

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 December 2015

Attendance:

Councillors:

Simon Cook (Chairman) (P)

J Berry (P)
Gemmell (P)
Hiscock (P)
McLean
Sanders (P)

Stallard (P)
Tod (P)
Thacker (P)
Wright (P)

Deputy Members:

Councillor Bodtger (Standing Deputy for Councillor McLean)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Godfrey (Leader), Byrnes (Portfolio Holder for Local Economy), Pearson (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Wellbeing) and Read (Portfolio Holder for Built Environment)

1. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Stallard and Tod declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of agenda items due to their role as County Councillors. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, they remained in the room, spoke and voted under the dispensation granted on behalf of the Standards Committee to participate and vote on all matters which might have a County Council involvement.

2. **MEMBERSHIP OF SUB COMMITTEES AND INFORMAL GROUPS**

Councillor Gemmell reported that a nomination by the Conservative Group for an additional appointment onto the Hampshire Home Choice Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) would be discussed by the Group and made available at the next meeting of the Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED:

That a nomination be made by the Conservative Group as an additional appointment to the Hampshire Home Choice (ISG), to be formally considered at the next meeting.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of meeting held on 26 October 2015, less exempt minute, be approved and adopted.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No comments or questions were made during public participation.

5. **ANNUAL COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE**
(Report OS135 refers)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Chief Inspector Claire Taylor (Winchester District Commander, Hampshire Constabulary) and Group Commander Dave Turner, (Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service)

Councillor Pearson introduced the Report and Chief Inspector Claire Taylor and Group Commander Dave Turner each gave short presentations to the Committee.

In summary, Chief Inspector Claire Taylor reported that she had replaced former Chief Inspector Darius Hemmatpour in the role of Winchester District Commander and detailed new structural arrangements from April 2015 onwards for the police across Hampshire. This had been in response to changes to boundaries and reduced staffing levels. Group Commander Dave Turner explained his responsibility for the delivery of fire prevention and protection services across the Southern area and outlined the future operation of the Fire Service following recent press reports.

The Chief Executive also highlighted the Council's close working with partners in relation to the community safety sector, which included the proactive work Community Safety Team and support to the Troubled Families initiative. He drew attention to the significant changes across the sector in recent years and that the Council may have to review its ongoing role in response to its own financial pressures.

The Committee then raised a number of issues and asked detailed questions, including on the performance information in the Report. Where appropriate, responses were given as summarised below:

- The Chief Inspector clarified that Police Neighbourhood Teams, each with its own district commander, now operated in areas that were

coterminous with District Council areas and had regard to ward boundaries. However, following these changes to boundaries and reductions in staffing levels in April 2015, the Chief Inspector confirmed that her neighbourhood team had been reduced from five to three sergeants, with neighbourhood policing for the Winchester area now comprising of 38 other staff in total. This also included 12 Police Constable's (PC's) and 23 Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's). It was reported that a neighbourhood team would work in the community to support any longer term issue. The Chief Inspector indicated that she would consider the issues raised by the changes in the City Council ward boundaries in 2016.

- Access to other resources was available from the Force, and in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership, to resolve local issues for the community in the Winchester District. Response teams also operated across all boundaries.
- In response to questions regarding reduction in Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings from three times per year to once a year, the Chief Inspector explained that attendance at PACT meetings needed to be gauged as with reduced staff, it was necessary to prioritise resources accordingly to make the most effective use of staff time. The Chief Inspector suggested that other innovative ways of engagement outside of PACT meetings should be investigated.
- Engagement with the community via use of on-line surveys and Hampshire alerts was discussed as a good approach and use of details stored on system from this method could be used to directly report back in areas where incidents have occurred. Members raised concerns of ensuring that communities in hard to reach rural areas and certain groups (i.e. elderly), who may not use IT, were reached and to make sure opportunities were taken for getting the message out. An update on findings regarding engagement would be reported back in due course.
- The Chief Inspector advised that she would work to ensure that all local Police Officers are aware who their Parish Councillors were and although it would not be possible to commit to attend all Parish Council meetings, attendance once a year was achievable when updates on local area issues and performance would be provided.
- The Group Commander reported that there had been a 40% reduction in fires overall. This was due to several factors, including increased fire safety awareness and improvements to built stock. However, there had been an increase in road traffic collisions and also extreme weather events.
- In response to questions relating to higher risk groups, the Group Commander explained that they were working with partner

organisations to carry out home safety visits and reaching out by signposting carers and supporting vulnerable groups.

