

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 January 2014

Attendance:

Councillors:

Pines (Chairman)

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

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

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Wood (Leader of the Council), Warwick (Portfolio Holder Neighbourhoods and Environment) and Weir.

1. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Stallard declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of Report CAB2539 due to her role as a Hampshire County Councillor. However, as there was no material conflict of interest regarding the 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. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman advised that he had been invited by the Tenants' Scrutiny Group to attend its Forum meeting as an observer and that he would report back to the Committee in due course.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 9 December 2013 (less exempt item), be approved and adopted.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Wilson addressed the Committee with his concerns relating to River Park Leisure Centre and the Council's re-letting of the contract for its management to DC Leisure on more than one occasion. He questioned why the Council had re-

let the contract without a full tendering process having been undertaken? At that time, the Council would also have been aware that the building required considerable investment. Mr Wilson reported that he had already raised these concerns with the Council's External Auditor and further requested that the Committee investigate the matter.

The Chief Executive advised that, following a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Council's Head of Legal and Democratic Services had recently provided Mr Wilson with exempt documentation with regard to the extending of the contract, which had a number of redactions (due to elements of commercial sensitivity). Mr Wilson had subsequently requested that the reasons for the redactions be reviewed and the Chief Executive explained that he was therefore obliged to inform the contractor before a decision could be made to release further details. This had been done and the Chief Executive indicated that he had decided that further information, with fewer redactions, would be sent to Mr Wilson.

A Member recalled that the decision to extend the management contract to 2023 had been taken after receiving external legal advice and external advice from a leisure management consultant.

The Committee discussed the matters raised by Mr Wilson and it was agreed that it was appropriate for it to consider reviewing the basis for the Council's decision to extend the contract with DC Leisure. However, the accusations made of alleged irregularities would be best dealt with separately by the External Auditor, to whom Mr Wilson had already made a complaint. The Committee should therefore await the outcome of this review.

The Chairman agreed to meet with Mr Wilson outside of the meeting and to discuss with officers how to best take this matter forward. Members would be updated at the next meeting.

5. **WINCHESTER DISTRICT CAR PARKING STRATEGY**

(Report CAB2539 refers)

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF CABINET HELD 4 DECEMBER 2013

(Report OS92 refers)

Councillor Warwick introduced the Report and drew attention to the core Aims and Objectives of the Strategy, as set out on page 3. The Strategy was an evidenced based document, following extensive public and key stakeholder consultation.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Weir addressed the Committee as Chairman of the Winchester Town Forum Informal Group which had previously discussed the draft Strategy. In summary, Councillor Weir welcomed the more strategic approach taken to parking in the town area as demonstrated within the

document but would prefer better price differentials between the three parking rings.

The Committee asked a number of detailed questions of the Portfolio Holder and officers and in summary, the following responses were given:

- (i) The Head of Major Projects explained that a priority list for residents' parking zones and parking restrictions was reviewed annually and he was satisfied that the Council's Parking Enforcement Team was adequately resourced to be able to patrol these areas.
- (ii) The Park and Ride facilities were leased from Hampshire County Council at a gross cost of approximately £800,000 per annum. The Council achieved an income of approximately half this amount.
- (iii) Although free on-street parking places could assist local businesses, there could then be turnover problems. The Head of Major Projects indicated that there would be discussions with New Alresford Town Council if regulation changes were proposed.
- (iv) The recent survey sent to residents in the vicinity of Chesil Street sought to achieve a better understanding of the out-of-hours use of Chesil Street open air car park. There was evidence that the adjacent multi-storey car park was under occupied during the daytime and evening. The evidence gathered would inform any proposal going forward for the potential redevelopment of the site by the Council (with County Council support) for extra care housing. The comments of a Member with regard to St Peters car park possibly having greater under-occupancy in comparison to Chesil Street (and potentially being a preferable town centre site for such a facility) were noted.
- (v) The Head of Major Projects noted comments that car parking on Wickham Square was normally at capacity and undertook to investigate when the survey referred to in the Strategy had been undertaken, that had demonstrated that this was not the case.
- (vi) Proposals for new Park and Ride facilities at Pitt Manor and at Barton Farm were both time dependent on planning decisions. However, the latter was set out within associated Section 106 agreements for the existing outline planning permission.
- (vii) Lighting at the South Winchester Park and Ride was now dimmed to 50% during the night but was required to remain on 24 hours of the day in some areas for security reasons.
- (viii) The Winnall Trading Estate area was not served by existing Park and Ride services as this would be likely to increase the contract costs significantly. However, this could be explored as part of a future review of the contract.
- (ix) It was explained that Hampshire County Council currently retained an area near the Park and Ride site for staff parking, but the City Council was paid for the use of the bus service.
- (x) Councillor Warwick acknowledged that it had been unfortunate that lifts had not worked in Chesil Street Multi Storey on a day during the Christmas period when the facility was used to capacity. Lifts were

normally switched off during out-of –hours and this matter would be resolved so to not reoccur in the future.

