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THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4 March 2026

Attendance:

Councillors
Brook (Chairperson)

Wallace
Batho
Laming
Pett

Clear
Power
Murphy
Bolton

Other members in attendance:

Councillor(s) Cutler, Porter and Becker

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

There were no apologies.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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.

Councillor Pett declared a disclosable pecuniary interest due to his role as a member of the South Downs National Park Authority. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, he remained in the room and spoke under the dispensation granted by the Monitoring Officer.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

No announcements were made.

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 10 FEBRUARY 2026**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 February 2026 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ian Tait addressed the committee regarding item 7, Planning Enforcement - Task and Finish Group - Feedback to Scrutiny Committee and a summary of his contribution was captured within the agenda item below.

6. **ANNUAL COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE**

Councillor Kathleen Becker, Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities, and Chief Inspector Korine Bishop introduced the report which set out the Annual Community Safety Update, ([available here](#)).

Councillor Becker's introduction included the following points:

1. The report covered the activity undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for the first three quarters of the financial year 2025-26.
2. Priorities included high-harm crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB), and open space actions, with a significant focus on domestic violence and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
3. Street homelessness numbers were reported as low due to the efforts of specialist providers and the housing team, though this figure did not account for 'sofa surfing'.

Chief Inspector Bishop provided the committee with details relating to the following:

1. The update focused on the people, partnerships, and priorities behind the data, with:
 - a. Priority 1 addressing ASB and shoplifting in Winchester City Centre, where formal action against shoplifters was over 41%.
 - b. Priority 2 focused on rural crime, with two new rural local police officers funded for Bishop's Waltham and Alresford, and a task force supporting investigations into heritage, wildlife, and farm crime.
 - c. Priority 3 concerned HMP Winchester, where a strategic prison partnership board was in place to address investigative workloads regarding drugs, violence, and weapons.
 - d. Priority 4 addressed the night-time economy and VAWG, with proactive operations including behavioural detection officers and venue compliance checks.
2. Strong partnerships were maintained with the Council and schools, and through the OVAL (Offender, Victim, Location) partnership.
3. Operation Fortress continued to tackle drug supply and county lines while safeguarding vulnerable users.
4. Priorities for 2026 included increasing visibility, maximising rural posts, high-harm offender management, and youth intervention.
5. Chief Inspector Bishop noted this was her final meeting and introduced Inspector Kirby as her successor.

The committee was recommended to acknowledge the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) progress report and agree any matters of significance with the Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities. The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised.

1. A question was asked regarding a recent incident in Wickham involving smashed car windows and the perceived lack of engagement following the report, and further clarification was sought on whether the ward and parish councillors were sufficiently updated on specific incidents.

2. A question was asked regarding the absence of statistics on rural and wildlife crime and whether this data could be added to future reports.
3. Clarification was requested regarding the definitions of "formal action taken" and "further action taken" within the report.
4. A question was asked about how figures regarding further formal action could be improved and whether this was circumstantial.
5. A recent media article regarding Winchester was raised and was followed with a question regarding the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and the frequency of its use by relevant officers.
6. Further clarification was sought regarding grant funding applications, specifically an update on the Legacy Plus project and the duration of the funding.
7. Concerns were raised regarding the balance of focus between rural areas and the city centre, as it was felt that rural areas generated a large proportion of complex cases.
8. A request was made for clearer area-based information in future reports, specifically breaking down data by city centre, market towns, rural areas, and specifically Whiteley due to it being a major area of the district.
9. A question was asked regarding mechanisms for reporting back to communities following crime reports where the reporter was not the direct victim.
10. A question was asked whether data could be included showing the breakdown of the legal process from caution or charge through to the final court result.
11. A request was made to include trend data in future reports to illustrate changes over a number of years.
12. A question was raised about road safety on the A272 and A32, including strategies to address speeding and noise outside average speed camera zones, this was followed by a query on the effectiveness of the speed camera schemes and a request for data on offences and Notices of Intended Prosecution.
13. Clarification was sought regarding the recorded 36% increase in mobile camera enforcement activity.
14. A question was asked regarding drug offences at Boomtown, noting a lack of public domain information and requesting reassurance that appropriate action was being taken.
15. Further clarification was sought regarding the Stop Domestic Abuse section and the reasons why referrals to community-based services appeared to have almost doubled.
16. A question was asked regarding the increase in drug detection, and whether there was evidence to demonstrate whether this was due to enhanced policing or an increase in usage.
17. Clarification was sought on why robbery figures had increased while shoplifting had decreased, including whether this was due to reclassification, this was followed by a question asking what advice should be given to the public if they witness shoplifting in progress.

These points were responded to by Councillor Becker, Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities, Sandra Tuddenham, Community Safety Manager and Chief Inspector Bishop accordingly. Members thanked the Chief Inspector for her continued support.

RESOLVED:

The committee agreed the following comments:

1. That the Community Safety Partnership progress report be noted.
2. The Cabinet Member consider the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item, specifically the following recommendations:
 - a. That future reports should include a breakdown of data between the city centre, market towns, and rural areas to better reflect demand and activity across the district.
 - b. That rural crime statistics, specifically regarding animals, be included in future updates.
 - c. That trend data be provided to illustrate whether crime statistics are improving or worsening over multiple years.
 - d. That reassurances regarding the drug enforcement strategy at Boomtown be provided to Councillors outside of the meeting.
 - e. That the Cabinet Member and officers discuss the issues raised within item 12 above (A272/A32) with the police, including feedback regarding road safety data and the impact of speed camera schemes.