- The Head of Community Safety agreed to provide statistical figures in future reports to the Committee, rather than pie diagrams.

During subsequent debate, the Committee noted that, generally, Winchester remained a safe place to live and work.

Councillor Stallard commended the work carried out by PCSO's Barry Towler and Rebecca Williams, who regularly attended Denmead Parish Council meetings and also Stuart Gilmore for his work in the Parishes.

Members also commended the work of the Community Safety Partnership and the Supporting Families Programme.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked the Chief Inspector and Group Commander for their attendance and for responding to the Committee's questions.

RESOLVED:

That the performance information in the Report be noted and the Committee's thanks be conveyed to the other agencies for their work.

6. **DRAFT PORTFOLIO PLANS 2016/17**
(Report CAB2741refers)

Councillor Godfrey reported that the Community Strategy would be refreshed next year when consideration would also be given on how best to take forward Portfolio Plans in the future.

It was noted that during consideration of this Report by Cabinet at its meeting on 2 December 2015, Councillor Power had raised comments requesting shorter and concise plans with clear targets. In response, the Leader had agreed to achieve a more focussed and balanced approach between the portfolio plans. The Assistant Director (Policy and Planning) indicated that the aim was that less strategic items should be included in individual Team Service Plans and monitored at officer level.

The Committee referred to the draft Portfolio Plans and raised a number of issues and asked detailed questions thereon. Where appropriate, responses were given as set out below:

Environmental Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Plan 2016/17

With regard to the progress of the Air Quality Report, it was hoped that a paper could be prepared in time for Cabinet early in the new year.

Built Environment Portfolio Plan 2016/17

Councillor Read clarified that he would be meeting with the Assistant Director (Environment) during January discuss matters related to viability in developments and whether any changes were needed to reflect recent Government policy announcements.

Councillor Read reported that, in order to promote an efficient and effective Strategy to deal with older enforcement cases, he met on a bi-monthly basis with the enforcement team to review older outstanding cases.

Local Economy Portfolio Plan 2016/17

In response to questions in relation to encouraging smaller businesses into the District and retaining those businesses, various support measures had been put in place, beyond financial support. Some employment sites had been allocated as a part of Local Plan Part 2. This was in addition to the creation of the employment and skills partnership, signposting businesses to the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership and the assistance provided to rural businesses through the Fieldfare Leader Programme.

During discussion of proposals related to the Casson Block, Councillor Byrnes reported that he believed funding would be adequate to deliver the Town Access Plan including the Air Quality Plan. The potential for a different surface treatment at or near the pedestrian crossing traffic lights at St Georges Street, near the Parchment Street junction, should be investigated with Hampshire County Council.

To assess the impact of the work carried out at the Casson Block, it was noted that footfall measurements taken in this area would be used to review the success of the project.

In conclusion, Members welcomed the Draft Portfolio Plans but noted the importance of linking monitoring and tracking with original plans to establish whether projects have been deliverable, measurable and realistic going forward for the future.

RESOLVED:

That the Portfolio Holders have regard to the queries raised by the Committee, as set out above, as part of the consultation prior to the Portfolio Plans for 2016/17 being considered for adoption by Council in January 2016.

RECOMMENDED:

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

7. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2016/17 – CAPITAL AND REVENUE CONSIDERATIONS**

(Report CAB2739 refers)

Councillor Godfrey outlined the various plans for the next financial year which would be reviewed when the final settlement from the Treasury became available on 17 December. He advised that there were currently no proposals to raise Council Tax or parking charges for 2016/17.

