

CORPORATE AND PUBLIC SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 January 2017 at 6.00pm at the Council House, Walsall

Panel Members Present Councillor A. Andrew (Chair)
Councillor D. Barker
Councillor M. Bird
Councillor S. Craddock
Councillor M. Nazir
Councillor G. Sohal
Councillor M. Ward
Councillor R. Worrall

Portfolio Holder Councillor S. Coughlan – Leader
Councillor D. Coughlan – Social Care
Councillor J. Fitzpatrick – Community, Leisure and Culture
Councillor L. Jeavons – Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Councillor C. Jones – Clean and Green
Councillor A. Nawaz – Personnel and Business Support
Councillor I. Shires – Agenda for Change

Members in attendance Councillor R. Martin

Officers Present Simon Neilson – Executive Director (Economy and Environment)
James Walsh - Assistant Director (Finance)
Tony Cox - Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Paul Gordon - Head of Business Change
Shawn Fleet - Group Manager (Planning)
Mike Smith – Regeneration Manager – Planning Policy
Chris Knowles – Services Finance Manager
Craig Goodall – Senior Democratic Services Officer

In attendance Mr Matthew Draper – Mayfield Prep School
Mr Simon Thacker – Mayfield Prep School

146/17 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Creaney and L. Rattigan.

147/17 Substitutions

There were no substitutions.

148/17 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

149/17 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to be considered in private session.

150/17 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minute number 142/15 'Petitions on unauthorised encampments' it was requested that 'Millfield Way' be amended to 'Millfield Road' in the resolution.

Resolved

That the minutes, as amended, of the meeting held on 24 November 2016 copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

151/17 Petition: Save School Crossing Patrols

The Committee considered a petition, which had received over 500 signatures, calling upon the Council to maintain funding for category 2 school crossing patrols (SCPs).

The Chair invited the petitioners to address the Committee. Mr Draper, Head teacher at the Mayfield Prep School, and Mr Thacker, Vice-Chair of School Governors at the Mayfield Prep School explained that they wished to maintain the SCP outside their school. They reported that despite there being a zebra crossing outside the school there had been several near misses prior to the SCP Officer being employed. Since the SCP Officer was on site there had only been one near miss. The SCP Officer came at a cost of £4709.02. This was considered highly cost effective for the increased safety it created. It was not possible to put the price on a life. The crossing to the school was on a bend and in rush hour cars did not always stop. This experience was supported by Government statistics (tabled) that showed a reduction in road casualties at crossings with human control compared to all others crossings.

At the invitation of the Chair Councillor R. Martin addressed the Committee. She reported that the Mayfield School was located near a busy road where drivers did not always take sufficient care. She said the small cost of SCPs saved lives and urged Cabinet to not include the saving in their draft budget.

The Portfolio Holder (Personnel and business support) explained that the proposal related to removing SCPs from category 2 crossings. This meant there was already an alternative means of crossing available. Category 1

crossings, where there were no alternative means of crossing available, would retain their SCP facilities. Further to this he added that the proposal was not to remove SCP Officers but to seek if it was possible to identify alternative means of funding. He reported that currently there were 19 category 2 SCP sites that were unstaffed and children were crossing roads safely. He clarified that no decisions had been made and Cabinet would listen to the feedback they received prior to making any decision.

The Deputy Leader added that the Council was seeking to develop the A-Stars road safety programme to schools. The idea of this project was to teach children life skills and build resilience within communities.

The Committee debated the petition and the response to it. Following questioning Members were concerned that despite the budget proposal being centred around identifying alternative forms of funding no investigations into alternative sources of funding had been undertaken. This meant that if the decision was implemented there would be very little time for schools to react to the saving. A Member noted that the Mayfield School crossing was on a busy road with limited visibility for road users.

Following a question Mr Draper reported that the Mayfield School was involved in the A-Stars road safety scheme and its effectiveness was noted.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. Cabinet considers maintaining funding for category 2 school crossing patrol posts that are currently occupied;**
- 2. Cabinet undertakes immediate discussions with schools on alternative sources of funding for category 2 school crossing patrols;**
- 3. Cabinet undertakes a review of all school crossing patrols on trunk roads.**

152/17 Draft revenue budget and draft capital programme 2016-17 to 2019-20

Members considered the draft revenue budget and draft capital programme 2016-17 to 2019-20.

The Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 3 January 2017. The Committee received a short report from each relevant portfolio holder on the proposals contained within the capital programme. The below is a short summary of feedback by portfolio.

