

**THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**17 October 2011**

Attendance:

Councillors:

Chamberlain (Chairman) (P)

Cook (P)

Gottlieb (P)

Hutchison (P)

Huxstep (P)

Learney

Pearson (P)

Power (P)

Tait (P)

Thompson (P)

Wright (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Beckett (Leader)

Humby (Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement)

Weston (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport)

Wood (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Estates)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Mitchell

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1. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Beckett, Humby, Weston and Wood declared personal and prejudicial interests, due to their involvement as Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holders, in actions taken or proposed in the Reports outlined below.

However, the Committee requested that all the above Councillors remain in the meeting, in their capacity as Portfolio Holders and Leader, under the provisions of Section 21(13) (a) of the Local Government Act 2000, in order that they could provide additional information to the Committee and/or answer questions.

Councillor Gottlieb declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Report OS22. He therefore left the room during the consideration of that item and took no further part in the debate or vote.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 26 September 2011 be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No questions were asked or statements made.

4. **CAPITAL STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME 2011/12 – 2014/15**  
[\(Report CAB2212 refers\)](#)

The Report was introduced by Councillor Wood and, during debate, Members raised concerns regarding paragraph 22 of the Strategy. The Leader explained that this referred to receipts of approximately £1.7m from the sale of vacant Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties accrued over the last four years. The Committee's concern was that these receipts may be subject to Government pooling and, therefore, not be available to the Council. The Leader suggested that the Committee might wish to scrutinise in detail and how the Council's returns for this had been signed off by its auditors and the advice that the Council had received at that time.

However, following debate, the Committee noted that Cabinet was due to receive a report on this issue at its meeting to be held on 9 November 2011. Members, therefore, requested that this Committee should consider this report at its next meeting on 14 November 2011, before considering whether the issue merited greater scrutiny.

In response to questions, it was explained that the Strategy gave the Council sufficient freedom to sell any capital assets, should it choose to do so. It was also noted that the emerging recommendations of the Carbon Footprint Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) might affect the Strategy. However, it was not possible to delay the approval of Strategy to respond to these recommendations, as to do so would delay the timetable and preparation of the 2012/13 budget which would be based on the Strategy.

In response to a Member's suggestion, Councillor Wood agreed to re-consider the presentation between the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund in future reports, in the wake of the proposed changes to housing finance regulations.

**RECOMMENDED:****THAT THE REPORT BE NOTED.**

## RESOLVED:

That the Committee should consider the forthcoming Cabinet report on pooling of Housing Capital Receipts at its meeting to be held on 14 November 2011.

5. **ALLOCATION OF GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP (ISG) – FINAL REPORT**  
[\(Report OS21 Refers\)](#)

The Head of Strategic Planning introduced the Report and explained that the ISG had recommended that an accommodation assessment be undertaken. Whilst the results of this assessment were unlikely to be completed before the publication of the Core Strategy, it would form part of the evidence base for the Council's future planning policies on Gypsy and Traveller needs and, ultimately, assist in the identification of sites.

During discussion, the Committee noted the number of existing temporary planning permissions that were due to expire in the near future, the role of caravan and mobile home sites and the importance of working with neighbouring local authorities.

At the conclusion of debate, the Committee welcomed the Report and thanked those involved in its production and the Leader explained the importance Cabinet would place in carefully considering its recommendations.

## RESOLVED:

That the following be recommended to Cabinet:

1. That a commitment to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and a Travelling Showmen Accommodation Assessment (TSAA) be set out in a Core Strategy policy. The policy should include criteria for allocating sites and assessing planning applications.
2. That the above GTAA and TSAA should be carried out, working with neighbouring authorities.

3. That the principle of making suitable provision for gypsies and travellers (including permanent and transit sites) and travelling showmen, based on the assessed need, be supported, including:

- Sites should be spread around the District with no over-concentration in any one location and be of a scale commensurate with the size of the settlement to avoid dominating the settled community or overloading services.
- Sites should be located at an appropriate distance from the settled community which still allows access to services.
- Sites should be suitably screened.
- Sites must provide appropriate site facilities such as sanitation, services and waste management and room for storing equipment for Travelling Showmen.

4. That temporary planning permissions should be reviewed against the policy criteria: if sites meet the criteria, permissions may be extended or made permanent but if they are found not suitable, enforcement action should be prioritised (which should also help prevent new unauthorised sites becoming established).

5. That the enforcement process at Carousel Park, Micheldever be continued to make this site available for travelling showmen again.

6. That the Council should proactively work with travelling showmen to identify suitable sites for allocation where needed.

7. That further investigations and negotiations be undertaken with a view to possibly taking over Tynefield from Hampshire County Council and managing this site to improve its occupancy/capacity.

8. That Members of the ISG be invited to attend and make representations to the Cabinet (Local Development Framework) Committee when it considers the allocation of site(s) in detail, to share expertise acquired throughout the Review.

9. That the funding available for both revenue and capital costs of providing sites be investigated to establish the likely ongoing cost of site provision.

10. That Parish Councils be given the opportunity to be involved in identifying potential sites.

11. Guidance be sought from the Council's equalities consultant/group on ways to increase cultural awareness of gypsies and travellers with Members, Parish Councils and the wider community.

RESOLVED:

That the action taken on the ISG's recommendations be reviewed in one year.

6. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE – HIGH QUALITY ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY OUTCOMES**

(Report OS20 refers)

Whilst considering the High Quality Environment issues, the Committee noted a slight decrease in household recycling and Councillor Weston explained that the Council would be working with East Hampshire District Council to promote recycling and reduce bin contamination.

In response to questions, the Corporate Business Manager agreed to circulate to Members after the meeting information on the cost of recycling per household.

During debate, a Member suggested that future reports should contain more information on the Carbon Reduction Theme with a greater emphasis on the success or otherwise of the initiatives the Council was involved in to reduce carbon emissions across the District. In response, it was explained that the performance information in the Reports had been requested by Members at previous meetings and had focused on the City Council's own emissions as it was something that the Council could directly influence and, if successful, would enable the Council to lead by example.

Conversely, Councillor Wright commented that the Council's carbon reduction measures was not an issue that vexed the majority of its residents. He explained that the current traffic emission levels were at an extremely safe level and therefore any measures taken to attempt to reduce this further would not be of any benefit to residents; residents who he thought would be more concerned about bin collections and the themes of safer and prosperous communities. Councillor Wright requested that the above be minuted.

In relation to the progress against Change Plans regarding Economic Prosperity, the Committee discussed the County Council's initiatives to roll-out broadband internet connection to areas where it would not otherwise be commercially viable. In response to this discussion, the Assistant Director (Economic Prosperity) agreed to circulate to the Committee a map and explanation of the affected areas after the meeting.

In response to questions, the Chief Executive explained that the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) was currently discussing the emerging Community Infrastructure Levies and how this related to cultural projects across district boundaries.

The Committee noted the decreased footfall for Winchester town centre in July and August but agreed that these figures should be considered in the context of the economic and weather climates, over a longer term and (preferably) against data from similar towns. Members also noted that a report on the Winchester High Street market would be considered at the December 2011 meeting of Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

7. **HOW TO IMPROVE THE COMMERCIAL OPERATION OF EIGHTEEN 71 CAFÉ OVER THE LONGER TERM**  
(Oral Report)

The Head of Estates explained that, whilst the new café was trading significantly better than the old Courtyard Café, there was still some scope for improvement. Occupancy rates at the Guildhall were improving which would increase trade at the new café and, with the release of backstage space, officers were working to establish the Guildhall as a music venue. There was the potential to market these events with tickets which offered discounted pre-concert meals. Officers were also reviewing the staff structure and providing greater customer focused training. In addition, the menu was to be reviewed and the Christmas charity card shop re-introduced which had attracted additional customers in previous years.

During debate, a Member expressed disappointment with the performance of the café against nearby similar facilities and the Leader suggested that the venue would enjoy greater success if the signage included the word "café".

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

8. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND SEPTEMBER 2011 FORWARD PLAN**  
[\(Report OS18 refers\)](#)

Following debate, the Committee agreed that the Planning Policy and Exception Sites Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) be deferred from Batch 2 in order to enable officers to fully assimilate emerging guidelines from Government. Therefore, the Chairman agreed to discuss with the Head of Policy issues that a replacement ISG could consider in its place as part of Batch 2.

The Committee also agreed that the Planning Performance Management ISG also be deferred from Batch 2, to enable a proper assessment of the success or otherwise of the Planning Improvement Plan. The Committee agreed that the performance of this Plan would be assessed in future performance monitoring reports and, if this was a concern, could be an issue for a future ISG.

The Chief Executive explained that all Members would be consulted on possible ISG subjects during the winter.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Planning Policy and Exception Sites ISG and the Planning Performance Management ISG be deferred from Batch 2.
2. That the Scrutiny Work Programme and Forward Plan for September 2011 be noted.

9. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.
2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
##	Progress to secure a new tenant or new use for Avalon House, Winchester	) ) ) ) ) ) )
##	75 Hyde Street, Winchester – Additional Funding	) ) ) ) ) ) )

10. **PROGRESS TO SECURE A NEW TENANT OR NEW USE FOR AVALON HOUSE, WINCHESTER**

(Oral Report)

The Head of Estates gave an oral report (details in exempt appendix).

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

11. **75 HYDE STREET, WINCHESTER – ADDITIONAL FUNDING**

The above Report had not been notified for inclusion on the agenda within the statutory deadline. The Chairman agreed to accept the item onto the agenda, as a matter requiring urgent consideration, due to the on-going discussions with the prospective new tenant (details in exempt appendix).

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 10.00pm.