

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 July 2012

Attendance:

Councillors:

Pines (Chairman) (P)

Cook (P)

Evans (P)

Gemmell (P)

Gottlieb (P)

Hutchison

Learney (P)

Read (P)

Sanders (P)

Scott (P)

Wright (P)

Deputy Members:

Councillors Tod (Standing Deputy for Councillor Hutchison)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Phillips

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Wood (Leader)

Councillor Coates (Portfolio Holder for Housing)

Councillor Godfrey (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration)

Councillor Stallard (Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture and Sport)

Councillor Tait (Portfolio Holder for New Homes Delivery)

1. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Wood, Coates, Godfrey, Stallard and Tait declared personal and prejudicial interests, due to their involvement as Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holders respectively, 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 Leader and Portfolio Holders respectively, 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 Tod declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in relation to Report CAB2366 (below), as he was a donator to Trinity and an ordinary volunteer at the Nightshelter. He spoke and voted thereon.

The Corporate Director (Governance) outlined recent changes relating to the declaration of disclosable pecuniary interests, as outlined in Cabinet Report CAB2368. Following this explanation, no further interests were declared.

2. **MEMBERSHIP OF SUB-COMMITTEES ETC**

RESOLVED:

1. That the following appointments to Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) be confirmed as follows:
 - i) Provision of Public Transport in Town and Rural Areas ISG: Councillor Read (lead), Bodtger, Henry, Hiscock, Jeffs, Southgate, and Weir. Lead Officer Andy Hickman
 - ii) Access to Services in the Market Towns and Rural Areas ISG: Councillors Evans (lead), Cook, Mason, McLean, and Verney. Lead Officer Rob Heathcock
 - iii) Impact of the Localism Act on the City Council and our Communities ISG: Councillors Hutchison (lead), Mather, Maynard, Johnston, Phillips and Warwick. Lead Officer Antonia Perkins
 - iv) The Impact of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) on City Council estates ISG: Councillors Scott (lead), Banister, E Berry, J Berry, Green, and Prowse. Lead Officer Richard Botham
 - v) Review of the Statutory Basis of City Council Services ISG: Councillors Sanders (lead), Collin, Nelmes, Phillips, and Warwick. Lead Officer to be advised.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, held on 18 June 2012, be approved and adopted.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Mills spoke regarding a proposed re-development in Milland Road, Winchester by the City Council for new affordable homes. As a Council tenant, Mr Mills expressed concern that local residents had learnt of the Council's proposals through the local paper, rather than directly from the Council.

In response, the Chief Executive agreed that the Council should review its communication and consultation procedures for its own developments. If the Council was found to be at fault in this instance, he would have no hesitation in apologising to those affected. He added that if the scheme became reality, the affected tenants would be temporarily re-housed and, if appropriate, offered first choice on the new dwellings.

5. **EXTRACTS FROM MINUTES OF CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE, HELD 20 JUNE 2012, AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE, HELD 11 JUNE 2012**
(Report OS48 refers)

The Committee noted extracts of the minutes of meetings of Cabinet (Housing) Committee, which considered Reports CAB2354 and CAB2357, and Personnel Committee in relation to Report PER216, as part of its consideration of these reports, as set out below.

RESOLVED:

That the minute extracts and matters referred to therein, be noted.

6. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING – CHANGE PLAN OUTCOMES 2011/12 OUTTURN AND QUARTER 1 2012/21**
(Report CAB2370 refers)

The Committee noted that future versions of the Report were likely to be more concise and that Members could have access to detailed performance monitoring information via the Council's corporate performance management system, Covalent. The key performance information would also be available to the public via the Council's website from summer 2012.

The Committee also discussed the performance figures relating to the Community Safety Partnership, recycling rates, and the work in Winnall and Stanmore. A Member highlighted the need for similar action in Wickham and it was explained that the five priorities of the Community Strategy (which included prioritising Winnall and Stanmore) were due to reviewed in 2013, but that Members had the opportunity to make amendments when the Change Plans for 2013/14 were taken to Council early next year. Until then, the Assistant Director (Economic Prosperity) offered to meet with Wickham Parish Council to discuss issues affecting the area.