Community, leisure and culture

CCTV upgrade to equipment

Members sought assurances that the quality of the new CCTV equipment was of a high quality suitable to support prosecutions. Encouragement was also provided to seek to develop a partnership with Centro on this issue.

Personnel and business support

Redesign of school kitchens to meet health and safety, food and fire regulations

Following questions the portfolio holder explained that this would see 31 schools benefit in total with investment in new machinery. Small works would be undertaken in 12 schools.

Regeneration

Hatherton Road multi-storey car park – development of demolition plan

Due to the significant costs of this scheme it was suggested that the Council should consider returning the lease on these premises rather than undertake this work on behalf of the property owner.

Walsall Town Centre Public Realm

Following a question Members were informed that this would ensure one uniform surface throughout the town centre. It was suggested that a tiled passageway in the town centre should be improved to prevent slippery conditions in wet weather.

Provision of dropped crossings along footpaths

This investment would provide approximately 20 new crossing points.

Social Care

Willenhall Lane traveller's site redesign and refurbishment of plots

Following questions it was confirmed that this investment would provide two additional plots at the site.

Aids and adaptations, preventative adaptations and supporting independence

Investing in this area would assist older people in living independently for longer.

Mosaic implementation phase 3

The intention of this phase of the project was to assist in streamlining administrative functions.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. the report be noted;**
- 2. further detail be provided to Members on the proposed expenditure on Hatherton Road car park;**
- 3. investigations take place into the excrement at the canal basin by the New Art Gallery.**

153/17 Petition scheme benchmarking

Members considered benchmarking data on the petition schemes of other local authorities.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that the Council had introduced its petition scheme in September 2010. Therefore it was a timely to review its effectiveness. He provided an overview of findings from the benchmarking exercise including triggers for debate and residency requirements for signatories.

Members debated the feedback. A discussion took place on the benefits or otherwise of limiting petitions on local issues to local residents. However, it was noted that some local issues could be of national and international importance. With these thoughts in mind Members were of the view that it would be beneficial to include definitions of local and national issues in the new scheme. The Committee supported the proposal to consult Members on various aspects of the petition scheme with the view of developing a revised scheme to be presented to Annual Council.

Resolved:

That a consultation be carried out with Members in respect of the petition scheme and that following consultation the council considers any proposed amendments to the said scheme.

154/17 Community infrastructure levy and section 106

Members were informed of the obligations under section 106 (s106) of the Planning Act and the overlap between the forthcoming Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations.

The Group Manager (Planning) and Regeneration Manager (Planning Policy) provided an overview of the s106 explaining that it was a method of attracting investment in a particular area that helped to make a planning application

acceptable. S106 money would be used for the benefit of the community affected by the proposed development. Moving forward it was proposed to replace s106 with CIL. CIL was different as it was a levy on development. It would apply to all planning applications and would be spent in line with priorities set out in strategic planning documents. However, the introduction of CIL was not yet confirmed. The Government were due to release a Housing White Paper shortly which could reflect a new approach.

A discussion took place on how s106 money was spent and the limited opportunities Members had to influence how money was spent. Following a question it was explained that it was not possible to allocate money to be used to fund projects through Area Panels.

With regard to CIL a Member questioned how developers would be attracted to the area? It was reported that it was planned for Walsall's fees to be competitively priced to attract development to the right areas. There would be series of tariffs which would vary throughout the borough. It was noted that it may be required to employ a member of staff to manage CIL payments and receipts.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. the committee receive a further report to a future meeting should the Housing White Paper make or propose significant changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy Regime**
- 2. the report be noted.**

155/17 Financial performance – forecast revenue and capital outturn for 2016/17

Members considered the forecast revenue and capital financial position for 2016/17, based on the position to October 2016, for services within the remit of the Committee.

The Services Finance Manager reported that there was a forecast revenue under spend of £430,000 based on a net use of reserves. It was highlighted that £3.1m of budget under spends had been centralised to assist with managing the Council-wide budget overspend. With regard to capital it was expected that there would be a carry forward of £3.406m.

Following questions it was explained that windfall income was unexpected surplus income generated by services. This money was held centrally. Windfall income from the following areas was due to:

- Clean and Green was due to reduced waste disposal costs.
- Leisure, Culture and operations was due to increased visits at Active Living Centres;
- Regulatory services windfall income was from court cost recovery.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

156/17 Areas of focus 2015/16

Resolved:

That the following items be added to the Committees work programme:

- 1. Active Living Centre performance;**
- 2. Petition to Save Rushall Library.**

157/17 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be 21 February 2017.

Termination of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 8.09 pm.

Signed:

Date: