

Meeting	Corporate and Scrutiny Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	13 July 2015
Present	Councillors Levene (Chair), Fenton, Flinders, Galvin (Vice-Chair), Gates, Kramm, Lisle, Reid and Williams
In attendance	Councillors Aspden, Richardson and Steward

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## **Part A - Matters Dealt With Under Delegated Powers**

### **9. Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the register of interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interest which they might have in respect of the business on the agenda. No additional interests were declared.

### **10. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on 15 June 2015, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **11. Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been three registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme and that one Member of Council had also requested to speak, but subsequently withdrawn, all in relation to Agenda item 7 – Yearsley Pool Update Report on the Work of the former Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee.

Fiona Evans, spoke on behalf of the Yearsley Pool Action Group, and thanked the Scrutiny Officer for his update report on the work of the former Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee. She confirmed that the Action Group were committed to reducing the Yearsley Pool subsidy and progressing the partnership approach with Nestle. However the Group questioned the use of Council resources to duplicate work and highlighted their proposals to reduce the subsidy via an alternative operational

management system and they asked the Committee not to reappoint a scrutiny committee for this purpose.

Dr Mike Jones referred to the lack of financial information in relation to the pool which made it difficult for comparisons to be made without the necessary figures. He expressed his support for the new administrations commitment to retain the pool but concern at the capital borrowing for the Community Stadium which would compete for the same customer base.

Brian Watson also confirmed the excellent work carried out by the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee which had involved both volunteers and pool users. He highlighted the importance of the sites use by Nestle and the need for the Council's involvement to find a solution for the pools long term future.

**12. Executive Leader, Finance And Performance And Deputy Leader & Executive Member For Economic Development & Community Engagement**

Councillor Steward, as Executive Leader, Finance and Performance and Councillor Aspden, as Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economic Development and Community Engagement, attended the meeting to report on their priorities and challenges for 2015/16. They drew attention to the draft Council Plan for 2015-19, which set out their 12 point list of priorities, which included the Council's statutory responsibilities, all built around the 3 key priorities of A Prosperous City for All, A Focus on Frontline Services and A Council That Listens to Residents.

Members raised a number of points to which the Leader and Deputy Leader provided the following information:

- 'key frontline services' would be protected however it was acknowledged that, whilst statutory services would take precedence, each Ward would have different priorities
- The Budget amendment proposals, due for consideration by Council on 16 July were highlighted, in particular the savings proposed to the media and communications team and reductions in the Trade Union budget
- Work on proposals for the use of the Guildhall as a Media Arts Centre had been put on hold pending the preparation of a robust business case and examination of other commercially viable uses for the complex in conjunction with partners

- If Members wished to scrutinise the issues around the Guildhall proposals it was suggested that this could be carried out either via a scrutiny committee or an Executive working/steering group
- Congestion and air pollution were priorities however this would not be pursued via a Congestion Commission
- Changes proposed to Ward funding, details of which were due to be reported to the Executive in July, which would result in additional funding for ward grants
- With Government proposals for another boundary review due in 2016, timescales would be examined with Officers to ensure that hard to reach groups were targeted for inclusion on the register of electors
- Raising additional income to fund services would be considered with the reduction in central government grants

The Chair thanked the Leader and Deputy Leader for their attendance and responses to Members questions.

### **13. Consultation on Decision Making Arrangements**

Consideration was given to the report of the Monitoring Office which set out proposed options for the policy and scrutiny committees to have the opportunity to debate and make recommendations on matters requiring an executive decision, prior to a final decision being taken. It was noted that the report would also form the basis of consultation with the Audit and Governance Committee, political groups and independent members.

Cllr Aspden and Officers outlined the proposals for pre decision scrutiny to allow for robust dialogue and greater transparency prior to decisions being taken. They gave details of the timescales and the issues involved, how urgent decisions could be taken and the proposal to end Officer in consultation decisions to improve openness and transparency. Members views were sought on the new proposals to report back to the Executive at the end of August.

Members generally expressed their support for the new arrangements and made a number of comments including:

- Discipline would be required to make the new system work, with a time commitment from Members with more frequent meetings

- ~~General~~ Some support for CSMC to be made up largely of Chairs of scrutiny committees
- Support for revision of scrutiny committee remits
- Some opposition to Chairs/Vice Chair operating as a filter for member requests
- Allowing at least 2 weeks notice to “call-in” a decision was considered too long
- The costs of moving to a monthly cycle of meetings were requested as without sufficient resources, this would not be possible
- No support for referral of urgent decisions to Staffing Matters & Urgency which was not a scrutiny committee
- Need to build in capacity for Officer engagement
- Noted that the Budget amendment to Council included additional funds for governance and democracy support
- Support for Officers reviewing the use of the urgency process periodically
- Any new system needed to be simple, efficient and understandable and have the support of all members
- Support for replicating post decision call-in of decisions by 3 members
- Support for CSMC oversight of Executive reports
- Highlighted that scrutiny was a member responsibility and, in order to work, it would require member engagement

The Chair thanked all Members and Officers for their contributions which would be taken account, prior to a decision being taken at the Executive meeting in August.

