

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2019 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Stewart Dobson, Cllr Alan Hill (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Tony Trotman, Cllr John Walsh, Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman) and Cllr Jacqui Lay (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cllr Bob Jones MBE, Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cllr Robert Yuill and Cllr Tony Jackson

55 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Christine Crisp, Gordon King, Howard Greenman and John Smale.

Councillor Crisp was substituted by Councillor Jacqui Lay.

56 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2019 were presented for consideration and it was,

Resolved

To approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

57 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

58 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman noted the resignation from the Council, and therefore as a Substitute of the Committee, of Councillor Roy While, Melksham Without South Division, owing to ill health. The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor While's long involvement with Overview and Scrutiny as a member or former member of the Management Committee, Children's Select Committee, Health Select Committee as well many task groups including the Financial Planning Task

Group, Commercialism Task Group, Partnerships Task Group, ICT Provision Task Group and Major Contracts Task Group.

The Chairman proposed to write to former Councillor While on behalf of the Committee to thank him for his huge contributions to the Council and Overview and Scrutiny in particular.

The Chairman then drew attention to vacancies on the Financial Planning, Housing Adaptations and Dementia Task Groups and encouraged members to put themselves forward.

59 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted.

60 **Executive Response to the Final Report of the Military and Civilian Integration Programme (MCIP) Task Group**

The Military-Civilian Integration Partnership (MCIP) Task Group was established in 2016 to focus on the impact of Army Basing in Wiltshire and the work of Wiltshire Council to prepare for the arrival of more military personnel, and then on work to encourage integration between civilians and the military at a community level. The final report of the Task Group was endorsed by the Committee for recommendation to the relevant Cabinet Member at its meeting on 4 July 2019.

Councillor Richard Clewer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Heritage and Tourism, presented a formal response on behalf of the Executive. It was stated the communication with the military had been improved, and a new workstream of 'Communities' had been added to the work programme in response to the report of the Task Group and agreed that a community conference on integration was a positive idea.

The Committee discussed the Executive response along with Councillor Richard Britton, Chairman of the MCIP Task Group. It was announced that the military would be appointing Community Champions to engage with parishes, schools and others in the area in the new future. It was also raised that the financial impacts and benefits to Wiltshire of the Army Basing Programme still required review, although it was also acknowledged there were benefits arising which might not be purely monetary

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) **To welcome the Executive responses to the recommendations of the MCIP Task Group.**
- 2) **Alongside the 12-month update on Military-Civilian integration at a community level to be received in June 2020, to request an update on the tangible benefits to the county from the army rebasing programme.**

61 **Final Report of the Public Consultations Task Group**

On 20 November 2018 the Committee established the Public Consultations Task Group to examine the number, purpose and method of public consultations taking place in Wiltshire.

Councillor Stuart Wheeler, Chairman of the Public Consultations Task Group, presented its final report and thanked all its members, as well as the supporting officers and contributions from the Executive.

The Task Group had concluded that there were issues of misused terminology in relation to public consultations. A formal consultation had a specific legal meaning, but only 14% of the activities referred to as such had been true consultations, with others being surveys or engagement exercises. Among other points, a consultation must be taken at a time where a decision can be genuinely influenced and changed, if appropriate. There were also concerns that there was a lack of expertise within the Council on how to operate a consultation, and a lack of consistency in their operation. The forthcoming Business Intelligence Hub would in future oversee this, but was not currently in place.

The Committee then debated the recommendations of the Task Group. It was agreed that there should be a review within 12 months to assess the level of implementation of any recommendations accepted by the Executive. It was acknowledged there needed to be sensitivity regarding communication of what was a consultation and what was an engagement exercise, and the wording of any consultation on a proposed decision needed to be clear and carefully prepared. It was suggested the report of the Task Group be shared with towns and parishes, some of whom would have similar issues in relation to consultations. The Committee also discussed whether there were any ways to appropriately assess the problem of a silent majority not responding to any particular issue.

Councillor Allison Bucknell, Cabinet Member for Communications, Communities, Leisure and Libraries, thanked the Task Group for their work and stated she would accept the recommendations and respond formally in due course. She noted there was a lot of work being undertaken in Communications and preparing the new Business Intelligence Hub as an internal service for the Council. There was also discussion of the precise wording of recommendation eight of the Task Group report.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) To welcome and endorse the report of the Task Group and refer it to the Cabinet Member for Communications, Communities, Leisure and Libraries for response at this Committee's next meeting.**

- 2) **For this Committee to receive a report in approximately 12 months' time about how any task group recommendations accepted by the Executive have been implemented.**
- 3) **To ask that the Executive response to the report includes reference to how the 'silent majority' is considered when the council undertakes public consultations and engagement.**

(For Information - List of Task Group Recommendations)

That the Cabinet Member for Communications, Communities, Leisure and Libraries considers implementing the following recommendations:

