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THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 5 June 2025

Attendance:

Councillors
Brook (Chairperson)

Batho
Laming
Pett

Clear
Bolton
Wallace

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Power and Murphy

Deputy Members:

Councillor Gordon-Smith (as deputy for Power)

Other members in attendance:

Councillor(s) Cutler and Reach

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025/26.**
RESOLVED:

That Councillor Wallace be appointed Vice-Chairperson for the 2025/26 municipal year.

2. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**
Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

1. Councillor Wallace declared a disclosable pecuniary interest due to his role as a Hampshire County Councillor. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, he remained in the room and spoke under the dispensation granted by the Audit and Governance committee.
2. Councillor Batho and Councillor Pett declared an Other Registerable Interest as they were both Non-Executive Directors of Venta Living Limited.

4. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Vice-Chair made several announcements relating to actions from the [previous meeting](#).

4.1. The Corner House. Referencing minute 4 of the previous meeting, the Vice-Chair proposed that after the public speaker, that Councillor Reach respond to both the outstanding action and any new points raised.

4.2. Annual Community Safety Performance Update. The Vice-Chair reported on a number of follow-up actions from minute 6 of the previous meeting as follows.

Members had received:

- a) Information from the Local Resilience Forum (11 March).
- b) Figures on Stop Domestic Abuse (14 March).
- c) Data on road safety and speed camera enforcement (25 March).
- d) Officers also committed to providing urban and urban-rural crime data splits in future reports where possible.

4.3. Development Delivery Plans – Central Winchester Regeneration.

Regarding minute 7 of the previous meeting, the Vice Chair noted that officers had circulated the summary development agreement and that an update with key dates and timelines would be added to the council website once Jigsaw's programme was finalised.

In addition, the Vice-Chair requested an update on the outstanding action, that the Cabinet Member to consider increasing the CIL budget and to discuss highways investment with Hampshire County Council.

4.4. Q3 Performance Report Follow-ups. The Vice-Chair updated members on actions from the Q3 Performance Report.

- a) A member sub-group had met in April to review Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); and a verbal update would be given under agenda item 7.
- b) Officers were forming a cross-party task and finish group on public toilets. Nominated members were Councillor Laming, Councillor Clear, Councillor Pett, and Councillor Bolton, with a fifth place held open.

4.5. Nutrient Neutrality. The Vice-Chair reported that, at Councillor Power's request from the previous meeting, the public website has been updated regarding nitrates and phosphates. A meeting between Councillor Porter, Councillor Power, and officers was scheduled for further discussion, and an update would be sought from Councillor Power at a future meeting.

RESOLVED

- a) That the actions relating to Development Delivery Plans – Central Winchester Regeneration noted above be taken forward.
- b) That officers establish the Public Toilets task & Finish group as above.
- c) That Councillor Power be invited to update the Committee regarding her meeting with the Cabinet Member concerning nutrient neutrality.

5. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 5 MARCH 2025**

Councillor Batho stated that he felt that the police speeding data provided did not meet the Committee's previous request for granular data on specific locations and wanted to request further information. Councillor Batho also felt that a commitment to include this information in the next community safety review, as requested, had not been made.

Councillor Pett believed that the response received to his query regarding the effectiveness of average speed schemes on the A272 and A32 had been insufficient. He requested a more formal review of how information be presented to the Committee.

Councillor Wallace raised a point regarding a previous action that requested Councillor Tod to provide an update on The Corner House acquisition process. This had been raised and minuted originally at the Scrutiny Committee on 4 February 2025 and then raised and minuted subsequently at the Committees meeting in March 2025. It was agreed that this point remained unresolved.

RESOLVED:

1. Regarding the Community Safety Partnership, whilst it was acknowledged that there could be limitations to the data available from partner organisations, officers were asked to request more detailed data on local speeding issues be provided for consideration at a future meeting of the committee and in future annual reports.
2. That the Cabinet Member provide an update regarding the outstanding issues concerning The Corner House (ref: [Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee 4th February 2025 item 6](#) (Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget - Resolved item 3)
3. That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Quentin Brook addressed the committee, raising concerns regarding the 2020 purchase of The Corner House property. He referred to a discussion concerning this at a previous meeting of the committee. He believed that the Cabinet Member had previously agreed to provide the business case for the acquisition. Mr Brook felt that this action had not been correctly minuted or

followed up on by Committee members and questioned when the committee would properly scrutinise the matter.

Councillor Reach and Councillor Cutler responded. They advised that a paper regarding The Corner House was scheduled for the Cabinet meeting in June 2025 and felt that these questions could be answered at that point. In addition, all were encouraged to review the available papers regarding this acquisition including the Cabinet meeting in March 2020.

Members felt that an outstanding action remained concerning The Corner House (see agenda item 5 (2)).

Mr Ian Tait addressed the committee regarding a £90,000 grant paid to the Winchester Housing Group (Keystone) in 2017. He explained that the grant, from Section 106 funds, was for converting offices into four move-on units for homeless households. Mr Tait believed that the charity which took over Keystone was now liquidating its assets, including currently auctioning the flats. He questioned whether the £90,000 grant would be repaid to the council or lost. He also asked if the council would ensure clawback provisions were included in similar future grant agreements.

In response, Councillor Reach advised that he understood that a full clawback mechanism was not included in the original 2015 agreement. He stated that approximately £35,000 was expected to be recovered through a separate commercial mortgage arrangement, but this was less than the grant amount. He agreed it was sensible to include such conditions in future grants and would take that point away as an action.

7. **Q4 FINANCE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

Councillor Neil Cutler, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced the report ref CAB3505 - Q4 Finance and Performance Monitoring report for the year to March 2025. The introduction included the following points.

