

THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**Thursday, 4 July 2019**

Attendance:

Councillors
Brook (Chair)Gordon-Smith
Gottlieb
Griffiths
Hiscock
HorrillLaming
Lumby
Power
Tod**Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:**

Councillors Thompson (Leader and Cabinet Member for Communications and Transformation), Cutler (Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk), Learney (Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management) and Murphy (Cabinet Member for Environment)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Gemmell

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/20

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Lumby be appointed Vice-Chairperson for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillors Hiscock and Tod both declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in relation to various matters on the agenda, particularly in respect of recycling, due to their role as County Councillors having been previously involved in discussions.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairperson welcomed all those present to the first meeting of The Scrutiny Committee and outlined the changes to the Committee following the review of the Council's Constitution. The role of the Scrutiny committee was one of critical friend and Cllr Brook proposed that the work plan include investigations and enquiries into the work and policies of the council. Although this largely meant the committee would consider matters retrospectively, there was opportunity to review items and proposals under development to provide a view for Cabinet. The committee had the

formal power of call in The Business and Housing Policy Committee and the Health and Environment Policy Committee would largely be policy development committees and support the work of the scrutiny committee by reviewing matters before decision by Cabinet.

4. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2019, be approved and adopted.

5. **TO NOTE THE DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Chairperson informed the Committee that an additional meeting had been scheduled on 14 August 2019 to give consideration to the disposal options for the Station Approach site prior to a decision being taken at an additional meeting of Cabinet, due to take place on 28 August 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the date and time and future meetings for the 2019/20 municipal year, be noted as set out on the agenda and outlined above.

6. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ian Tait addressed the Committee. In summary, Mr Tait raised concerns regarding the integral role of TACT in the new governance structure and their continued involvement in the development of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and other associated housing matters. In addition, Mr Tait made comments regarding the further consideration of the 12 court sports hall and the need to ensure continued transparency and engagement in this matter with the residents of Winchester.

In response, the Chairperson confirmed that she would liaise with the Leader to clarify the continued engagement of TACT and mechanism for their involvement going forward.

7. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME OUTTURN 2018/19 (SC007)**

(Report SC007 refers)

The Committee gave consideration to the Report which provided an update on the financial performance of the HRA in 2018/19 and the associated Housing Capital Programme.

Members raised a number of detailed questions and sought clarification in a number of areas which were responded to by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management and the Head of Housing Finance accordingly, these included:

- The material variances as a result of the level of vacant posts arising during the year – The Head of Housing Finance clarified that the 2019/20 budget assured a mix of staff with a review in progress;
- Refurbishment of 84-86 Sussex Street – It was confirmed that this would be available at the end of the Summer with the lease agreement currently being finalised;
- Capacity to address Universal Credit A successful appointment had been made to the role of Money and Benefits Advisor.
- Installation of WIFI systems - The Head of Housing Finance advised that a number of WIFI systems had already been installed and the provision of quality broadband services for residents would be monitored;
- Right to Buy and the number of units sold –a schedule setting out this information would be provided and
- Housing Capital Programme – It was considered fundamental to ensure engagement with residents and the community to establish potential for additional sites currently unallocated. In response, Councillor Learney clarified that other available sites would continue to be programmed into the existing list of housing units that were due to come forward over the next ten years. Land acquisition would continue to be explored as a priority in conjunction with the establishment of a Housing Company.

The Committee welcomed the report's content and expressed its thanks to officers for the positive work carried out.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet be asked to formalise a mechanism to enable TACT to feed into the housing process; and
2. That the Leader and other relevant Portfolio Holders notes the comments of the Committee set out above

8. **Q4 FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (SC002)**

(Report SC002 refers)

Councillor Cutler introduced the Report which summarised the Council's performance and financial position during the final quarter of 2018/19. The report gave updates against major projects, the Council Strategy outcomes and key performance measures. A financial summary set out the detail of the General Fund revenue and capital budgets as well as the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Members raised a number of detailed questions and sought clarification in a number of areas which were responded to by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk and the Strategic Director: Resources accordingly, these included:

- New Burdens Grants – The Council would bid for additional funding made available from the Government to be distributed across local authorities for spend in the new financial year, wherever possible;

