Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2021 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

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

Also Present:

Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Richard Clewer and Cllr George Jeans

38   **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Bob Jones MBE and Cllr Jo Trigg.

Cllr Trigg was replaced by Cllr Ian Thorn for this meeting only.

39   **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2021 were presented for consideration.

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2021 as a true and correct record.

(Note – Cllr Trotman raised a query about minute 32 – Asset Transfer Policy Update and whether any arrangements had been made for the rapid scrutiny. The Democracy Manager (Scrutiny) explained that the planned consultation with town/parish councils on the Policy would now be replaced with a town/parish council conference to be held in January 2022. He also reported that the timing of the agreed scrutiny exercise might be affected, but that volunteers to take part would be sought very soon.)

40   **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

41   **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman drew attention to the following announcements:

1. **Evaluation of face-to-face select committee meetings**

As this was the final select committee meeting for November, officers had been asked to circulate a short survey to all select committee members to evaluate their experience of the return to face-to-face meetings. The results would be available to everyone and will be used to help determine the future approach to select committee meetings.

2. **Councillor training event**

An online training event would be held for all councillors on Tuesday 23rd November at 9.30am, on the experiences of Wiltshire's Gypsy, Traveller, Romany and Boater communities, and the issues and challenges they face.

The online event will be jointly delivered by council officers and staff from the charity, Julian House, cover issues such as:

- History, culture and discrimination
- Accommodation needs
- Health
- Education; and
- Voices, Visibility and Inclusion

42   **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

43   **Wiltshire Online Update**

The Committee received a presentation from Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Libraries, Governance, Facilities Management and Operational Assets providing an update on the Wiltshire Online Programme.

The Chairman confirmed that the presentation slides had been circulated and were available on the Councils website and can be viewed here at Supplement 1.

The Committee noted that the Programme was launched in 2013 and targeted those premises that were considered commercially non-viable. The partnership was made between Wiltshire Council and Building Digital UK (a Directorate of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport delivering broadband networks to the UK), and four contracts had been awarded, 3 to Openreach and 11 to Gigaclear. The Council's investment totalled £15.5m.

Cllr Blair-Pilling commented in detail on the following areas:

- An update on the latest position with the 3 contracts with Openreach
- Openreach gainshare repayments
- An update on the latest position on the contract with Gigaclear
- Future plans.

Cllr Blair-Pilling responded to a number of questions and comments from the Committee which included the following areas:

- The performance of Gigaclear and their inability to meet contractual commitments.
- The trigger for repayments
- Commercial viability in part due to geographical positioning and the installation of the initial infrastructure
- Broadband capability in rural areas is in the gift of the Government and the Council has been lobbying the Government about this.
- Wiltshire, when compared with other council areas continued to perform well with the installation of broadband
- Wiltshire/South Glos/Swindon were in lot 30 of 38 and detailed information about the roll out was available on the Governments website.
- Issues surrounding the quality of installation work by Gigaclear

Cllr George Jeans, the Overview and Scrutiny nominated councillor representative on the programme provided an update report as detailed below:

'Over the last years Wiltshire Council have foreseen the Broadband revolution and with BDUK have intervened in non commercial areas of Wiltshire to enhance what if anything was available. In the South of Wiltshire intervention has finished. There are still areas in the south that have not a good service. An example of "helping yourself".

The South West Wiltshire Area Board (SWWAB) hosted a meeting presenting how Bishopstone intended to obtain fibre to the premises, giving them super-fast broadband. Also Wessex a local provider gave a presentation regarding their progress across Dorset and beyond including south west Wiltshire, providing fibre broadband. You may wish to visit www.communityfibre.openreach.co.uk, to view Openreachs roll out. During the coronavirus pandemic many people have used the internet to work from home and for shopping and entertainment services. Children have had on-line learning. Internet communication services have become vital. The Government's aim is to have "Gigabit capable"

(one gigabit =1000Mbps) broadband connections available to all. To achieve this aim it is necessary to have an optical fibre connection from the telephone exchange to the property - known as Fibre To The Property (FTTP), some already have this capability, others have what is known as fibre to the cabinet (FTTC), which has helped many in South Wiltshire. FTTP is the next step and its roll out is indicated by the above web site. Under the Government's Rural Gigabit Voucher scheme homes and businesses should be eligible for funding towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband when part of a group. These homes and businesses can establish a Community Fibre Partnership (CFP). Rural premises with broadband speeds of less than100Mbps can use vouchers worth £1,500 per home and up to £3,500 for each small to medium-sized enterprises (SME) to support the cost of installing new fast and reliable connections. However, these vouchers may not meet the full cost of installation.