*[As amended at CSMP&S Committee meeting, 14 September 2015]*

#### **14. Yearsley Pool Update Report on the Work of the Former Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee**

Consideration was given to a report which detailed the work carried out by the former Yearsley Pool Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee, which had been requested at the Committee’s last meeting in June.

Whilst it had been agreed, at the meeting, that the review should be abandoned Members had requested an update report on the work of the Ad-Hoc Committee to provide a clear record of their findings to date and to allow assessment of any benefits of continuing the review.

The Scrutiny Officer presented the update report, highlighting the extensive consultation undertaken and the element of duplication of work, with a review of the future of Yearsley Pool also being undertaken, in connection with the Community Stadium and Leisure Complex, due to report six months prior to the opening of the Complex. Members were also asked to note the Council amendment to the Revenue Budget, in February 2015, which had earmarked unallocated future New Homes Bonus up to £300,000 per year for up to five years, from 2016/17 onwards, to maintain Yearsley Pool. Members had however taken the view that any measures taken to reduce the subsidy to Yearsley Pool could only be beneficial.

Some Members felt that, in the spirit of earlier involvement in decision making and, in light of the information provided, that a scrutiny review was still relevant. Either reconstituting the Ad Hoc Committee or by reference to the Learning & Culture Scrutiny Policy & Committee for further examination.

However, following further discussion it was

Resolved: That, having considered the information provided, the scrutiny review of funding arrangements for Yearsley Pool from 2016, be discontinued.

Reason: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and work plans.

#### **15. Scrutiny Topic Assessment - The Expansion of Local Democracy Using Digital Means**

Consideration was given to a scrutiny topic proposed by James Alexander on the expansion of local democracy using digital means and Members were asked to decide if they wished to proceed to scrutiny review.

Background information on e-government transformation was also provided, together with additional information, circulated at the meeting, on work being undertaken by the Local Government Organisation and the Department for Communities and Local Government on the Government's digital ambitions to local public services.

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report and confirmed that James Alexander had indicated that he would be willing to

respond to any questions, or feed into any review undertaken as a witness.

The Chair confirmed his support for review of this topic, particularly with the move towards digital by default and the affect this could have on residents who were unable to access services.

Members also expressed their support for this review, to gain feedback from residents on their experiences and in view of the authority having to find budget reductions.

Following further discussion it was

- Resolved:
- (i) That the Committee agree to proceed with a review of the expansion of local democracy using digital means, to be undertaken by a Task Group comprising of Councillors Fenton, Flinders, Gates, Kramm and Lisle, over a three month period.
  - (ii) That a suggested remit for the review, based on the topic assessment submission, be circulated to Committee members for their agreement.

Reason: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and work plans.

## **16. New Arrangements for Petitions**

Consideration was given to a list of eight current petitions, received by the Council, details of which were set out at Annex A of the report. It was noted that agreement to review the list of petitions in a reduced format had been made at the last meeting of the Committee in order to make the information more relevant and manageable.

Members considered the information provided in relation to the status of each petition and it was

- Resolved: (i) That petitions 20, 22, 25, 26 and 28 be received and noted, pending their consideration by the Executive/Executive Member/Council or an Officer.
- (ii) That the update provided in relation to petitions 23 and 24 be received and noted.
- (iii) That petition 27 relating to the Multi Academy Trust be referred to the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Young People to provide a formal response to the lead petitioner.

Reason: To ensure the Committee carries out its new requirements in relation to petitions.

#### **17. Work Plan 2015/16**

Consideration was given to the Committee's work plan for the 2015/16 municipal year.

Officers confirmed that, further to earlier discussions, an overview report be provided at the Committee's next meeting in relation to the Guildhall to inform discussions around possible future scrutiny involvement.

Resolved: That the Committee's work plan for 2015/16 be received and noted, subject to the following addition:

14 September 2015

Guildhall, update on current position

Reason: To inform Members of the Committee's work during the current year municipal year

### **Part B - Matters Referred To Council**

#### **18. Scrutiny Annual Report**

Consideration was given to the draft Annual Scrutiny Report which summarised the work of the five Overview and Scrutiny Committees for the municipal year June 2014-May 2015.

Members were asked to agree the report prior to its presentation to Council on 16 July 2015.

Recommended: That Council approve the Annual Scrutiny Report, covering the period between June 2014 and May 2015.

Reason: To enable its presentation to Full Council in July 2015, in line with Constitutional requirements.

Councillor D Levene, Chair  
[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.25 pm].