7. **PLANNING ENFORCEMENT - TASK AND FINISH GROUP - FEEDBACK TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.**

Councillor Malcolm Wallace, Chair of the Planning Enforcement Task and Finish Group, introduced the report which set out the findings and recommendations of the group ([available here](#)). The introduction included the following points.

1. The group was established to review the operation of the planning enforcement service following the adoption of the updated enforcement plan.
2. Two sessions were held, focusing on case assessment, prioritisation, monitoring, communication, transparency, and managing public expectations.
3. Communication was identified as the issue most frequently raised by councillors and parish councils, with a clear desire for consistent updates at key stages.
4. The group identified scope to celebrate successful enforcement outcomes more visibly to counter the perception of inactivity.
5. Practical improvements discussed included the development of a formal drone policy, increased use of temporary stop notices, and alignment with digital transformation.
6. The group recognised constraints regarding historic cases and recruitment pressures, supporting the continued use of the triage system for lower-priority cases.

Ian Tait addressed the committee regarding enforcement issues within the city. He raised a specific example at 148 High Street involving unauthorised alterations reported in 2021, noting that while reporting was easy, tracking the progress of enforcement matters was more difficult for the public. He expressed frustration at the lack of updates for individuals and organisations interested in preserving the city's character.

The committee was recommended to note the recommendations from the Task & Finish Group. The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised.

1. A question was asked regarding why Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets were not included in the final report to measure the enforcement team's performance.
2. Further clarification was sought on the action plan for addressing highlighted staffing issues.
3. A question was raised regarding whether the service would accept the challenge of finding a way to measure and track progress to communicate benefits to parish councillors and residents.
4. A question was asked whether standard investigation stages could be included in reports to councillors and parish councils to provide better visibility on case progress.
5. A request was made for officers to return in six months with a brief progress report against the recommendations to ensure momentum was maintained.
6. A question was raised regarding resources and whether the council should more actively seek to recover costs on appeals.

These points were responded to by Councillor Malcolm Wallace, Julie Pinnock, Corporate Head of Planning and Regulatory Services, Sarah Armstrong, Service Lead: Built Environment and Councillor Jackie Porter, Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan accordingly.

RESOLVED:

The committee agreed the following comments and recommended to cabinet:

1. That the Scrutiny Committee notes the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and asks the cabinet member to consider them.
2. That a progress report against the recommendations be brought back to the committee, with a preference expressed by the committee for this to occur in six months, noting officer advice that a longer period might be required to demonstrate meaningful change.

8. Q3 FINANCE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Councillor Neil Cutler, Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation introduced the report, ref CAB3537 which set out the Q3 Finance and Performance Monitoring report for the 2025/26 financial year, ([available here](#)). The introduction included the following points.

1. The report covered the period from 1 October to 31 December for the 2025/26 financial year.
2. An update was provided regarding the programme highlight report for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which was included in the Efficient and Effective council plan section.
3. Highlights from the quarter included the introduction of four food waste collection rounds, the Winchester Sport and Leisure Park winning the

regional public club centre of the year award, the exchange of contracts for 46 S106 units at Kings Barton, and the completion of the stage one consultation for the community governance review.

The committee was asked to raise with the Deputy Leader or relevant Cabinet member any issues arising from the information in this report, ref CAB3537, which was being presented to Cabinet on 12 March 2026 and to consider whether there were any items of significance to resolve or to be drawn to the attention of Cabinet.

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

1. A question was asked regarding climate and corporate carbon neutrality, and whether anticipated carbon savings from decarbonising key corporate buildings were at risk.
2. Further clarification was sought on the housing retrofit progress; noting that although the programme showed accelerated progress, it remained amber, and assurance was sought on whether this trajectory kept the Council on track for EPC C commitments by 2030.
3. A question was raised regarding the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and whether the underlying financial pressures, such as void repair costs and spending on damp and mould, were sustainable heading into 2026/27.
4. Clarification was sought regarding nutrient mitigation solutions at Northington Road and Goodens, specifically whether chemical analysis was undertaken to measure outpourings before and after solutions were implemented, or if an algorithm was used.
5. A follow-up question was asked regarding whether the 15 other sites within the Itchen catchment area that had not yet been upgraded were being measured.
6. A question was asked regarding the repair to PV panels at the Vaultex car park, and whether this was due to vandalism or maintenance needs.
7. Clarification was requested regarding an application for the Smart Export Guarantee and whether this had been completed when the solar panels were first installed, including whether the same application process had been undertaken for the offices and the leisure centre. Additionally, a question was raised about the tender for surveys on solar panels for small properties and whether this duplicated similar work carried out on the council estate several years ago.
8. Clarification was sought regarding waste target GF5, specifically whether the quarterly figures were cumulative to meet the annual target of 420kg per household.
9. A question was asked regarding the introduction of Local Government Reorganisation and whether the TC25 programme had been removed from the report and whether it would continue to be reported to the committee.
10. Further clarification was sought regarding the footnote concerning the recharging of electricity at the Guildhall and how the percentage of usage and recharge was calculated.

These points were responded to by Councillor Cutler, Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation, Councillor Porter, Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan, Simon Hendey, Strategic Director, and Liz Keys, Director (Finance) accordingly.

RESOLVED:

The committee noted the report and agreed to ask that a response regarding the Smart Export Guarantee details for the offices and leisure centre be circulated to the committee.

9. **TO NOTE THE COMMITTEES 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.

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

RESOLVED

That the latest Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.45 pm

Chairperson

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