- (xi) Further to a suggestion from a Member, the Head of Major Projects advised that there was not enough space to permanently create echelon parking in The Broadway, as this would inhibit buses turning. Parking in this location would eventually be reviewed as part of the Silver Hill development.
- (xii) Consultation on the draft Strategy had been undertaken with key stakeholders including the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, which had then passed details to branch Chambers of Commerce in local areas.
- (xiii) In response to a comment, the Corporate Director advised that he would investigate the possibility of an appendix to future reviews of charges detailing revenue and service costs.

During debate, the Chief Executive reiterated the core Aims and Objectives of the Strategy as set out on page 3, in particular, to ensure efficient parking and traffic management.

Councillor Wood also emphasised that the Car Parking Strategy was intended as a working document and therefore some aspects of it may be subject to change. He thanked Councillor Warwick and officers for their work in developing the Strategy.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Winchester District Car Parking Strategy be noted.
2. That the extract from minutes of Cabinet held 4 December and decisions therein, be noted.

6. FINAL REPORT OF THE CONSULTATION INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP
(Report OS90 refers)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Power (Chairman of the Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG)) introduced the Report. In summary, Councillor Power explained that consultation was a key part of all projects, where it had been concluded that it was appropriate to be undertaken.

Councillor Wood welcomed the Report and reminded Members that not all projects required extensive consultation and a careful balance should be achieved with the process designed to be appropriate to the nature of the project. Consultation should be carefully worded, so as not to raise public expectations on potential outcomes that were unlikely to be achievable.

During further discussion, Councillor Power recognised the importance of consulting with hard-to-reach-groups wherever possible, including those unable

to access electronic methods. However, a balance had to be made with regard to associated additional costs and appropriateness of the specific project.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Councillor Power and the members of the ISG for their work in producing the Group's recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That following recommendations of the Consultation Informal Scrutiny Group be supported by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee for referral to Cabinet for implementation:

1. Prior to the commencement of a project, officers should establish the degree to which consultation is likely to contribute to a successful outcome.
2. All projects should include a consultation plan at inception to:
 - establish timescales, techniques, costings etc;
 - to determine the most appropriate forms of consultation;
 - involve local members to ensure the scale and nature of the consultation will be the most effective and reach the relevant audiences.
3. Refresh the Engage web pages to include:
 - consider renaming Engage to more accurately reflect its purpose;
 - promote the toolkit to both officers and members so that it is used more regularly and consistently across the organisation;
 - incorporate relevant parts of the Statement of Community Involvement, that add value to this on-line resource as it covers all aspects of what, where, when, who, why and how;
 - ensure that the Engage calendar is updated regularly, or the calendar deleted. At present the existence of the calendar sets an expectation that all consultations are shown and this is not the case;
 - create a simple checklist for use by members and officers to include the matters covered by 'Engage' to ensure a consistent approach.

4. To involve local Members:

- in advance of a consultation exercise, use members expertise to plan the consultation, particularly with regard to local groups to engage with, and events or venues to use;
- during the consultation to promote the project and the opportunity to comment;
- provide feedback to the local community.

5. To instigate a training session for staff and members on the principles and concepts of consultation to including the use of Survey Monkey and other best practice techniques.

7. **FINAL REPORT OF THE HOW WE RESOLVE EXCLUSION INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP**

(Report OS93 refers)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Evans (Chairman of the Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG)) introduced the Report. In summary, Councillor Evans referred to the recommendations of the ISG which proposed ways in which the City Council could further assist the work of the many agencies who supported vulnerable groups. The importance of Trigger Tool training for staff was also emphasised.

During discussion, it was agreed that the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer) ensure that information related to tenants, where appropriate, be shared with Ward Councillors as well as between Council departments. The Committee therefore supported the following additional words to be added at the end of Recommendation 10, ‘..and where, appropriate, with Ward Councillors’.

The Head of Health and Wellbeing clarified that Age Concern Hampshire was represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board and was also working proactively with regard to the County Council initiatives, Dementia Friendly Community and Community Agents.

RESOLVED:

That following recommendations of the How we Resolve Exclusion Informal Scrutiny Group be supported by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee for referral to Cabinet for implementation:

1. That the Winchester City Council Reception area should join the Tourist Information Centre and the RPLC as an additional designated safe place under the ‘Safer Places’ scheme. This should be publicised in WCC communications.