- Commercial activities: Property –The current policy enables the the Council to purchase property within the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) boundary, however, to date, all purchases had taken place within the District.
- Central Winchester Regeneration and Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Progress – Councillor Learney clarified that next steps for this project were under review, the SPD had been completed and progress going forward would run in parallel to work by JLL, who had been appointed as Strategic Placemaking Consultants, and a revised timeline would be established.
- Transport Budget – The Strategic Director: Resources clarified that this figure was not spent and was included as a saving as part of the budget setting for 2018/19 which was separate to the Movement Strategy and therefore had now been removed.
- Car Parking Strategy – Discussions were ongoing with Hampshire County Council (HCC) and an update on Car Parking Strategy would be made available in due course. In respect of the report, it was considered that the Car Parking Strategy for the Winchester town centre should differentiate from that in market towns like Alresford to provide clarity in the monitoring process.
- Article 4 Directions – Members expressed concern regarding any further losses of family homes to Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's). In response, Councillor Thompson stated that the Article 4 Directions would be further reviewed in due course, particularly in Winchester itself where the rise in HMO's continued to be an issue.
- Access to Superfast Broadband –Figures of the access percentages achieved in rural locations to be provided.
- Nitrates across the Southern Parishes in respect of festivals, events etc – The Chief Executive provided a brief update to the Committee on the discussions of the recent meetings of Partnership for South Hampshire (PFSH) and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Authorities (HIOWLA) where this matter had been debated at length.
- Homes England Grant – Members congratulated the Housing Team on securing the grant which was testimony to their partnership working practices.
- Performance Indicators - With regard to staff sickness levels and staff turnover, it was reported that levels had reduced since the last quarter and it was noted that levels remained consistent and were not considered to be of particular concern.

In respect of the processing of new Housing Benefit claims, it was reported that fluctuations in this area were as a result of the delays regarding Universal Credit.

- Universal Credit – It was considered that the impact on peoples lives needed to be addressed as a result of the delay to Universal Credit and it was suggested that contact be made with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to assist

the Council in supporting local residents with the challenges they faced wherever possible.

RESOLVED:

That the Leader and other relevant Portfolio Holders notes the comments of the Committee, as set out above,

9. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL CHALLENGE (SC008)**

(Report SC008 refers)

The Committee gave consideration to the report which set out the medium term financial planning challenge that the Council faced and highlighted a range of high level forecasts and scenarios over the medium term to address how the Council could best respond to the uncertainty currently facing local government.

Members raised a number of detailed questions and sought clarification in a number of areas which were responded to by the Leader and the Strategic Director: Resources accordingly, these included

- Enterprise M3 LEP funding – In response to questions regarding the Station Approach project, the Leader clarified that early meetings had taken place with the LEP to discuss the Council's position and to receive confirmation that the anticipated £5m M3 LEP funding was still available.
- Winchester Sports and Leisure Centre – the Leader stated that the finances of the new Leisure Centre had been reviewed and excessive costs would not allow for the sports hall to be extended at this time. As a result, building would progress as previously agreed.
- In respect of key projects in the General Fund such as the replacement Doctors Surgery and Coitbury House, the Committee were informed that these projects were moving forward and would be included within the budget into the future.

RESOLVED:

That the Leader and other relevant Portfolio Holders notes the comments of the Committee, as set out above, but that no items of significance to be drawn to the attention of Cabinet.

10. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019/20 (SC001)**

(Report SC001 refers)

The Committee referred to the work programme which would continue to be updated to reflect other business coming forward throughout the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

In respect of the Committee's request that external speakers be invited to attend future meetings, the Chief Executive asked Members to set out the details of which aspects were of particular focus to enable officers to feed this back to the relevant speaker in advance of the meeting date and/or Member briefing date, as appropriate.

Members requested that an external speaker from the NHS be invited to attend and address the Committee in respect of health and social care issues as a priority and agreed to discuss this matter and seek advice from officers in order to progress this request.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2019/20 be noted.

11. **MONITORING REPORT - EXCEPTIONS TO FORWARD PLAN (SC006)**

(Report SC006 refers)

The Committee gave consideration to the annual monitoring report which set out the number of Key Decisions that came forward for decision, which had not been included in the Forward Plan. It was noted that the number of exceptions to the Forward Plan had reduced significantly over the years.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

12. **DRAFT ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT (SC004)**

(Report SC004 refers)

The Committee noted that the Report represented a succinct summary of the main work it had carried out during the previous municipal year.

RECOMMENDED:

**THAT COUNCIL NOTE THE ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT
FOR 2018/19.**

13. **APPOINTMENTS OF EXTERNAL BODIES RELATED TO SCRUTINY
(SC005)**

(Report SC005 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the following appointments be made the external bodies listed below:

- i. Portsmouth City Council – Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel: Councillor Achwal (deputy Councillor Clear).
- ii. Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) – Scrutiny Champions Network: Councillor Brook.
- iii. Partnership for South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Hiscock (deputy Councillor Clear).
- iv. Environmental Services Joint Scrutiny Committee (with East Hants DC): Councillors Achwal, Ferguson and Laming (deputies: Councillors Bronk, Clear and Gordon-Smith)

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.10 pm

Chairperson