1. *To ensure that the Council is compliant with its own guidelines and consistent in its approach to public consultations, to update the sections of the following documents which relate to public consultations:
 - a) *Wiltshire Council: The Constitution*
 - b) *Wiltshire Council: Consultation Strategy**
2. *To ensure that the proposed Business Intelligence Hub has the necessary expertise and skills to manage public consultations:
 - a) *Additional expertise and advice to be sought, before finalising arrangements for the Hub*
 - b) *The Hub to have the required specialist knowledge and skills to design effective and balanced consultation processes.**
3. *In the interim period whilst the Business Intelligence Hub is established and to minimise the risk of the Council being legally challenged on its decisions, public consultations to continue to be managed by specialists.*
4. *In order to ensure that the Council uses the appropriate process and terminology, corporate training to be rolled-out to all service areas on the difference between a public consultation and engagement/canvassing, and guidance to be provided on the internal processes for managing each of these forms of participation.*
5. *For all future public consultations to be designed so that the public can respond with feedback that is directly relevant to and can directly inform the council's subsequent decision making.*
6. *For all public consultations to clearly state:
 - a) *the purpose of consulting the public on the proposal*
 - b) *the process that the Council will follow when making its final decision and where a respondent's contribution fits into this chain of events.**
7. *The same principles as set out in recommendation six to also apply to any form of public engagement, canvassing/surveys.*
8. *For all decision-making papers to clearly set out how respondents' views have actively influenced the final decision made.*

9. *For Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to consider receiving a report in approximately 12 months' time about how any of the above recommendations accepted by the Executive have been implemented.*

62 **Interim Report of the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group**

The Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group endorsed new terms of reference on 5 June 2018 to explore the options of the Microsoft Exercise, how ICT projects were chosen and vetted, auditing of existing software and the interface between users and the council's digital systems. An interim report was received on 18 September 2018, and a further interim report was presented to the Committee by Councillor Jon Hubbard, Chairman of the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group.

It was stated that the 'Get Well' programme of capital investment in ICT which had been agreed by Full Council on 7 July 2019 was a positive step. There were updates on the replacement for the MyWiltshire app, which would show other reports of issues on the same matter to prevent duplication, which would increase its effectiveness, and discussed the work of the Task Group looking at the council's use of various Microsoft solutions. It was welcomed that many recommendations of the Task Group were taken on board and progressed by the Digital Board which oversaw all Digital projects as they came, and the Task Group appreciated the engagement of the Executive with it. On behalf of the Task Group the Chairman thanked Paul Day, Interim Director of Digital, Data and Technology, for his efforts overseeing a period of major changes.

The Committee discussed the report and welcomed its update. Questions were raised regarding problems with the council's planning department's ICT system, and it was stated this was being addressed but that major systems would take significant time to be implemented.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) **To support the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group in building and maintaining a positive working relationship with the Executive**
- 2) **To acknowledge the work of the Task Group from November 2018 to September 2019, in providing valuable input into the council's Digital Programme.**

63 **Management Committee Task Groups**

Written updates were provided on all Management Committee Task Groups. In relation to the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) Task Group there was discussion of the new legal status of the SWLEP as a company limited by guarantee, and how it would now be responsible for its own scrutiny but would involve both local authorities in Wiltshire. The Committee

requested circulation of details of the new board structure of the SWLEP and for the matter to be kept under review.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) **To note the update on Task Group activity provided.**
- 2) **To note the request from the Commercialism Task Group to not consider the appointment of an additional member to fill its current vacancy until its work programme has been established.**
- 3) **To help the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) put in place appropriate scrutiny arrangements by supporting the development of a scrutiny panel, comprising members of Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council to provide councillor input, plus members of the SWLEP as co-optees to provide a business perspective, with final proposals brought back to a future meeting.**

64 **Forward Work Programme**

The Forward Work Programmes of the Select Committees were presented by the Chairmen of the Children Select Committee and Health Select Committee, and the Vice-Chairman of the Environment Select Committee.

Through the Environment Select Committee it was stated the work of the Global Warming and Climate Change Emergency Task Group was ongoing, along with work on the Homelessness Strategy which was awaiting an Executive response. A Housing Adaptions Task Group had been established to identify any improvements that could be made to making use of properties which had been adapted for specific needs.

Through the Children's Select Committee it was stated that in the recent Ofsted inspection the council had received a 'good' rating across all four assessment areas, the best by any council in the south west region, and all the service was congratulated for the achievement. There would also be work undertaken on higher education strategy and young carers.

Through the Health Select Committee it was stated there was additional work being taken on enhancement services around primary care networks, there had been a rapid scrutiny on the transformation of maternity services, and planned work on Dementia.

The Committee was also updated on the report to the Cabinet on the Wiltshire Council Equality & Inclusion Annual Report 2019 and Objectives 2019-22, which had taken into account the comments of the Committee at its last meeting.

It was,

Resolved:

- 1) To note the update on the OS Forward Work Programme.
- 2) To congratulate all of the council's Children's Services teams for achieving Good ratings across all four inspection themes following the recent Ofsted inspection.

65 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 3 December 2019.

66 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.10 pm)

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