2. Additional signage should be provided in the main City Council Reception area to make it clear to people that rooms can be offered for confidential discussions. These should be made freely available.
3. Ensure that the confidentiality and anonymity of rehoused victims of domestic violence and abuse is protected in all contacts with the Council.
4. That the Council should consider the policy of having one key contact officer for residents with Autism and other mental health issues.
5. The Council should ensure continuity of information between departments in cases where there is a change to the key contact officer.
6. The Council should ensure that language used in contact communications with residents with Autism and mental health issues should be unambiguous and clear.
7. Relevant City Council officers should receive appropriate training to ensure that they can address the needs of vulnerable adults, particularly those with mental health issues including Dementia. WCC should also arrange specialised training for a number of key officers in how to deal with people with Autism. There should be a regular in-house check to ensure all departments currently have staff with appropriate training.
8. Trigger Tool training should be included as part of the staff induction process for all staff and members. Consideration should also be given to extending the training to the Council's contractors.
9. Training opportunities should be extended to elected Members and WCC contractors where appropriate.
10. Consideration should be given to putting procedures in place whereby vulnerable or at risk tenants can, with consent, be identified on the Council's Orchard Housing systems and can also be 'flagged' up between departments and, where appropriate, with Ward Councillors.

8. **BATCH 5 INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUPS**
(Report OS91 refers)

The Chief Executive explained that the existing Member Involvement Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) had not yet concluded its work. This had been due to the

commencement of the Local Government Boundary Commission and Governance review projects and the potential for duplication of some tasks with that of the Informal Policy Group, recently appointed by Cabinet to inform this work. It was agreed that the ISG should conclude its work.

The Committee discussed the options for Batch 5 ISGs as set out at paragraph 3.3 of the Report and those recommended for in-depth scrutiny review. The Committee agreed that option 1 (Troubled Families); option 3 (Welfare Reform/Council Tax and Housing Benefits Systems) and option 7 (New homes programme) be not pursued.

It was agreed that the recommended ISG topics option 6 (Review of Business Support Team) and option 2 (Public Health and the City Council's role) could be scrutinised satisfactorily by way of an officer report to a future Committee meeting.

Option 5 (Supporting Older People) was agreed to be subject of a future in-depth scrutiny investigation as part of Batch 6.

The Committee referred to previous recommendation of the Guildhall ISG to undertake a scrutiny investigation of the potential of Abbey House to achieve additional income to the Council. It was agreed that an Abbey House ISG be established as part of Batch 5 to give further consideration to opportunities presented by Abbey House and whether the programme of refurbishment currently underway may assist with this.

The Committee also agreed that an ISG be established as part of Batch 5 to investigate matters related to proposals to replace River Park Leisure Centre. Terms of reference would be agreed before its first meeting, but should include a review of information made available as part of the initial proposals put forward to replace the facility and the decisions to be made thereon. The Committee was mindful that a Report was to be considered by Cabinet in February 2014 setting out potential options which may inform an outline business case with regard to the future of the leisure centre.

Members referred to option 9 for Batch 5 ISGs as set out at paragraph 3.3 of the Report with regard to Pensions. It was agreed that representatives of Hampshire Pension Fund be invited to a future Committee meeting to explain how they proposed to deal with actuarial forecasts, how they could improve management efficiencies and other aspects of the scheme. Should Members not be satisfied at the responses given, then consideration should be given as to whether an ISG be established to consider the matter further in-depth.

The Committee agreed that the Scrutiny Leads as set out below be agreed as Chairman and that membership of the ISGs be established by Group Managers, for approval at the next meeting of the committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the following Informal Scrutiny Groups (ISGs) (with Chairman as shown) be taken forward into Batch 5, with their membership brought forward for approval at the next meeting of the Committee:

- a) How we respond as a City Council to homelessness (Councillor Power)
- b) How we respond as a City Council to domestic violence (Councillor Evans)
- c) River Park Leisure Centre (Councillor Wright)
- d) Abbey House (Councillor Scott)

2. That, following a presentation by representatives of the Hampshire Pension Fund to a future committee meeting, consideration be then given as to whether to establish a Pensions ISG as part of Batch 5.

3. That officers bring reports direct to a future meeting of the Committee on:

- (a) Review of Business Support Team
- (b) Public Health and the City Council's role.

9. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND FEBRUARY 2014 FORWARD PLAN AND COMMENT ON ANY ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION**
(Report OS71 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme and Forward Plan for January 2014 be noted.

10. **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>
##	Exempt minute of the previous meeting held on 9 December <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estates Restructure) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). (Para 3 to Schedule 12A refers).

11. **EXEMPT MINUTE**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minute of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 9 December 2013, be approved and adopted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.15pm.

Chairman