

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 May 2013

Attendance:

Councillors:

Pines (Chairman) (P)

Byrnes (P)
Cook (P)
Evans (P)
Gemmell
Learney

Power (P)
Sanders (P)
Scott (P)
Stallard (P)
Wright (P)

Deputy Members

Councillor Hiscock (Standing Deputy for Councillor Learney)
Councillor Read (Standing Deputy for Councillor Gemmell)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Humby (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development)
Councillor Warwick (Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods & Environment)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Tait (Portfolio Holder for Housing & New Homes)
Councillor J Berry

1. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Stallard declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of Report OS72, due to her role as a Hampshire County Councillor. However, as there was no material conflict of interest regarding this item, she remained in the room and spoke and voted under the dispensation granted by the Monitoring Officer on behalf of the Standards Committee.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2013/14 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Scott be appointed Vice Chairman of the Committee for the 2013/14 Municipal Year.

3. **TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

RESOLVED:

That meetings of the Committee commence at 6.30pm in accordance with the published timetable of meetings for 2013/14.

4. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported that following his attendance at a recent training event along with the scrutiny lead Members, he would soon be meeting with the Chief Executive to discuss some possible changes to the Council's scrutiny arrangements.

The Chairman also advised that he had recently waived the Committee's right to consider a supplementary estimate related to Abbey Mill, as the additional sums required were relatively small. He reported that he would be working with officers to consider increasing the existing call-in threshold (currently £50,000).

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Whitmarsh addressed the Committee on behalf of Winchester Action against Climate Change (WinACC) with regard to the agenda item 13a - Progress Report on Implementation of the final Recommendations of the City Council's Efforts to reduce its Carbon Footprint Informal Scrutiny Group (Report OS75 refers).

In summary, Mr Whitmarsh advised that the Report should have contained measurable carbon savings rather than the emphasis on financial savings to the Council. He also highlighted that greenhouse emissions from electricity were twice that for gas consumption. Therefore, behavioural change should be encouraged amongst Council employees, for example: switching off lights, computers and installing real-time display units for electricity consumption. Mr Whitmarsh reminded that carbon emissions are cumulative and therefore there was an urgent need to reduce them.

The Chairman thanked Mr Whitmarsh for his comments and advised that they be taken into account as part of the Committee's discussion of Report OS75 later on the agenda.

6. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 18 March 2013, be approved and adopted.

7. **APPOINTMENT OF COUNCILLORS TO LEAD INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUPS AND TO EXTERNAL BODIES RELATED TO SCRUTINY FOR THE 2013/2014 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

(Report OS70 refers)

RESOLVED:

1. That the following six appointments to lead Informal Scrutiny Groups (ISGs) for the 2013/14 Municipal Year be confirmed:

- (i) Councillor Sanders
- (ii) Councillor Scott
- (iii) Councillor Wright
- (iv) Councillor Evans
- (v) Councillor Gemmell
- (vi) Councillor Power *(role to take effect after Councillor*

Hutchison has concluded his work on the existing Implementation of Informal Scrutiny Group Recommendations ISG)

2. That the Committee confirm appointments to the following external bodies:

- a) Portsmouth City Council – Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Councillor Read and Councillor Newman-McKie (deputy))
- b) Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) – Scrutiny Champions Network (Councillor Pines)
- c) Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Gemmell and Councillor Achwall (deputy))
- d) Joint Project Integra Scrutiny Panel (with East Hants District Council) (Councillors Pines, Clear and McLean)

8. **FIELDFARE LEADER FUNDING AND THE FUTURE**

(Report OS72 refers)

Councillor Humby advised that the Council would soon have its position as part of the LEADER funding mechanism clarified by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

During discussion, the Chief Executive acknowledged the valuable role of the Council with regard to the Fieldfare Local Action Group in delivering funds to support the rural economy. Depending on the outcome of DEFRA's decision, the Council may be able to maintain the momentum of the existing work of the

programme in the District by reconsidering its existing priorities and utilising the skills of officers to investigate alternate funding streams.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress to date in implementing the recommendations of the LEADER Informal Scrutiny Group be noted.

2. That the Committee notes the changes to the Leader Programme during 2013/14 – 2015/16

9. **HOUSING TERM MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS - PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2012/13 (CONTRACTOR – GEOFFREY OSBORNE LTD.)**
(Report OS74 refers)

The Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) introduced Mr McLoughlan, Operation's Manager – Geoffrey Osborne Limited.

During discussion, the Assistant Director clarified that the contractor should demonstrate significant reasons for there to be a less than 100% response to call-outs and emergency repairs. Inclement weather during the winter period had caused some fluctuations. It was also reported that officers were looking to make improvements to the performance information gained from tenants' responses in Customer Care Cards. This would include details of the contractor's response to any negative feedback received from a tenant. Feedback would also be given to TACT.

The Committee was pleased to note marked improvement to the performance of the contractor since its previous scrutiny of the performance information. The Chairman advised that he would discuss with officers how the Committee could help review the performance of the Council's other contractors related to housing repairs.

RESOLVED:

That the performance information in the Report be noted.

10. **FINDINGS OF THE INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP ON HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION**
(Report OS69 refers)

As Chairman of the Informal Scrutiny Group, Councillor Scott introduced the Report and summarised the work undertaken to reach its main conclusions and recommendations.

