

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 November 2012

Attendance:

Councillors:

Pines (Chairman) (P)

Cook (P)

Evans (P)

Gemmell

Gottlieb

Hutchison (P)

Learney (P)

Read (P)

Sanders (P)

Scott (P)

Wright (P)

Deputy Member

Councillor Phillips (Standing Deputy for Councillor Gemmell)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Wood (Leader), Godfrey (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration) and Humby (Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Economic Development)

1. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reminded Members that the next meeting of the Committee on 10 December 2012 would scrutinise the operation of the Councils major contracts - Biffa waste management, Landscape Group and Osborne Housing maintenance. It was suggested that Members email officers in advance of the meeting their specific areas of concerns and the likely questions to be asked of officers and representatives of the contractors invited to be present. This would help ensure that the Committee were provided with detailed responses to any concerns raised at the meeting, rather than being supplied with information at a later date.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 17 September 2012, be approved and adopted.

3. **GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP – 12 MONTH REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

(Report OS55 refers)

Councillor Humby and the Head of Strategic Planning responded to questions and it was confirmed much of the detail of each of the recommendations would be dealt with as part of the processes in preparation for Local Plan Part 2. Thorough consultation on proposed sites to accommodate gypsies, travellers and showmen (as well as 'considered options' for future strategic development sites) would be undertaken, which would be inclusive of parish councils.

The Corporate Director (Operations) confirmed that although it was unlikely that grants from the government to support Councils in making suitable provision for gypsies, travellers and showmen would cease, they were not guaranteed beyond 2013/14.

RESOLVED:

That the progress achieved to date in implementing the recommendations of the Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites Informal Scrutiny Group is noted.

4. **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY: CONSULTATION ON PRELIMINARY DRAFT CHARGING SCHEDULE**

(Report CAB2412 and addendum refers)

The above Report and addendum had not been notified for inclusion on the agenda within the statutory deadline. The Chairman agreed to accept the item and Addendum onto the agenda, as a matter requiring urgent consideration, to allow sufficient time for any comments that the Committee may have to be considered in advance of commencement of the public consultation process on the draft charging schedule.

The Corporate Director (Operations) explained that the Addendum was a replacement to table 3 – Proposed charging rates (appendix to Report CAB2412 refers). The replacement presented to Cabinet on 14 November 2012 contained a further error which had now been corrected in this latest version. Subject to this information being taken back to Cabinet, it had endorsed the draft charging schedule as a basis for consultation on the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging regime.

During discussion, the Corporate Director confirmed that Council had information relating to charging schedules from elsewhere in Hampshire in compiling the consultation document. The charges related to development were proposed at a viability level for Winchester District. It was also clarified that the Infrastructure Development Plan is a supporting document to the Charging Schedule. This

demonstrated that there was a requirement for infrastructure provision that could be funded by the levy which fully justified the proposed charges.

Councillor Humby explained that in light of changes to the existing open space funding stream once CIL was adopted, new mechanisms for agreeing support to bodies requiring contributions to infrastructure would be required. Therefore, Parish Councils, key stakeholder and the Winchester Town Forum would be involved in a programme to decide these new processes.

Councillor Wood agreed that in recognition of the importance to the Council of the introduction of CIL in supporting its priorities, an all Member briefing be arranged in advance of its adoption. It was recognised that this was subject to a full independent examination process and the final charging schedule being formally approved by full Council.

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposals outlined in the report be noted.

2. That the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Economic Development have regard to the comments of the Committee as summarised above.

5. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET CONSULTATION 2013/14**
(Report CAB2414 refers)

The Committee noted that, at its meeting held 14 November 2012, Cabinet had approved the recommendations of the Report as set out.

Councillor Godfrey highlighted that there were few significant changes to the Council's originally approved spending and income plans. The Council's Financial Strategy outlined some of the likely difficulties from funding gaps that were likely to be experienced year on year. There were no expectations to drastically change expenditure at this time and it was expected that the administration would present a balanced budget. However, external factors could not be easily predicted at this time – the Council would not know the rate of the Revenue Support Grant until late December 2012.

