

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 December 2014

Minute Extract

384. **DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER PLANS 2015/16**
(Report CAB2633 refers)

A Member suggested that consultation on the draft Plans should ideally be inclusive of all parish councils, in a similar way to that undertaken for the Community Strategy and also the Council's General Fund Budget. The Leader undertook to investigate this, having regard to the timetable for their compilation and approval by the Council.

The Committee referred to the draft Portfolio Plans and raised a number of issues and asked detailed questions. Where appropriate, responses were given as summarised below:

(i) **Leader Portfolio Plan 2015/16**

- It was explained that various milestones related to the Silver Hill project would be added in due course, once the outcome of the planning decision was known. These would be monitored accordingly, including by the Committee. Councillor Humby also explained that capital projects referred to within the Plans would be prioritised as the Capital Programme was developed.
- The Chief Executive detailed how the new interpretation project for Hyde Abbey was to be developed, in consultation with the Hampshire Cultural Trust, Hyde900 project and Professor Martin Biddle.
- The Leader explained that, through economies of scale, the Destination Plan for Winchester would look to continue to achieve sustained growth in visitor numbers to Winchester by bringing together various local businesses and groups.
- Following initial consultation with key stakeholders on the Carfax and Cattle Market redevelopment proposals, the Leader explained that a wider resident and community engagement exercise would then take place.
- The continued roll out of superfast broadband to rural business premises across the District was to be maintained. The Council would work with the County Council to ensure that a suitable minimum standard of broadband speed was achieved. Attention was drawn to recent improvements to three exchanges in the Winchester Town area.

(ii) Communities & Transport Portfolio Plan 2015/16

- Councillor Southgate advised that he would report back to the Committee, outside of the meeting, why the Portfolio Plan no longer featured priority actions for Neighbourhood Wardens undertaking community work, in major development areas.
- Councillor Southgate also undertook to give further consideration as to whether the Recommendations of the Domestic Violence Informal Scrutiny Group could feature within the Plan. He drew Members' attention that the Report had yet to be formally considered by Cabinet, although having attended one of its meetings, he recognised that the majority of the ISG's recommendations were likely to be low cost/high value.
- With regard to coach parking, Councillor Southgate recognised the success of the temporary coach parking facility at the old Bar End depot. Investigations for a permanent all-year facility were currently being explored.
- Councillor Southgate reported that the lighting of the Winchester Park and Ride, although dimmed during the late evening, was necessary for security reasons. Investigations were underway as to whether solar panels could be utilised to power the lights.
- Councillor Southgate said that it was not proposed to charge for electric vehicle charging points in car parks, but he would consider the matter.

(iii) Business Services Portfolio Plan 2015/16

- Councillor Miller clarified that, whilst recognising its use by the community, the Guildhall would continue to seek to increase its occupancy and income and therefore reducing its overall costs. He advised that he would circulate to the Committee the most recent figures demonstrating increased café takings and conference income. Councillor Miller also highlighted that, notwithstanding the work of the Abbey House Informal Scrutiny Group, there were significant design and accessibility issues that were likely to prevent substantial increase in the commercial use of that building.

(iv) Environment, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Plan 2015/16

- With regard to the "The Great Waste Project" it was explained that there was an ambition to increase recycling rates in general through a number of initiatives. These would increase the number of items that were able to be recycled and also projects to decrease instances of contamination by non-recyclable materials.

- The Chief Executive explained that the recent achievement in establishing Winchester as the first 'Dementia Friendly' City in Hampshire, together with the successes of the Supporting Families Programme, would be maintained over time by working closely with partner organisations.

(v) Built Environment & Deputy Leader Portfolio Plan 2015/16

- The Leader clarified that due to continued officer resource pressures, all outstanding, older enforcement issues were to be reviewed to ascertain whether resources may be better utilised in progressing more recent cases.
- The Leader also noted comments raised with regard to ensuring that the Council should continue to express its preference to developers that, in many cases, affordable housing units should be 'pepper potted' across development sites to assist with developing more sustainable and mixed communities. It was suggested that this should be expressed in advance of formal planning applications being submitted. Councillor Tait outlined some practical constraints where this approach was not always possible for economic reasons and agreed that the issues should be considered further in a Member briefing session. The Committee's attention was also drawn to a future report to be considered by Cabinet on implications arising from recent changes to Government policy on developer's affordable housing thresholds.
- The Corporate Director advised that officers were to discuss with the Portfolio Holder whether an Article 4 Direction for Stanmore as a means for controlling HMOs in the Stanmore area could be progressed at an earlier date than first envisaged. He also clarified that officers continued to liaise with Denmead Parish Council to help coordinate their timetable for the development of its Neighbourhood Plan.

(vi) Housing Services Portfolio Plan 2015/16

- Councillor Tait advised that the success of the Estate Improvement programmes in Winchester had been greatly assisted having been championed in communities by local Ward Members. Officers would help to facilitate similar schemes in other estates across the District. These could also include smaller and mixed ownership areas.
- Councillor Tait also drew Members' attention to the recent stock condition survey which would highlight deficiencies on older stock.

At conclusion of discussion of the draft Portfolio Holder Plans , the Committee raised some general concerns that the Plans were lacking in measurable success criteria and were consequentially difficult to monitor, as were too activity rather than outcome focussed . In addition, the Plans should ideally contain details of corresponding budgets. However, it was commented that, in general the Plans, made individual Portfolio accountability much clearer.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT COUNCIL BE ADVISED THAT, WHILE THE COMMITTEE WELCOMED THE PROGRESS THAT HAD BEEN MADE WITH THE PRESENTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER PLANS, FURTHER DEVELOPMENT WAS NEEDED TO FOCUS ON OUTCOMES AND CLEAR SUCCESS CRITERIA SO AS TO ENABLE EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY TO TAKE PLACE TO HOLD PORTFOLIO HOLDERS TO ACCOUNT.

RESOLVED:

That portfolio holders have regard to the comments of the Committee, as set out above, as part of the consultation prior to the Portfolio Plans for 2015/16 being considered for adoption by Council in January 2015.