North of Wiltshire was given by Wiltshire Council and BDUK, intervention by Gigaclear, this has helped many, however they have had operational problems and have now fall behind in their delivery. The north has benefited from this program, however the speed of delivery and the extent of coverage may fall short I will update you all March/April of next year.'

Cllr Blair-Piling thanked officers for their input and ability to maximise the funding spent on the project.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Blair-Pilling for the informative presentation.

Resolved:

1. **To note the update from the Cabinet member and Overview and Scrutiny councillor representative on the Wiltshire Online programme, and to thank Cllr Jeans and the officers involved for their work in this area.**

2. **To receive a further update from the Overview and Scrutiny representative in March 2022.**

44   **Management Committee Task Groups**

The Committee considered an update report on the recent work of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Joint Scrutiny Panel.

The Chair welcomed Cllr Richard Britton to the meeting, who provided an update on the work of the Joint Scrutiny Panel. Cllr Britton reported that the Panel met on 21 October 2021 to consider the Business Cyber Centre proposals. He indicated that the Panel had requested further financial information in order to fully evaluate the proposals, but unfortunately this was rejected by the SWLEP due to the information being commercially

sensitive. Other Wiltshire Councillors also expressed their disappointment at the decision by the SWLEP not to release the information requested and the impact on the Panel's ability to fully scrutinise the proposals.

The Committee also considered a request from Cllr Pauline Church, Cabinet Member for Finance & Procurement, Commissioning, IT, Digital and Commercialisation to form a new Task Group to provide scrutiny input on the Council's Evolve Programme. It was noted that the Evolve programme involved the procurement and implementation of a new Cloud-based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system for the council, which will impact on the work of all staff in respect of HR, finance, procurement and payroll processes. It will look to modernise technology and standardise business processes, improving efficiencies for core activities that are undertaken across the council, supporting their adoption through a comprehensive in-house business change and training effort, and will deliver improved data, insights and reporting capabilities.

The Chair asked for members to indicate their willingness to serve on the Task Group in addition to those who had already expressing an interest to be involved in the Task Group.

Resolution:

1. **To note the update on task group and panel activity provided.**

2. **To note the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP Panel's concerns about their limited ability to scrutinise the Business Cyber Centre proposals due to the limited opportunity and lack of information available.**

3. **That the Chair of the Committee will write to the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP to outline the Committee's concerns and will report back.**

4. **To establish a new Evolve Programme Task Group with the terms of reference outlined in the report, and appoint the following to the Task Group:**

   - **Cllr Mary Webb**
   - **Cllr Mark Verbinner**
   - **Cllr Horace Prickett**
   - **Cllr Ruth Hopkinson**
   - **Cllr Dr Monica Devendran**
   - **Cllr Jon Hubbard**

45 Financial Planning Task Group Update

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

Cllr Ridout provided details of the recent work of the Task Group including consideration of (i) Procurement of the Planned and Reactive Maintenance Contracts for Housing and General Fund Assets; and (ii) Care Homes Block Contract Procurement reports to Cabinet on 30 November 2021 and 14 December 2021.

The Democracy Manager (Scrutiny) confirmed that, for some reports heading to Cabinet, joint briefings for both the relevant select committee Chair/Vice-chair and the Financial Planning Task Group Chair would be arranged by the Scrutiny team.

The Chair thanked the Task Group and officers for their continued hard work.

Resolved:

1. **To note the update on Financial Planning Task Group activity provided and thank its members for their work.**

2. **To note the task group's forward work plan, Appendix 1 to the report.**

46 Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the forward work programmes of each Select Committee, as well as updates from the Chair for each Select Committee. These included:

- Cllr Jon Hubbard - Children's Select Committee
- Cllr Johnny Kidney - Health Select Committee
- Cllr Jerry Kunkler - Environment Select Committee
- Cllr Graham Wright - Management Committee

Resolved:

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

2. **To add the Asset Transfer Policy Rapid Scrutiny Exercise to the work programme to take place in December.**

47 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 25 January 2022.

48   **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.10 pm)

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