

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE Thursday, 27 September 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Matthew Tomlinson (Chair), Colin Coulton (Vice-Chair), Susan Jones, Elizabeth Mawson, Keith Martin, Barbara Nathan, Michael Titherington, Linda Woollard, David Howarth, Graham Walton and Mike Nathan

CABINET MEMBERS: Councillors Mary Green, Caroline Moon, Warren Bennett, Karen Walton, Susan Snape, Cliff Hughes

OFFICERS: Darren Cranshaw, Louise Hawkins, Gary Hall, Jennifer Mullin, Jonathan Noad, Tracy Boustead, Dave Whelan, Mark Hodges, Phil Hartigan

OTHER MEMBERS: Councillors Alan Ogilvie, Jane Bell, Phil Smith, Colin Clark, Michael Green, Bill Evans, Paul Foster, Mike Nelson, Derek Forrest

PUBLIC: 1

17 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair, Councillor Matthew Tomlinson welcomed everyone in attendance to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jim Marsh, Mike Nathan and Barrie Yates.

18 Declarations of Interest

There was no declarations of any interests.

19 Cabinet Agenda Item 5 - Communicating with Residents and Businesses

The Leader of the Labour Group (Councillor Paul Foster) was invited by the Chair to explain the reasons for making the call-in request on behalf of those who had signed the request.

Councillor Paul Foster requested that the Committee refer the decision back to Cabinet as a priority.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Mary Green and Director of Neighbourhoods and Development, Jennifer Mullin were in attendance to answer questions of the Committee.

Although Cabinet approval for the production of the FORWARD was not sought previously it was considered appropriate to do so on this occasion. There had been

a lengthy gap in its production and the Council wanted to remain open and transparent about the process.

The FORWARD publication would cost £5190 to produce through a company called Newsquest. The company had been used previously and they could also deliver the publication at a cost of 0.14 pence a copy (£500 in rural areas). However, if Royal Mail were used, delivery would reduce to 13p per copy.

The Leader explained that the full costings of producing the FORWARD publication had not been included in the report as they had not been finalised at that time.

It was further explained that the FORWARD cross party editorial group was convened after the Cabinet decision was made. This raised concerns amongst members, as this was different to the previous arrangements.

In response to queries raised in relation to publication dates around Purdah and the Publicity Code, the Monitoring Officer advised that a more ideal time for publication of the proposed third edition would be the end of February or beginning of March 2019.

In response to Members concerns about the publication of three FORWARD editions in the relatively short period of time from now until the May elections, the Leader clarified that there had never been a decision taken to stop its production, and had been put on hold whilst under review. Recent consultation with residents on the Community Strategy had prompted the Council to rethink its strategy following feedback received by various groups that had asked for hard copies of FORWARD (this had included many younger residents). The Committee considered that a more formal public consultation process may have been more appropriate to better evidence the reintroduction of the publication.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

1. That Scrutiny Committee would support the call-in request for the reconsideration of the decision and asked for a more detailed report to be considered at a meeting of Cabinet.
2. That the role of the FORWARD Editorial Group be formalised in terms of role, membership and process.
3. That future Cabinet reports include more detailed financial information and evidence to make decisions more robust and transparent and demonstrate cost effectiveness.
4. That Scrutiny Committee expresses concern at issuing FORWARD in March due to the Election (Purdah) and the issuing of three publications in six months.

20 Cabinet Agenda Item 9 - Council Tax Support Scheme

The Leader of the Labour Group (Councillor Paul Foster) was invited by the Chair to explain the reasons for making the call-in request on behalf of those who signed the request.

Councillor Paul Foster requested that the Committee refer the decision back to Council.

The Cabinet Member (Finance) Councillor Susan Snape, Specialist Consultant – Leadership and Organisational Development, Tracy Boustead and Section 151 Officer, Gary Hall attended the meeting to explain the decision and process followed.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Section 151 Officer explained that a decision made at Full Council could not be overturned by Cabinet.

Concerns were raised over the length of time that the process was taking, the decision had been made back in February 2018 and the consultation was only just starting. Councillor Snape explained that this delay had been due to a change in Cabinet responsibilities, however, meetings had subsequently taken place in June and July 2018 and that consultation would be starting soon.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That Scrutiny Committee would support the call-in request for the decision to be reconsidered by full Council. The Committee also:

1. Asked for any future reports be more detailed and provide all the relevant information to ensure that Members are clear on the decisions they are making at meetings.
2. Expressed concern that the consultation had been delayed.

21 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business as it involved the discussion of information defined as exempt from publication under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, 'Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) ' and in which the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing it.

22 Cabinet Agenda Item 14 - Campus Programme (Contract Award)

The Leader of the Labour Group (Councillor Paul Foster) was invited by the Chairman to explain the reasons for making the call-in request on behalf of those who signed the request.

Councillor Paul Foster requested that the decision be referred back to Cabinet.

The Cabinet member (Public Health, Leisure and Wellbeing), Councillor Karen Walton and Cabinet Member (Assets and Transformation) Councillor Warren Bennett attended the meeting along with the Director of Neighbourhoods and Development, Jennifer Mullin to explain the Cabinet decision.

Councillor Bennett circulated a background information document titled 'Leyland Health and Wellbeing Campus – Notes for Scrutiny Committee'

The Scrutiny Committee was adjourned to allow the Scrutiny Committee to leave the room to consider and discuss this new information.

After the adjournment, the Chair commented that Members were concerned over the detail contained with the report and clarity of information presented, particularly in light of the additional information brought to the meeting by the Cabinet Member for Assets and Transformation.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

1. That Scrutiny Committee would support the call-in request for reconsideration of the decision and asked for a more detailed report to be taken to the next meeting of Cabinet.
2. That the quality of decision making reports be improved in terms of detail, advice provided and content.

Chair

Date