

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT .

Present:

Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman), Cllr Christopher Williams (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Bob Jones MBE, Cllr Johnny Kidney, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Bill Parks, Cllr Tony Pickernell, Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Tony Trotman and Cllr Iain Wallis

Also Present:

Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Phil Alford, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Pauline Church, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Tamara Reay, Cllr Suzanne Wickham, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Robert Yuill and Cllr Dr Mark McClelland

25 **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

26 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2021 were presented for consideration, and it was,

Resolved:

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

27 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

28 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman drew attention to the establishment of several Rapid Scrutiny Exercises and a Task Group as detailed below:

- 1) Rapid scrutiny exercise: Gap analysis of the provision of accommodation for young people
- 2) Rapid scrutiny exercise: Disadvantaged learners
- 3) Fostering Excellence Task Group
- 4) Rapid scrutiny exercise: Housing Related Support

All Members would be contacted and encouraged to participate in the work programme.

29 **Public Participation**

A question had been submitted by Mel Boyle regarding potential scrutiny of county farms. A response was provided as detailed in Agenda Supplement 2.

30 **Wiltshire Council Draft Business Plan 2021-31**

The Business Plan sets out the council's overarching principles by which the organisation would be managed. The current plan was set out for 2017-27. This had been updated on 21 July 2020 to include an addendum relating to climate change.

Following the election in May 2021 the Business Plan had been reviewed and a draft Business Plan Principles 2022-32 was circulated to Overview and Scrutiny members on 18 September 2021 and then published as detailed in Agenda Supplement 2. The Select Committees each met informally on 20 September 2021 to discuss the draft document.

Councillor Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council, supported by the Chief Executive, Terence Herbert, and other members of the Executive, presented the draft Business Plan. It was explained that the document was intended to serve as the guiding principles for the organisation, and would inform service delivery plans, and metrics would then be used to measure the performance of the council in meeting those guiding principles. It was intended that a finalised version of the Business Plan principles together with service plans would be considered by Full Council in February 2022.

The Leader detailed the approach taken in developing the Business Plan principles, focusing strategically on systemic problems and how to bring resources together across all areas to address them, rather than services operating in isolation. The guiding themes including of prevention and early intervention, improving social mobility and tackling inequalities, understanding communities, and integration, were detailed.

The Chairman of each Select Committee then raised points discussed at the informal meetings which had considered the draft document. In addition to textual suggestions there were comments relating to references to delivery of housing, scrutiny influence on annual corporate planning, the involvement of scrutiny on transformation of council services, and how the themes could be reviewed by the Select Committee structure. There were comments that the document was not detailed on some of the specific challenges that the council faced or was not specific enough in relation to young people, with some previous commitments reduced. In response the Leader noted that much detail would be within service delivery plans, and the guiding principles would not be an exhaustive list of specific challenges or proposals.

Other points raised in discussion included the need for further scrutiny of the developing service plans to accompany the Business Plan. Some Committee members noted the changed approach from the previous Business Plan and sought details of measuring if it had achieved its aims. The Leader considered that the two plans were structured and would be monitored in very different ways, and did not consider it would be appropriate to expend resources examining the details of the previous Plan as the new Plan was developed. Some also raised that whilst the Business Plan set out broad themes, that they felt it was important to be explicit around inclusion of children and young people issues. The importance, through the Plan, of working with partners such as parish councils, was discussed.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) **To ask Cabinet to take note of the comments of the Committee on the Wiltshire Council Business Plan Principles 2022-32 document, which will be set out in the minutes to be approved by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.**
- 2) **To note that a final, more detailed Wiltshire Council Business Plan 2022-32 would be presented to Full Council in February 2022.**
- 3) **That the Leader, Chairman and Vice-Chairman will agree the timetable for further scrutiny input on the Business Plan, to be reported back to all select committees.**

31 **Stone Circle Governance Review**

The Stone Circle companies were formed in 2019. The housing development company was incorporated on 9 September 2019 and was established to provide homes to residents whose financial circumstances enabled them to afford rents between council house levels and the private sectors, and to create homes for sale through developing council owned land.

Cabinet had requested a review of the governance arrangements for the Stone Circle companies on 2 February 2021, to examine governance in relation to shareholder requirements, processes for decisions, performance and risk reporting to the council's corporate leadership team and the Cabinet, the council's role as shareholder, representation on the company boards, separation of roles, and the role of Audit and Governance and Overview and Scrutiny

Councillor Pauline Church, supported by the Corporate Director for Resources and Deputy Chief Executive Andy Brown, presented the report, which would be considered by Cabinet on 27 September 2021. She set out the process of the review to draw on best practice, including experience of other councils, to enhance the viability of the companies. She provided details of the new shareholder group which would receive reports from Audit and Governance and Overview and Scrutiny, to enable Cabinet to monitor the companies appropriately.

