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THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 13 July 2022

Attendance:

Councillors
Brook (Chairperson)

Becker
Cook
Craske

Horrill
Laming
Westwood

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Cutler

Deputy Members:

Councillor Rutter (as deputy for Councillor Cutler)

Members in attendance:

Councillors Batho, Clear, Ferguson, Gordon-Smith, Porter, Power, Thompson and Tod

[Audio and video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were made but Councillor Tod and Councillor Becker wished it to be noted that the Station Approach project was within their ward.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The chairperson sought the committee's view of holding an additional meeting in January 2023 to scrutinise the next stage of the Station Approach project, which was generally supported.

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 14 JUNE 2022**

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 June 2022 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Six members of the public addressed the committee and a summary of the matters raised are as follows:

Imogen Dawson re Station Approach project.

- Welcomed the emphasis on social and environmental factors and the opportunity for consultation.
- Felt that the project shouldn't be considered or labelled solely as a transport hub and that housing should be a priority.
- Concerned that consultation was taking place over the school holiday period.
- Requested that more user-friendly methods of online consultation be used.
- Believed that an integrated transport plan should be developed with the County Council first.
- Concerned that the council was taking on too much work with this and other projects.
- Concerned that many short-term, external factors such as the cost-of-living crisis would steer the project in the wrong direction and urged the decision to be paused.

Gavin Hunter re Station Approach project.

- Spoke on behalf of the University of Winchester.
- Appreciated being included in the early stages of the project.
- Generally supported the scheme as proposed and felt that the vision for a mixed-use development would provide a good gateway for the city.

Chris Higgins re Station Approach project.

- Generally supportive of the development in principle.
- Concerned over the council's previous track record of delivery of this project.
- Believed that a local organisation with the necessary expertise existed and recommended their engagement.
- Initial plans looked sensible and constructive but previous lessons needed to be learned.

Fingal Noguera re Station Approach project.

- Felt that finding the information on the council's website was difficult.
- More notice for attending this evening's meeting would have enabled more to attend.
- Supportive of a scheme that gave a better balance of uses and not just a walk-through area.

Nicholas John re Station Approach project.

- Seen numerous failed schemes in the past and felt that many of these didn't work in terms of scale and usability.
- Urged the council to think about the scale of development.
- Recommended that meetings take place on-site to understand the site, the scale involved and the appropriate balance of uses.

Fred White re Station Approach project.

- Mr White couldn't attend the meeting in person but had asked that the committee be made aware of his concerns regarding residents' parking should a development come forward.

David Chafe on behalf of Tenants And Council Together (TACT) re Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn 2021/2022.

- Mr Chafe advised that TACT had met once to discuss the HRA Outturn report and had agreed to meet again on 28 July 2022 to receive a presentation from Mr Botham concerning it.

6. **UPDATE ON STATION APPROACH PROJECT (REF SC072 AND CAB3349)**

Councillor Tod, Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management introduced the report, ref SC072 and CAB3349 which set out proposals for the Update on Station Approach project, ([available here](#)).

The committee was recommended to scrutinise and comment on the proposals within the attached cabinet report, ref CAB3349 which was to be considered by the cabinet at its meeting on 19 July 2022.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised:

1. whether an opportunity existed for the initial consultation period to be extended past the holiday season
2. would the drop-in sessions also take place at weekends and evenings to ensure wider accessibility?
3. clarifying the timescales concerning the Northern Park and Ride
4. concern over capacity within the council to manage several regeneration projects concurrently
5. clarifying the council's aspiration for the percentage of affordable homes delivered as part of this project
6. ensuring the appropriate separation of functions within the council, ie between the council as a developer and local planning authority
7. establishing the Reference group and the desire to avoid the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements
8. clarifying at which point Phase 1 ends
9. understanding the background and expertise of the public affairs agency (Meeting Place Communications)
10. could the phasing titles be added to the appendix?
11. the nature of the short-term agreement with Network Rail and their financial contribution to Phase 1
12. plans for the engagement with the City of Winchester Trust
13. the status of the master plan within a planning context and whether it would be possible to create a type of Supplementary Planning Document from it?
14. the status of the area of land next to the records office

15. whether other potential sites nearby exist that could be brought into the partnership
16. did a mechanism exist for looking at all of the council's regeneration projects to ensure the right balance of facilities for the whole city?
17. would the Jones Lang LaSalle report be available to members?
18. the importance of engaging with the wider district
19. the use of social media to promote all engagement sessions including committee meetings
20. could rail passengers be handed a newsletter as they leave or enter the station?
21. consider distributing the newsletter to a wider audience
22. consider including specific outputs or deliverables with the associated milestones as part of the milestone table
23. encourage the project team to seek to use the local expertise of residents in how they use the site and how they move around the site.
24. vital to engage with those who are difficult to engage with and communities on the edge of the city that would be impacted by these proposals
25. consider both physical and virtual walkabout events
26. important to consider the knock-on effects and reassure residents that the wider considerations are being assessed
27. ensure people don't feel that this was being "done to them"
28. would Network Rail be undertaking their own consultation?