It was anticipated that meeting the budget gap would be manageable for the next financial year. However, work would continue over the next few months to look at opportunities to contribute towards bridging the budget gaps the Council would face in coming years. This would include consideration of future methods of working and the impact of the Devolution proposals.

In response to concerns regarding the accuracy of the impact of financial risk projections, the Chief Finance Officer explained that forecasts had been based on the available facts at the time the Report was prepared as the risks had not yet occurred. Therefore, the best reasonable estimates had been made and measured based on the spending review.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet have regard to the comments of the Committee, as set out above.

8. **REVIEW OF LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

(Report CAB2740 refers)

Councillor Godfrey introduced the Report which outlined a review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and contained an appraisal of the current position, together with preferred options following the results of an online customer consultation survey. The Report had also been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 2 December 2015, whereby proposals, as set out in the Report, had been agreed. Due to the changes agreed to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2016/17, Council approval would be required at its meeting on 6 January 2015.

RECOMMENDED :

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

9. **NORTH WINCHESTER FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME**

(Report CAB2751 refers)

Councillor Pearson drew the Committee's attention to the proposed timetable for the scheme which would continue in January, with a public consultation event at the Winchester School of Art. This was to be followed by the tendering process with the scheme scheduled to commence early in the new financial year and finish during the Summer 2016.

During the consideration of this matter, several Members requested a copy of the 'North Winchester Flood Defences Feasibility Report' previously linked as a background paper to the Cabinet Report (CAB2751) on the Council's website, which officers agreed to circulate to the Committee.

In response to concerns regarding the provision of funding in other parts of the District, the Assistant Director (Policy and Planning) confirmed that it is hoped that not all of the £250,000 budget allocation would be required and only a contribution would be made towards the North Walls Park and Park Avenue scheme. This is dependent upon how much Government funding is secured and hence this could therefore allow some of the allocation to be used to help progress other flood alleviation schemes in other areas of the District.

Following further questions regarding whether it was practicable to install another drainage channel system across Winchester City Centre as an alternative, the Chief Executive reiterated that the current proposed scheme is aimed at managing flooding risk together with other measures and that the funding of a new drainage system across the City would be excessively high.

RESOLVED:

That the decision be not called in for review under the Budget and Policy Framework Rules s.7.

10. **ELECTORAL REVIEW OF HAMPSHIRE: DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS**

(Report CAB2753 refers)

Councillor Godfrey drew attention to Appendices 1 and 2 to the Report which summarised the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) draft proposals for new electoral division boundaries across Hampshire, as published on 17 November 2015.

The Committee noted that Council retained seven County Councillors but that the LBGCE proposed several changes to the division boundaries. There had been a variation on the previous arrangements to require that Soberton Parish was warded to give effect to the new boundary needed for the County Electoral Division – Soberton North (returning two parish councillors) and Soberton South (returning nine parish councillors).

The outcome of the 2015 City Council Electoral Review had potentially removed the need for a similar ward arrangement in Soberton, which had existed since the City Council 2001 Review, and had not been popular locally. As a result of the County changes now proposed, which maintained the need to split Soberton Parish, Councillor Godfrey reported that concerns had been expressed by Ward Members. Cabinet had agreed to submit a recommendation to Council to request that the LGBCE be asked to give consideration to the transfer of the whole of the Soberton Parish into the Southern Parishes County Electoral Division.

The Chairman made reference to two further requests for amendments in relation to Bishops Sutton and the splitting of Weeke from the rest of the Winchester Town area for County Electoral Division purposes. The Committee suggested that, should any Members wish to pursue these suggestions, they could put forward proposals to Council on 6 January 2016.

RECOMMENDED:

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

11. **REVIEW OF SCRUTINY PROCESS – CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**
(Report OS136 refers)

At its meeting on 16 February 2015, the Committee agreed to undertake a review of the scrutiny process, subsequent to the resignation of the former Chairman, Councillor Chris Pines and following the High Court Judgment in relation to the Silver Hill Development Scheme.