During discussion, the Head of Finance explained how the baseline budget was calculated and that the most realistic prediction was that there would be a deficit to the Council of around £1.1million, as identified in the July Report on the Financial Strategy. The Chief Executive also reminded the meeting that the Council was legally bound to a nationally agreed pay structure and therefore, for example, there was no potential to achieve savings from a freeze on incremental salary progression and/or opting out of the Hampshire County Council pension fund.

Councillor Wood clarified that the fee payable to the Council to deliver a planning service on behalf of the South Downs National Park would be re-negotiated soon; however, the National Park itself was also experiencing funding pressures and that it could potentially negotiate a Service Level Agreement with another Local Authority within the National Park area to undertake the work instead.

Councillor Wood also responded to comments on the impact to the General Fund Budget from identified projects within the Capital Programme. Any investment expenditure on the Council's estate should achieve a positive outcome to the Council. With regard to maximising income from the Guildhall, he reported on recent changes and it was agreed that the Head of Estates provide an update to the Committee on the recent improvements made to this area.

The Chief Executive clarified that the latest proposals for re-organisation of the staffing structure of the Council were not just intended to achieve savings, they were part of realising cultural changes within the organisation that would help inform more fundamental service reviews over the longer term. He acknowledged that as a consequence of the changes, the Council was likely to require a broader discussion of its corporate priorities, in addition to the annual 'refresh' of the Sustainable Community Strategy. He was currently finalising his proposals following a period of consultation and these would then be formally considered by Cabinet and the Personnel Committee. Following further discussion, it was agreed that all Members be provided with an overview of his aspirations for the direction that the Council was to take in the future and that this be arranged by way of an informal discussion in advance of the decisions to be made by Cabinet and the Personnel Committee.

The Committee discussed the provision of grants to voluntary organisations and Councillor Wood stated that these were reviewed annually. The Committee noted that payments were made only to those organisations which contributed to the Council in achieving its key priorities.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Report be noted.
2. That arrangements for presentations on the following be communicated to Members in due course :
 - (i) An overview of the Chief Executive's aspirations for the direction that the Council was to take in the future in light of proposals for staff reorganisation.
 - (ii) Recent changes to the management of the Guildhall to assist with maximising its income.

6. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE – MID YEAR 2012/13**
(Report OS53 refers)

In response to discussion, the Assistant Director (High Quality Environment) reminded the meeting that, particularly under the Active Communities Outcome theme, that despite pressures on staffing resources progress had still been maintained in several areas with some projects successfully delivered. The Chief Executive also underlined the importance of some of the smaller projects in making a difference to the lives of some residents.

Councillor Wood also reported on his commitment to delivering the Council's Climate Change targets under the High Quality Outcome theme. With regard to reducing the organisation's carbon emissions, he stated that although the Council was making some progress to this area, it was largely dependent on resolving the future of City Offices and River Park Leisure Centre, the two least energy efficient buildings in its estate.

The Assistant Director also reported on work commissioned on behalf of the Council by Winacc to work with other partners to achieve further public discussion on carbon footprint reduction. This area was not just linked to carbon reduction, but also other agendas, for example, ensuring that homes were well insulated and growing the green economy. Both Councillor Wood and the Chief Executive confirmed that they would attend a meeting of the Climate Change Project Board and the Assistant Director undertook to make the necessary arrangements.

With regard to the Economic Prosperity theme, Councillor Humby acknowledged that comparative data would assist in gauging the Council's contribution to successfully reduce youth unemployment.

At the conclusion of discussion, the Committee congratulated the Assistant Directors for their achievements in delivering important areas of the Change Plans, despite staffing capacity restrictions during the last year.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet have regard to the Committee's comments arising from the performance information in the report as summarised above.

7. **BATCH 3 INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE**
(Report OS54 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the terms of reference for Batch 3 Informal Scrutiny Groups as set out in paragraph 2 of the Report be confirmed.

8. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT OS45 REFERS) DECEMBER 2012 FORWARD PLAN AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION**

The Chairman reported that a meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs Liaison Group was soon to convene and would discuss progress of batch 3 Informal Scrutiny Groups and any topics coming forward from Group Managers for batch 4 scrutiny investigations.

RESOLVED:

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

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.30pm.

Chairman