These points were responded to by Councillor Tod, the Strategic Director and the Project Manager accordingly and were noted by the cabinet members present at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

The committee agreed to the following comments and recommended that the cabinet:

1. include the names of phases in appendix 2 to clarify the timelines
2. review how the accessibility of the interactive maps could be improved when viewed on older or different forms of technology
3. consider the strategic areas across the district that could be used for the distribution of the paper copy survey
4. enable the distribution of the newsletter online and via social media
5. consider whether the newsletter distribution be wider than a radius of $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile of the site
6. include specific outputs or deliverables with the associated milestones as part of the milestone table
7. provide further clarity for residents around the reasons for consultation at each stage to ensure understanding of the process

8. consider providing “walkabout” sessions for residents as part of the consultation programme and consider virtual “walkabouts” for those unable to access in person
9. consider how to optimise engagement across the wider district
10. review the red line in para 11.7 to ensure accuracy (with specific reference to the queries concerning land by the Records Office).

7. **GENERAL FUND OUTTURN 21/22 (REF SC073 AND CAB3352)**

Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value introduced the report, ref SC073 and CAB3352 which set out proposals for the General Fund Outturn, ([available here](#)).

The committee was recommended to scrutinise and comment on the proposals within the attached cabinet report, ref CAB3352 which was to be considered by the cabinet at its meeting on 19 July 2022.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised:

1. clarification of the higher than budgeted collection of business rates
2. clarification of the variances at the Winchester Sport and Leisure Park (WSLP)
3. whether sufficient transparency existed in the financial performance of the WSLP since the ending of the open book arrangement.
4. the lessons learnt concerning the impact of the pandemic on future uptake of sports and leisure activities and specifically how actual usage compared to forecasted usage
5. further information on the timescales and costs to achieve final contract closure regarding the WSLP
6. clarification of the timescales for the Valuation Office determination of the River Park Leisure Centre
7. further information regarding the variance relating to the general election expenses
8. further information regarding the recycling and refuse collection costs
9. whether further claims for Government support packages were awaiting a decision
10. the number of properties within the investment property portfolio listed in paragraph 23.1
11. clarification of the proposal for explanatory notes to be included in Appendix 3 regarding the Winchester Town Forum account.
12. further information regarding the revised budget for "Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funded community projects" shown in Appendix 5.

These points were responded to by Councillor Power, both Strategic Directors present and the Corporate Head of Finance and were noted by Councillor Power.

RESOLVED:

1. that officers provide further information to points 4, 5 and 10 above
2. that the committee appreciated the amendments proposed regarding the presentation of the Winchester Town Account figures
3. that officers discuss with the Chairperson as to whether future outturn reports would be presented directly at this committee or via the Performance Panel
4. that the Cabinet Member and officers note the comments of the committee.

8. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) OUTTURN 2021/2022 (REF SC074 AND CAB3354)**

Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing and the Corporate Head of Housing introduced the report, ref SC074 and CAB3354 which set out proposals for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn 2021/2022, ([available here](#)).

The committee was recommended to scrutinise and comment on the proposals within the attached cabinet report, ref CAB3354 which was to be considered by the cabinet at its meeting on 19 July 2022.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised:

1. concern over the underspend in several areas, and clarification of actions being taken to get these programmes back on track
2. an update was requested regarding the Winnal development and the Housing Company
3. an update was requested regarding the use of Disabled Facilities Grants and whether actions were needed to speed up the application process
4. confirming the tendering and awarding of the contract to fulfil the retrofit programme of works
5. the key risks and/or opportunities that the underspend had highlighted.

These points were responded to by Councillor Ferguson, the Strategic Director, the Corporate Head of Housing and the Finance Manager: Housing accordingly and were noted by Councillor Ferguson.

RESOLVED:

1. The committee wished to thank TACT and the Housing team for their ongoing work and engagement with the committee.
2. That the cabinet member and officers note the comments of the committee.

9. **TO NOTE THE LATEST FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The forward plan of key decisions for August 2022 was noted.

10. **TO NOTE THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23**

Members questioned the future timetabling of updates to the committee concerning Central Winchester Regeneration, Station Approach the Local Plan and any revised budget proposals.

Officers advised that an update on Station Approach would be presented to this committee in January 2023 and that any revised budget proposals would be presented via the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in November 2022. It was currently envisaged that the Local Plan would be subject to a dedicated meeting of the Local Plan Advisory Group (LPAG).

RESOLVED:

1. that the latest version of the work programme be noted
2. that an update regarding Station Approach be timetabled for January 2023
3. that an update regarding Central Winchester Regeneration be timetabled
4. that the Chairperson discusses with officers regarding the scrutiny of the Local Plan.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 9.05 pm

Chairperson

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