 2016/17. He drew specific attention to the work being undertaken to seek alternative provision for those who had been affected by the withdrawal by the Bus operator of the No. 20 Bus Service, and to the proposed submission through the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership of a bid to seek Enterprise Zone status for parts of Swindon Town Centre.

Councillor Junab Ali, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Group and Central Ward Councillor, asked if the proposed Enterprise Zone bid was likely to succeed and were there other examples of successful bids that had crossed local authority boundaries. He wondered if the bid illustrated the constraints on Swindon that were placed on it by the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Chair commented that it was too early in the process to know how Government would receive the bid submission. He noted that all partnership arrangements involved negotiation and compromise and reminded Councillors that Swindon had been very successful in securing funding from the recent Growth Fund

allocated to the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development advised that the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership had submitted a successful Enterprise Zone bid that had covered several local authority areas.

Councillor Toby Elliott, Cabinet Member for Communities and Strategic Planning, welcomed the inclusion of Swindon Town Centre in the bid and noted that businesses were not overly aware of, or concerned with, local authority boundaries.

Councillor Ali expressed concern that the establishment of an Enterprise Zone in Swindon Town Centre might simply encourage the relocation of existing businesses from other areas of Borough into the Zone whilst leaving those companies located outside or on the boundaries of the Zone disadvantaged with higher business rates. Councillor Elliott commented that the Borough would still benefit from the 100% uplift in the rates from the businesses moving into the Zone and the Council would then seek alternative uses for any sites made vacant.

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration, and Skills, explained that the proposed Enterprise Zone extended beyond Swindon Town Centre and the Kimmerfields site, and that any businesses moving into the Zone would help to improve the wider local economy, including the Town Centre retail area.

Resolved – (1) That the Cabinet notes the projected Revenue Budget Out-turn position for 2015/16, as set out in Table 1 and Appendices 1 and 2 to the joint report.

(2) That the in-year investment in skills and capacity to continue work to deliver the Council's 2016/17 Budget, be noted.

(3) That the proposed Budget virements, as set out in Appendix 3 to the joint report, be approved.

(4) That the proposed Fireworks and Explosives Licensing fee structure, as set out in Appendix 4 to the joint report, be approved.

(5) That the Council support the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership's bid for Enterprise Zone status that includes parts of Swindon Town Centre and the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive be authorised to sign the final submission documentation on behalf of the Council.

(6) That, further to the decision in Minute 10(3), it be noted that the Passenger Transport Manager, Delivery Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Transport, is investigating potential options in respect of working with Dial A Ride, the Stratton St. Margaret Parish Council and any other organisation to assist any people in need since the Number 20 Bus Service was discontinued.

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

26. Capital Programme Monitoring 2015/16

The Cabinet Member for Finance, People, and Performance and the Board Director, Resources submitted a joint report concerning (a) the projected out-turn position of the 2015/16 Capital Programme, (b) issues affecting Capital schemes and the associated financial implications, (c) proposed changes to the Capital

Programme, and (d) proposals associated with securing a Swindon Museum and Art Gallery.

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance, People and Performance, introduced the report and referred to issues affecting the Capital Programme and the associated financial implications. He highlighted the changes to the Capital Programme associated with the proposed project to deliver a new Swindon Museum and Art Gallery and the benefits of this.

Resolved – (1) That the Capital Programme Out-turn position for 2015/16, as set out in the joint report, be noted.

(2) That the issues affecting the Council's Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the joint report, be noted.

(3) That the changes to the Council's Capital Programme, as set out in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.12 of the joint report, be approved.

(4) That the Director of Law and Democratic Services, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, be authorised to complete the necessary legal documentation on such terms as he considers necessary to best protect the Council's interests, to create a trust to establish and run a new Museum and Art Gallery for Swindon.

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

27. References from Other Council Bodies - Health and Wellbeing Board

The Cabinet Member for Adult Health and Social Care and the Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a joint report concerning a recommendation arising from the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on 8th July 2015 regarding the Council's support for the adoption of the "Swindon Adult Autism Strategy 2015-2018".

Councillor Brian Mattock, Cabinet Member for Adult Health and Social Care, expressed his support for the Strategy. He explained the background to its development and what it would mean for those with the condition and for Swindon. He referred to the increasing problem of adults with Autism and how the Strategy sought to respond to this and support those individuals with the condition.

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills, expressed his support for the Strategy and welcomed the way the Children and Adult Services would work together with partners to support the transition of those with the condition from school to adulthood.

Resolved – That, further to Minute 15 of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and to its endorsement by the Swindon Clinical Commissioning Group, the "Swindon Adult Autism Strategy 2015-2018", be approved.

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