Following the update, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) **To note the recommendations of the governance review, which will be considered by Cabinet on 27 September 2021 and the Audit & Governance Committee on 28 September 2021.**
- 2) **To note the important role overview and scrutiny plays within a robust governance framework for local authority wholly-owned companies.**
- 3) **To welcome the recommendation for overview and scrutiny input on Stone Circle Company annual business plans and quarterly reports.**
- 4) **If the review's recommendations are approved by Cabinet, to ask Financial Planning Task Group to:**
 - a) **undertake the overview and scrutiny input recommended, with updates from the task group presented to OS Management Committee under its standing update item;**
 - b) **refer any issues highlighted in Stone Circle reports regarding housing delivery (rather than finance) to the Environment Select Committee where appropriate;**
- 5) **To ask the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Financial Planning Task Group to monitor the governance arrangements adopted and report back in 12 months or sooner if appropriate.**

32 **Asset Transfer Policy Update**

The service devolution and asset transfer policy was the policy under which responsibility for services or ownership of assets was transferred from Wiltshire Council to town and parish councils, including car parks, play areas or grass cutting provision. A policy was approved by Full Council in 2017. The Committee had requested an update on the policy and delivery of service devolution and asset transfer following delays in 2019 and pausing due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Phil Alford, Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets and Asset Transfer presented the report. He noted the pause in the programme, noting particularly the technical expertise required to exercise the policy of transferring services or assets which had needed to be reassigned, and provided details of completed transfers and savings that would be realised. The policy would be reviewed, with input from parishes, in order to improve the process, which had taken longer than intended in several instances.

The Committee discussed the report and update. It was stated that the initial asset transfer policy had been agreed in 2011 and been refreshed in 2017, and that relatively few transfers had been agreed. Whilst the impact of Covid-19 was

acknowledged comments were made about the delays to the delivery of the policy prior to that point, and that this meant the continuance of a lower level of service or maintenance of assets for local residents. The difficulty for parish councils to plan their budgets with uncertainty around taking on services or assets was raised, along with any new parish requests being treated the same as those with historic requests.

The Cabinet Member, along with the Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Clewer, noted the comments and concerns raised, as well as the intention to streamline the processes as much as possible, or alternative models explored if that would be more suitable. The complexity of devolving services and assets was emphasised, as it was stated that a simple process was not always possible as a result.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) To note the update on the Asset Transfer Policy, which will now be reviewed, and ask Cabinet to note the points raised by the Committee.**
- 2) To note the reported intention for a consultation on the Policy in November 2021 and a report to Cabinet in early 2022 to reset the policy and programme, taking into account resource requirements and town/parish council appetite.**
- 3) To establish a rapid scrutiny exercise to provide Overview and Scrutiny input on the Policy review process following completion of the Consultation process, with arrangements to be agreed by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Cabinet Member and reported back to Committee.**

33 Financial Planning Task Group Update

A report on the ongoing work of the Financial Planning Task Group was presented by Councillor Pip Ridout, Chairman of the Task Group.

Councillor Ridout provided details of recent work of the Task Group including revenue and capital budget monitoring, and the report detailed amendments to the terms of reference of the Task Group.

Updates were also provided on the level of work needed for scrutiny of the Stone Circle companies, and that owing to the level of assigned work for the Task Group, it was requested that the Committee establish a new Task Group for specific scrutiny of the Evolve programme, which was considered under the next agenda item.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) To note the update on Financial Planning Task Group activity provided.
- 2) To approve the appointment of Councillor Bill Parks to the Financial Planning Task Group.
- 3) To approve the amended terms of reference as set out at paragraph 5 of the report.

34 **Management Committee Task Group update**

A report was provided with an update on the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) Joint Scrutiny Panel, which had met on 9 August 2021 to consider the governance review of the SWLEP.

It was then,

Resolved:

To note the update on Task Group and Panel activity provided.

35 **Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the forward work programmes of each Select Committee, as well as updates from the Chairmen.

Updates included details of the new exercises and task groups being undertaken by the Children Select Committee including as detailed under Chairman's Announcements. Updates from the Health Select Committee included work with the Royal United Hospital, Bath, on its new Health and Care vision model and interacting with Wiltshire social care, as well as other work on place based integrated care and reablement. The Environment Select Committee had examined the future bus strategy and would be progressing with a review of Community Area Transport Group operation.

The Chairman also confirmed that at request of the Executive and the Financial Planning Task Group that the Management Committee would establish a Task Group relating to the Evolve programme, the replacement of the council's enterprise resource planning solution.

All Chairmen had or would be meeting with relevant Cabinet Members and Directors to shape future overview and scrutiny work.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the updates on select committee activity and approve the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

36 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 16 November 2021.

37 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.50 pm)

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