The Chief Executive made reference to the importance of looking positively at what the Committee had achieved in order to test and examine proposals and draw matters to the attention of Cabinet, whilst making a difference with the formation of Informal Scrutiny Groups (ISG’s) to progress specific detailed topics.

The Chairman introduced the Report which outlined his Review of the Scrutiny Process. This made comparisons to the processes carried in similar sized local authorities and drew Members’ attention to areas of good practice that might be considered for adoption.

The Chief Operating Officer responded to questions about the Council's existing decision making processes and the Committee system followed prior to the Local Government Act 2000 and also the scope for possible changes brought about following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011. He also drew attention to the work of the Electoral Review Informal Policy Group last year on how the Council might operate its governance arrangements in future. This was approved by Full Council in its submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission which suggested the change to the Council's size (from 57 to 45 Members) (Report CAB2593 refers). This work would now need to be re-considered as the Commission's proposals for the reduction in the size of the Council would be implemented in May 2016.

The Chairman suggested that an ISG be formed to examine the work carried out in the review of the scrutiny process and establish how best to proceed, as defined by the proposed terms of reference in the Report and answered Members' questions thereon.

During debate, several Members supported the formation of an ISG but deemed it premature at this stage and considered that this should link in with the conclusions following the Independent Review carried out by Claer Lloyd-Jones. However, it was noted that the Chairman's Report was not time defined and that this could occur should the Committee be minded to approve the Report.

At the conclusion of debate, the Committee decided to take a vote on the recommendation, as set out in the Report, which was not approved.

RESOLVED:

That the Report and the recommendations therein, be not supported.

12. **UPDATE ON CREATIVE ENTERPRISE CENTRE (LESS EXEMPT APPENDICES)**
(Report CAB2750 refers)

Councillor Godfrey outlined the Report which updated Members on development progress of an Enterprise Centre for the Creative Industries. The facility also included the provision of a replacement depot for the Streetcare Team and replacement storage premises to enable the museum store at the former Bar End Depot to be relocated to F2 on the Bar End Industrial Estate where the rest of the museums reserve collection was already held.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of Cabinet taken at its meeting on 2 December 2015 to approve a supplementary capital estimate of up to £590,000, of which £450,000 will be unfinanced, be not called in for review.

RECOMMENDED:

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

13. **SILVER HILL WINCHESTER – SITUATION REPORT AND ASSESSMENT (LESS EXEMPT)**

(Report CAB2752 refers)

Councillor Godfrey stated that regular Silver Hill progress updates had been provided following the approval of the Council at its meeting held on 15 July 2015 to continue with the scheme. He introduced the Report which outlined the progress made by the developer Silverhill Winchester No. 1 Ltd (SW1) in fulfilling the outstanding conditions required by the Silver Hill Development Agreement. Councillor Godfrey also commented upon the permission recently given for the judgment in the Judicial Review case brought by Councillor Gottlieb to be challenged in the Court of Appeal.

Councillor Godfrey reported that SW1 had recently been contacted and concerns had been raised with them. There had been no substantial progress in the interim in reaching unconditional status on the Development Agreement, with the 2009 scheme planning permission deadline of 9 February 2016 and the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) deadline of 19 March 2016 fast approaching. A written response to address concerns had been requested before the Christmas period to enable information to be compiled and the options made available to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 13 January 2016.

In response to questions, Councillor Godfrey acknowledged that there was now limited time to make progress, but the build of the 2009 scheme remained the preferred option for the Council. A clear specification would be asked for if the developers were given the opportunity to change the scheme following any Court of Appeal decision, but at this stage no firm proposals had been made.

The Committee were advised that Council officers and the developers had been in contact before and after the Council meeting in July to discuss what would and would not be acceptable in light of the Development Agreement and the Judicial Review decision. However, at this stage, the scheme would need to go unconditional first before changes could be brought forward for consideration.

During debate, the Committee agreed that there was no requirement for any additional matters relating to this Report to be dealt with in exempt session.

That the content of the exempt appendices be noted.

17. **EXEMPT MINUTE**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minute of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 26 October 2015, be approved and adopted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.50pm.

Chairman