During discussion, the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) suggested that the estimated number of HMOs in town area wards (as listed in paragraph 5.2 of

the Report) was intended as illustrative and it was acknowledged that it was unlikely to be totally accurate. For example, the high number of HMOs within St Michaels Ward was due to the purpose built university halls of residence being located here. It was also likely that there were HMOs in the St Pauls and Littleton & Harestock areas.

The Committee was reminded of the University's proactive work with regard to its students' behaviour when living in communities. Members also referred to other existing neighbourhood management initiatives that continued to be effective across Winchester's estates. There was some concern that the Informal Scrutiny Group had not had particular focus on non-student tenants of HMOs, who were likely to be transitory in nature and could also be the cause of some problems to other residents. There was also a possibility that they may be living in houses that had been converted without proper building control approval.

The Committee discussed the ISG's recommendation with regard to introducing a HMO licensing scheme and noted that there had been a low response to consultation on an earlier proposal for the Stanmore area. The Assistant Director demonstrated that the proposed new scheme for the whole of the Town area was likely to be cost neutral to the Council from a suggested charge per licence. There was some concern that this cost to the landlord may be passed onto the tenant in their rent, along with any associated costs required to bring the property up to a sufficient standard.

Councillor Scott clarified that Recommendation 6 of the ISG (which suggested that the Council should encourage further development of purpose built halls of residence) may help 'free up' family homes in estate areas of the Town which were currently HMOs. However, some Members were concerned at the continued expansion of the University in previously residential areas close to the main campus and also of private developments looking to accommodate students. Further development would also not be of benefit non-student tenants of HMOs. It was therefore agreed that Recommendation 6 of the ISG ('That the University of Winchester and the University of Southampton be encouraged to provide more purpose-built accommodation for their students') not be referred to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the following recommendations of the Informal Scrutiny Group be recommended to Cabinet for approval:

1. That the Assistant Director (High Quality Environment) commence a one year pilot of the Enhanced Neighbourhood Management approach in localities with a significant number of Houses in Multiple Occupation; the pilot to commence on 1 July 2013.

2. That the success of that approach be reviewed after six months to determine its effectiveness and consider whether an additional licensing scheme or other measures are needed. A further review of the pilot scheme will take place after a full year of operation.

3. That consultation be undertaken about the possibility of an additional licensing scheme being introduced in the Winchester Town area (a three mile radius from the city centre).

4. That officers work in partnership with the University to support students to set up a means of recording and publicising feedback on the quality of private rented accommodation and the service offered by landlords.

5. That officers extend the coverage achieved by the 'Welcome to the Neighbourhood' booklet.

6. That the Council commission an update of its 2007 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey and revise its Private Sector Housing Strategy.

7. That officers be requested to review the local planning approach to HMOs.

8. That officers work in partnership with the University of Winchester and University of Southampton to find ways to foster effective community cohesion between students and their neighbourhoods.

11. **PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITY COUNCIL'S EFFORTS TO REDUCE ITS CARBON FOOTPRINT INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP**
(Report OS75 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, so that the matter could be dealt with without further delay.

Councillor Warwick introduced the Report which provided an update on the implementation of the ISG's recommendations following its broad investigations.

The Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods & Environment) referred to the comments made by Mr Whitmarsh during public participation and updated the Committee on the Council's work to influence change through its staff travel arrangements. The Head of Estates also detailed the extensive work to date in improving the energy efficiency of the Council's operational buildings and also more fundamental improvements to other buildings within its estate undertaken as part of refurbishment works.

The Committee noted that consultants' reports were currently being analysed with regard to the future of River Park Leisure Centre and to City Offices, both currently making unacceptably high contributions towards the Council's carbon footprint. The Chief Executive advised that the outcome of this work would soon be presented to Members.

During discussion of the ISG's recommendations with regard to lease cars, the Chief Executive advised that any changes to existing entitlements were also linked to negotiations related to national terms and conditions of affected post holders. However, as and when posts became vacant, officers vigorously reassessed whether essential user status should still be applied. The Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods & Environment) also reported on a continuing downward trend in the CO2 emissions of vehicles due to their income tax bandings.

The Committee also discussed the Council's involvement in a feasibility project led by the County Council to deliver a local heating and power scheme for its own buildings, the prison, hospital and university. There was also potential for the scheme to supply energy to elsewhere in the town centre. The Chief Executive explained that there was also potential for there to be a separate scheme as part of the Silver Hill development.

The Committee referred to the town centre being situated within a designated Air Quality Management Area. As vehicles were responsible for significant carbon emissions and air pollution here, it was agreed that Cabinet be requested to commission an investigation into how this could be reduced.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress towards reducing carbon emissions since May 2012 be noted
2. That, as vehicles were responsible for significant carbon emissions and air pollution in Winchester town centre, Cabinet be requested to commission an investigation into how this could be reduced.

12. **ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2012-13**
(Report OS73 refers)

RECOMMENDED:

THAT THE DRAFT ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2012-13, BE APPROVED AS SET OUT IN REPORT OS73.

13. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT OS71 REFERS) AND JUNE 2013 FORWARD PLAN AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION**

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme and Forward Plan for June 2013 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.30pm.

Chairman