1. The report followed the established format of six sections covering the themes of the Council Plan, showing both project delivery and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
2. Since the previous quarter's report, a new section on the highlights of the Tier 1 River Park Cricket Pavilion project had been added.
3. The report had also been updated to include a quarterly highlight report for the Housing Compliance Tier 1 project.

Councillor Wallace provided an introduction regarding the KPI Task & Finish group that had met following a previous committee resolution. Notes of this meeting ([available here](#)) had been presented at a recent cabinet meeting which had agreed on several actions as a result. The minutes of the cabinet meeting [were available here](#). Councillor Wallace advised of the following points.

1. A meeting was held on 14 April to review the proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the 2025/26 year.
2. Two minor changes to the KPIs were accepted, and it was agreed that officers would investigate two new potential KPIs: one measuring greening and biodiversity, and another on planning enforcement.
3. The basis for the annual KPI targets would be included with the first quarterly performance report to provide clarity on how goals were set.
4. It was proposed that the Scrutiny Committee would consider using future meetings for periodic in-depth reviews of key service areas or council policy priorities.
5. It was proposed that updating the forward plan for the committee be postponed until the in-depth reviews could be discussed with officers.

The committee initially discussed the meeting of the Task and Finish group and subsequent issues, and then moved to the Q4 Report. The committee was asked to raise with the Deputy Leader or relevant Cabinet member any issues arising from the information in this report, which was being presented to Cabinet on the 18 June 2025 and to consider whether there are any items of significance to resolve or to be drawn to the attention of Cabinet. In summary, the following matters were raised.

1. A request was made to include historical RAG statuses to show whether issues are new or long-standing, for example the Carbon Neutrality status (p. 19).
2. It was suggested that simple graphical indicators, like arrows, be used to show performance trends since the last report.
3. The committee agreed to discuss the performance reporting framework and in-depth reviews offline, with the outcome to inform the next Committee Chairs' meeting
4. Further information on the two completed nutrient mitigation pilot plants was requested.
5. Whether there was an inconsistency between the green RAG status for the retrofit programme (p.23) and the red status for related housing items (p.25).
6. Further information was sought regarding the delay in the EV strategy.
7. Clarification was sought over the slow reduction of corporate building gas usage and its impact on targets.
8. Reasons for the retrofit programme's (p.25) red status and whether there was any resident reluctance.
9. A request to more clearly highlight the positive budget RAG status change for waste and recycling.
10. Why the carbon neutrality action plan timeline (p.19) was rated green when the narrative suggested it was not.
11. Whether the green energy procurement process also considered conventional suppliers to ensure the most competitive rate.
12. The impact of the council's ethical procurement policy for solar PV on the cost or acquisition of panels.
13. A request to define scope one, two, and three carbon emissions in future reports for public clarity.
14. A request for gas consumption data to be broken down between the main council offices and the Guildhall.

15. Information was sought regarding a recent incident involving council contractors cutting back hedges.
16. How the visitor target for the Winchester Sport and Leisure Park related to the original business plan.
17. The reasons for the delay in the community and well-being strategy.
18. Whether the council had foreseen the housing compliance issues subsequently highlighted by the regulator.
19. The report's reference to changing demographics and housing preferences in relation to homelessness and voids.
20. Whether challenges in tackling homelessness were still predominantly related to individuals with complex needs.
21. A request for more information on the reduction in stage one accommodation.
22. A request for a strategy paper on the future of the Guildhall.
23. The wider impact of local government reorganisation on the council's work and major projects.

These points were responded to by Councillor Neil Cutler, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, Councillor Mark Reach, Cabinet Member for Good Homes, and Laura Taylor, Chief Executive accordingly.

RESOLVED:

The committee noted the report and agreed:

1. That a meeting be held between committee members and officers in advance of the next Committee Chairs' meeting to discuss the objectives of the council's scrutiny and policy committees.
2. That the cabinet member and officers consider the following points regarding future quarterly performance reports:
 - a. That definitions for scope one, two, and three (ref Page 24) be included in future performance reports.
 - b. That the report should separate the gas consumption data for the main council offices from that of the Guildhall and West Wing.
3. That the cabinet member responds to the question regarding the circumstances of an alleged incident concerning hedge cutting during bird nesting season.
4. That the cabinet member considers tabling a strategy paper for the committee's consideration regarding the future of the Guildhall following the completion of the condition surveys and market assessments.
5. That the cabinet member provides clarification on whether the council's ethical procurement policy was impacting the cost and acquisition of solar PV panels.

8. **APPOINTMENTS OF EXTERNAL BODIES RELATED TO SCRUTINY**

RESOLVED:

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

1. Portsmouth City Council – Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel: Councillor Bennett (deputy: Councillor J Williams).
2. Centre for Governance and Scrutiny – Southeast Regional Network: Councillor Brook.
3. Partnership for South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Power (deputy: Councillor Batho).

9. **ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2024/25**

The Chairperson introduced the report, which set out proposals for the Annual Scrutiny Report, (available here). The committee was recommended to consider the report and make any necessary comments on the content before its submission to the full council.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That Council note the annual scrutiny report for 2024/25.

10. **ANNUAL REPORT - EXCEPTIONS TO FORWARD PLAN 2024/25**

The Chairperson introduced the report which set out the annual report concerning exceptions to the forward plan, (available here). The committee considered the report and noted that during the 2024/25 municipal year, the Chairperson of The Scrutiny Committee was informed of one key decision which was not included in the forward plan.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

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

RESOLVED

That the latest Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

12. **TO NOTE THE COMMITTEE'S CURRENT WORK PROGRAMME.**

RESOLVED:

That the latest version of the work programme (which can be found here <https://democracy.winchester.gov.uk/mgPlansHome.aspx?bcr=1>) be noted.

13. **TO NOTE THE DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE**

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.40 pm

Chairperson