

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 MARCH 2021 AT ONLINE MEETING.

Present:

Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Kevin Daley, Cllr Stewart Dobson, Cllr Howard Greenman, Cllr Alan Hill (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Atiqul Hoque, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr John Walsh, Cllr Stuart Wheeler and Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman)

Also Present:

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cllr Philip Whitehead and Cllr Robert Yuill

19 **Apologies**

There were no apologies or substitutions.

20 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meetings held on 26 January and 9 February 2021 were presented for consideration, and it was,

Resolved:

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

21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

22 **Chairman's Announcements**

As the final meeting of the Committee before the May 2021 local elections, the Chairman offered his thanks to all Members, Officers, and those who had interfaced with the Overview and Scrutiny process.

On behalf of the Committee the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Alan Hill, also thanked the Chairman, Councillor Graham Wright, for his management of Overview and Scrutiny for the last four years, especially during streamlined Covid-19 scrutiny arrangements.

23 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted.

24 **Covid-19 Update**

A report was received as detailed in Agenda Supplement 2 of an update on Covid-19, which would be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 16 March 2021, as well as questions and comments made at Select Committees regarding recent Covid-19 updates.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Philip Whitehead, presented the report along with the Chief Executive, Terence Herbert, and other senior officers.

Councillor Whitehead thanked the Chairman and Scrutiny for its work and provided an update on latest Covid-19 numbers and highlighted the importance of continuing to follow guidance to continue to reduce infections.

The Chief Executive provided further updates including but not limited to Covid-19 case rates, increase in schools testing with the reopening to all pupils on 9 March 2021, testing sites, communication of the government roadmap to relax restrictions, distribution of business grants, plans for the reopening of leisure and hospitality venues, election planning, the return of council staff to offices in the future, and future development of the Wellbeing hub to support residents.

The Committee discussed the update and sought additional information from the Leader and Chief Executive. Details were sought on an increase in postal vote applications, and it was confirmed that the government had not yet extended the law to permit virtual meetings to continue after the May elections and that local MPs had been lobbied regarding the matter. In response to queries it was stated council staff were not expected to return in significant numbers until at least June in accordance with government guidance, and that appropriate plans were being developed.

Clarity was sought in relation to the extension by 12 months of pavement licences for hospitality businesses and the impact on other types of businesses. The Leader noted concerns, but also that many businesses required such extensions to operate and be sustainable during ongoing Covid-19 restrictions.

The council was thanked for its work communicating specifically with the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) populations in Wiltshire including translated materials and direct engagement. It was also confirmed that all polling stations for the May elections had received risk assessments for the new arrangements that would be in place to ensure safe and secure elections.

There was discussion of schools reopening and whether similar bubble arrangements in response to positive Covid-19 tests were in place as during previous terms. It was stated that specific arrangements were for each school to determine, and that some might continue with arrangements whereby whole year groups were sent home in response to a positive test, or it might be a more contained approach. Details were also requested regarding the opening of skate parks, which could open from 29 March 2021, but those run by parish councils would need to be confirmed by that council following risk assessments in line with government dates and guidance.

At the conclusion of discussion,

Resolved:

To note the update on the council's ongoing response to Covid-19.

25 **Task Group Updates**

The Committee received a report as detailed in the agenda pack with updates in relation to Task Groups reporting to the Management Committee.

It was reported that the Financial Planning Task Group had requested information in relation to the Stone Circle companies established by the Council, and that the Children's Select Committee was requesting that should the Commercialism Task Group be re-established after the May 2021 elections, that a representative from the former Traded Services Task Group be appointed to its membership.

It was,

Resolved:

- 1) **To note the update on Task Group activity provided;**
- 2) **To note that task groups will be reformed, and memberships confirmed, as appropriate by Management Committee at its first meeting following the elections in May.**

26 **Review of Overview and Scrutiny 2017-2021**

The Committee received a report as detailed in Agenda Supplement 1 highlighting the key pieces of work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny during the council term 2017-2021, recommendations on the approach and effectiveness of the work undertaken, and submissions from each of the Select Committees for topics that it was recommended be included in a future Overview and Scrutiny work programme following the May 2021 elections.

The Chairman, Councillor Graham Wright, thanked all the Select Committees for their work over the last four years and for making recommendations for future work, as well as cooperation of the Executive and council officers, and hoped that the council would be able to build on its strengths to improve its Overview and Scrutiny further.

The Committee discussed the report, welcoming the recommendations which had been made. Further details were sought on the undertaking of a rapid scrutiny exercise in respect of Furlong Close as requested by Full Council at its meeting on 23 February 2021, and further work after the elections.

It was also noted that induction for new Members would seek to highlight the benefits to all non-executive Members to contribute to Overview and Scrutiny

including through task groups, and it was hoped those with specific experience or skills could be positively approached for specific subjects of scrutiny. The Chairman also wished to pay tribute to the work of his Vice-Chairman, Councillor Alan Hill, for managing the Overview and Scrutiny function.

At the conclusion of debate, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) **To thank all those Members, co-opted members, stakeholders, partner organisations, officers, other witnesses and members of the public who have positively contributed to the work of the select committees and in the effective delivery of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme;**
- 2) **To acknowledge that the content of the report, including the key activities listed at Appendix A, demonstrates the significant contribution that Overview and Scrutiny is making to open and honest decision-making and to the overall good governance of the authority;**
- 3) **To refer the topics listed in Appendix B of the report, and the strengths and development areas listed under paragraphs 12 to 14, for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its first meeting of the new Council.**

27 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 25 May 2021, following the local elections.

28 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.25 am)

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