In response to a Member's comment, the Leader explained that the New Homes Delivery Team would, in addition to creating new Council Houses, continue to work with registered providers to maximise the development opportunities for affordable homes achieved via new private sector developments.

Several Members raised concerns regarding the number of deferred work items as highlighted in the Report and questioned whether this was a result of recent reductions in officer resources. In response, the Chief Executive explained that changes to Council's organisation had been necessary to achieve balanced budgets and that, through more efficient working, the Council strived to reach the targets that it had set itself. However, it was acknowledged that there was a continual re-assessment of what was achievable and this needed to be relayed to Members and the public. At the conclusion of debate, the Committee agreed to highlight this concern to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet have regard to the Committee's concerns regarding the number of programmes in the Report which appeared to be delayed as a consequence of reducing numbers of staff and, as a consequence, any significant readjustment to the Change Plan should be reported to Members.

7. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP – PERFORMANCE OUTTURN 2011/12
(Report OS47 refers)

Councillor Stallard introduced the Report and highlighted to Members the various decreases in crime statistics and the positive contribution the street pastors had made to the night-time economy.

The Committee discussed staffing within the partnership and noted that there were currently two vacant Neighbourhood Warden posts. These posts were due to be re-appointed following a review of their roles, which may widen the range of tasks they undertake.

Members also discussed the possible role of the partnership following the introduction of the new Police and Crime Commissioner and noted that the County Council was currently reviewing partnership working across the County.

At the conclusion of debate, Members requested that future performance information from the partnership should include, where appropriate, easy-to-understand comparisons with similar, nearby local authorities.

RESOLVED:

That the work of the Community Safety Partnership be noted and that future report include easy-to-understand, relevant comparison data, where appropriate.

8. **FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2013/14 – 2015/16**
(Report CAB2362 refers)

The Committee noted that this Report had been considered by Cabinet, at its meeting held on 4 July 2012, where the recommendations had been agreed as set out.

Councillor Godfrey introduced the report and explained that the Strategy was the first stage in progressing next year's budget. However, at this stage, many of the major variables within the budget (principally, the level of Government grant) were unknown. Despite this, it was likely that without further savings, the budget would fall into deficit by approximately £1m next year, increasing to £2.2m in 2014/15. The Committee noted that this forecast was mirrored by the Local Government Association's research.

In response to a question, Councillor Godfrey explained that the proposed increase in planning fees was unlikely to significantly assist. During discussion, the Chief Executive outlined the Council's initiatives to tackle the on-going budget problem, which in the past had included savings on the waste contract, shared services, smarter use of the Council's buildings as well as reducing the number of staff.

Councillor Godfrey also highlighted the Government's proposed change to the redistribution of National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR). In summary, 50% of any increase (or decrease) in the collection of NNDR within a district would, under the proposed scheme, to the benefit or loss of local areas.

In response to concerns regarding the lack of a letting or sale of Avalon House, the Committee noted the strategic importance of the site and that a final decision on its future would have regard to the Council's long term aim to achieve both the best result for its budget and the local community.

At the conclusion of debate, the Committee supported the Strategy, subject to an additional amendment to page 3, paragraph 2.4 to read:

“The opportunities provided by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)”.

The Leader also accepted the Committee's suggestion to hold a Members' Training evening on the emerging CIL.

RESOLVED:

That, Cabinet be advised that, subject to the above amendment, the Strategy be supported.

9. **DEVELOPMENT OF A SHARED AND CONSOLIDATED IT INFRASTRUCTURE WITH TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**
(Report CAB2319 refers)

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, because it was recognised that Test Valley Borough Council had to make a decision in the near future as to where it housed its IT storage facilities.

Councillor Godfrey explained that the Report had also been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 4 July 2012. However, due to the late publication of the Report, Cabinet had agreed to delegate the decision to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, subject to consideration of any comments arising from this Committee or any subsequent comment from Members before the decision was made on 13 July 2012.

In summary, the Head of Information Management and Technology explained that the proposed shared service in the Report was a cost effective way to undertake work that Winchester needed to do, to upgrade its processing and storage facility.

In response to questions, Members noted that whilst the two councils would continue to seek efficiencies through increased sharing of IT software systems, the Report dealt with the processing and storage solutions only.

