

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on  
Tuesday, 16 April 2019 at 5.20 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Grenville Chamberlain – Chairman  
Councillor Brian Milnes – Vice-Chairman

|              |                    |                      |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Councillors: | Ruth Betson        | Anna Bradnam         |
|              | Dr. Martin Cahn    | Graham Cone          |
|              | Dr. Claire Daunton | Dr. Douglas de Lacey |
|              | Bill Handley       | Peter McDonald       |
|              | Judith Rippeth     |                      |

Councillors Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Bridget Smith and Hazel Smith were in attendance, by invitation.

|           |                  |                             |
|-----------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Officers: | Victoria Wallace | Democratic Services Officer |
|           | Bob Palmer       | Interim Executive Director  |

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gavin Clayton, Sarah Cheung Johnson and Steve Hunt. Councillor Geoff Harvey was present as a substitute for Councillor Hunt.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2019 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Minute 5, Scrutiny ICT Working Group update:

- Members requested that a sentence be inserted to reflect that there had been no answer given by officers regarding whether a service level agreement existed between the authorities.
- Committee members' request for the provision of a shared document repository, would be added to the minutes.

Minute 8, Resettlement of Syrian Refugees:

- Councillor Betson clarified that her reason for abstaining in relation to this item, was due to there being no criteria or weighting to judge where families would be placed.

### **4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received.

## **5. PURCHASE OF INVESTMENT PROPERTY**

The Interim Executive Director presented a briefing in response to a request from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee Chairman, to answer specific questions in relation to the Council's purchase of an investment property at 140 Cambridge Science Park. The opportunity to purchase this property had come up at short notice requiring an urgent decision, therefore there had not been an opportunity for pre-scrutiny of the decision.

In response to questions from committee members, the Interim Executive Director informed the committee of the following:

- Provision had been built in for a void period and capital to be put aside for refurbishment of the building. The expectation was that any void period would be short as the tenant was required to give 12 months notice.
- The current tenant may seek to assign the lease and vacate the property, however the length of the lease would not be shortened. The current tenant would have to be the guarantor of any other occupant during the period of the lease, or permission to assign would not be given.
- The property was leasehold and there were 89 years remaining on the lease.
- The covenant referred to the financial reputation and credit worthiness of the tenant; this was strong for the current tenant.
- There were very limited risks with this investment. The Council's Investment Strategy included a decision matrix and had a requirement for any scheme to score at least 100 on the matrix; this proposal had scored 150, scoring highly on the location and tenancy strength.
- The ground rent payable was in the region of £200 per year.
- A rent review was due in October 2020, which anticipated an increase in the rent.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee indicated its support for the decision and noted the update.

## **6. SCRUTINY ICT WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

A further meeting of the ICT Working Group would be scheduled to fully understand the implications of the answers given to the committee's questions in relation to the ICT shared service, at the last Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting. The committee was informed by the Interim Executive Director that a Shared Services Directors Board meeting had taken place on 12 April. This had looked at the third quarter's performance and governance proposals, which included the potential for joint scrutiny and changing some of the governance mechanisms. These proposals would be discussed at the Chief Executive's meeting which would take place on 15 May 2019. The committee was informed that the directors and City Council members were supportive of the potential for joint scrutiny of shared services.

## **7. VISION AND AMBITION FOR SCRUTINY**

A review of all the recommendations made by the committee over the past 12 months would be carried out.

How the committee handled the volume of its workload was discussed. Committee members did not support the set up of sub-committees between which the workload could be split. Members largely supported the breadth of the committee's agendas and recognised the strength of the diversity of experience and expertise of the committee's membership. Committee members therefore supported retaining the current system for Scrutiny.

The shortening of reports was not supported, with members accepting that agenda papers would be lengthy for this committee. Members would prefer to be presented with the level of detail they had been presented with to date by report authors. Members did however support the inclusion of an Executive Summary at the beginning of reports. Officer presentations teasing out the detail from the papers for members, were also supported.

Members accepted that the increasing number of commercial decisions the Council would have to make, were unlikely to allow time for pre-decision scrutiny to take place, therefore post-decision scrutiny would be important.

The committee was informed of a briefing on the Bourn Airfield Supplementary Planning Document, which would take place on 9 May. Members were encouraged to attend this ahead of the committee's consideration of this item at its May 2019 meeting.

Members indicated a wish for the committee to have access to papers earlier and were informed that this was being built into the meeting and agenda schedule for the next municipal year. The committee was informed that building in more time was difficult however, due to the monthly meeting cycle.

In response to a query regarding the potential to increase the size of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, which was not supported, members were informed that the size of the committee was determined by the Constitution.

There was some support for the idea of having subject matter experts nominated amongst the committee; these should have training and spend time with the relevant officers and service areas.

The committee discussed the possibility of limiting the number of questions members could ask during a meeting, however this was not supported by the majority of the committee.

The Chairman suggested that more task and finish groups were needed.

## **8. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee reviewed its work programme.

The Chairman proposed that Councillor Gavin Clayton, who was not present at the meeting, led a task and finish group to look at gypsy and traveller issues. The Chairman would discuss this with Councillor Clayton.

The Chairman suggested that a task and finish group be set up to look at the performance of the Planning service. He proposed this be discussed by the committee at its next meeting, with a view to taking a detailed look at the Planning service as had been done with the shared ICT service.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Planning explained what the Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction SPD was, and informed the committee this would be considered by the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee on 7 May 2019. Committee members were encouraged to attend this meeting in preparation for this SPD being considered by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at its June 2019 meeting.

The scheduled Rural Crime Task and Finish Group meeting had been cancelled as the

relevant lead officer was on sick leave.

**9. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE**

There were no updates from Scrutiny monitors.

**10. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The committee noted the dates of future meetings. Councillor de Lacey informed the committee of a number of clashes of these dates with parish council meetings, and proposed having day time committee meetings in order to avoid this. Daytime committee meetings were not supported by the majority of the committee and meetings would therefore continue to take place in the evening.

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**The Meeting ended at 6.25 p.m.**

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