During debate, a Member raised concern that it was difficult to properly scrutinise the Report's proposals without careful consideration of the Joint IT Strategy, which had only been released as a Portfolio Holders Decision Notice one working day before this meeting.

In response to other concerns, Councillor Godfrey confirmed that the potential difficulties and unquantifiable additional costs, should the Council need to remove itself from the joint working agreement in the future, had been considered and weighed against the greater efficiencies of shared services and facilities.

RESOLVED:

That, having been granted delegated powers from Cabinet to determine Report's proposals, the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holder for

Finance and Administration be asked to consider the points made in the Committee's discussion, as summarised above.

10. **CONSIDERATION OF ITEM UNDER THE COMMITTEE'S POWERS OF CALL-IN**

(i) **COUNCIL HOUSE NEW BUILD PROGRAMME AND ADDITIONAL STAFFING REQUIREMENTS (EXCLUDING EXEMPT APPENDIX 3)**
(Report PER216 refers)

The Committee noted that this Report had been considered both Cabinet at its meeting held on 13 June and Personnel Committee, held on 11 June 2012, where the recommendations had been agreed as set out.

The Chairman requested that, in addition to the consideration of the supplementary estimate under the Committee's powers of call-in, Members consider any other matters that they wish to raise in relation to the Development Process for either the Portfolio Holder or Cabinet.

A Member raised concern that the creation of the new team had reduced the number of posts in the Strategic Housing Team, which promoted affordable housing through registered providers. As the majority of new affordable homes would continue to be developed through registered providers, the Member questioned whether this reduction would lead to a net reduction in the number of new affordable homes being built. The Corporate Director (Operations) explained that the new team would continue to promote the development of affordable housing on private developments (usually through Section 106 Agreements) as well as promoting the new Council House build programme.

During debate, several Members questioned why it was necessary to create a new team to undertake work which could broadly be considered part of the existing Estates Team's responsibilities. In response, the Chief Executive explained the Estates Team did not have sufficient resources to ensure the prompt development of new build programme, in accordance with Members' expectations. Whilst the new team would be created from existing Council staff with relevant skills, as schemes progressed, it was likely that those staff would call on existing expertise within the Estates Team and other teams where necessary.

He added that the creation of the new in-house team would be more cost effective than outsourcing the work and that the best way to progress individual schemes was likely to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The Committee noted that, in the creation of the new team, the Council had learnt (and would continue to learn) from other Local Authorities and

housing associations to ensure the effective delivery of new affordable homes.

In response to concerns raised by Mr Mills in public participation, the Head of New Homes Delivery agreed that careful consideration should be given to the consultation with existing tenants regarding the creation of new Council housing. He indicated that communications and consultation would be considered in the Development Strategy.

At the conclusion of debate, the Committee welcomed the creation of the new team and wished it well with its work. However, they underlined the need for the team to remain flexible, the importance of communication, future benchmarking (eg dwelling unit costs) against other local authorities/registered providers and the role of the new Cabinet (Housing Delivery) Committee.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT COUNCIL BE ADVISED THAT THERE ARE NO MATTERS THAT THE COMMITTEE WISHES TO DRAW TO ITS ATTENTION

RESOLVED:

1. That the decision of Cabinet to approve a supplementary estimate in the General Fund of £95,715 in 2012/13 (£147,958 in a full year) noting that recharges to the HRA will increase by £227,616 in 2012/13 (£266,102 in a full year), be not called in for review.

2. That the Cabinet (Housing Delivery) Committee be asked to give specific consideration to communications and consultation issues in the preparation of the Development Strategy.

(ii) **HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION FUND 2012/13**
(Report CAB2366 refers)

Councillor Tod declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in relation to Report CB2366, as he was a donor to Trinity and an ordinary volunteer at the Nightshelter. He spoke and voted thereon.

The Committee noted that this Report had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 4 July 2012, where the recommendations had been agreed as set out.

During discussion, the Committee suggested that, in addition to continuing to report directly Government, consideration should be given to reporting the Council's performance in regard to homelessness in the performance monitoring reports made to Members.

In response to a question, the Head of Housing Services explained that it was hoped that initiatives within the Report would negate the need to create a wet centre within Winchester town centre.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of Cabinet to approve a supplementary estimate of £50,000 to the Homelessness Prevention Budget for 2012/13 (funded from the Homelessness Prevention Earmarked Reserve) not be called-in for review.

(iii) **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2011/12 OUTTURN**
(Report CAB2354HSG refers)

The Committee noted that this Report had been considered by Cabinet (Housing) Committee at its meeting held on 20 June 2012 and at Cabinet 4 July 2012 where the recommendations had been agreed as set out.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT COUNCIL BE ADVISED THAT THERE ARE NO MATTERS THAT THE COMMITTEE WISHES TO DRAW TO ITS ATTENTION.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of Cabinet to approve a supplementary estimate of £300,000 to fund estate improvement works in Stanmore (and the associated engineering resources required to deliver the programme) not be called in for review.

(iv) **STOCK CONDITION SURVEY OF COUNCIL OWNED HOMES**
(Report CAB2357HSG refers)

The Committee noted that this Report had been considered by Cabinet (Housing) Committee at its meeting held on 20 June 2012 and at Cabinet 4 July 2012, where the recommendations had been agreed as set out.

Councillor Coates explained that the last full stock condition of Council owned homes was in 1987. In the proposed review, a contractor had agreed to undertake the work at an average cost of £60 per dwelling and this included a visual inspection of roof spaces, where applicable.

In response to a question, it was noted that the result of a separate survey on the condition of the Council's garages would be considered by Members in the near future.

At the conclusion of debate, the Committee supported the proposed survey.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT COUNCIL BE ADVISED THAT THE COMMITTEE SUPPORTS THE PROPOSALS.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of Cabinet to approve a supplementary estimate within the Housing Revenue Account of £300,000 in 2012/13, with the revenue support to the capital programme (RCCO) being reduced in order to meet the stock survey costs which are a charge to revenue (note that the capital budget for External Envelope Works will be reduced because of the reduction in the RCCO), be not called-in for review.

11. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME ([REPORT OS42 REFERS](#)) JULY 2012 FORWARD PLAN AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION**

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme and Forward Plan for July 2012 be noted.

12. **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>
##	Abbey Mill Update Depot Update) Information relating to the) financial or business affairs) of any particular person) (including the authority) holding that information).) (Para 3 Schedule 12A) refers).
) Information relating to any) individual (Para 1 Schedule) 12A refers).
	Appendix 3 Council House New Build Programme and Additional Staffing Requirements) Information which is likely to) reveal the identity of an) individual (Para 2 Schedule) 12A refers).
) Information relating to any) consultations or negotiations,) or contemplated) consultations or negotiations,) in connection with any labour) relations matter arising) between the authority or a) Minister of the Crown and) employees of, or office) holders under, the authority) (Para 4 Schedule 12A) refers).

13. **APPENDIX 3: COUNCIL HOUSE NEW BUILD PROGRAMME AND
ADDITIONAL STAFFING REQUIREMENTS**
(Report PER216 refers)

The Committee considered the above exempt appendix, which set out detailed financial information relating to the proposed staff budget costs. This information

had been revised as of 11 June 2012, following the publication of the Report for Personnel Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the appendix be noted.

14. **CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS UNDER THE COMMITTEE'S POWERS OF CALL-IN**

i) **ABBAY MILL UPDATE**
(Report CAB2374 refers)

The Committee considered the above Report, which updated Members on progress regarding the potential letting of and works on Abbey Mill, Winchester (detail set out in the exempt minute). The Report had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 4 July 2012, where the recommendations had been agreed as set out.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of Cabinet to approve the supplementary estimate, as set out in the exempt Report, not be called-in for review.

ii) **NEW DEPOT UPDATE, BARFIELD CLOSE, WINCHESTER**
(Report CAB2375 refers)

The Committee considered the above Report which updated Members on the development of a new depot at Barfield Close, Winchester (detail in exempt minute). The Report had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 4 July 2012, where the recommendations had been agreed as set out.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of Cabinet to approve the supplementary estimate, as set out in the exempt Report, not be called-in for review.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 10.25pm.