

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Panel held on Monday, 16 January 2023 at 11.00 am in the Council Chamber, Portsmouth Guildhall

Present

Councillor Matthew Atkins (in the Chair)

Councillors Graham Heaney
Dave Ashmore
Simon Boshier
Cal Corkery
Mark Jeffery
Abdul Kadir
Leo Madden
Gemma New

Themed Scrutiny Panel Chairs not on the panel:

Councillors George Fielding
Ryan Brent

Cabinet Members providing updates:

Councillors Darren Sanders
Lynne Stagg

1. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Scott Payter-Harris. Councillor Simon Boshier was in attendance as Standing Deputy.

2. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2022 and the special meeting held on 27 September 2022 (AI 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2022 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

The minutes of the special meeting held on 27 September 2022 were confirmed and signed as accurate record subject to the following amendment:

Page four paragraph five, the proposal to take no further action was proposed by Councillor Judith Smyth.

4. Themed Scrutiny Panel Updates & Scrutiny Work Programme (AI 4)

The panel considered the report of the Senior Local Democracy Officer and received updates from each of the themed scrutiny panel Chairs.

Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel

The Chair, Cllr Ryan Brent, explained that the panel had met informally to discuss the current topic of 'Review into support for children with disabilities' which had commenced prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The panel had also discussed ideas for future topics. Members of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel were satisfied that significant work had been undertaken by the council in supporting children with disabilities and agreed that continuing with the review would not be the best use of the panel's resources. Cllr Brent therefore requested that the topic be abandoned.

Having discussed ideas for topics with the panel, Cllr Brent proposed a new topic for the current municipal year, which was 'School attendance in transitional years, with a particular focus on years 6-7'. He also proposed that 'Out of city placements' be added as a topic for the 2023/24 municipal year.

In response to a question about the lack of formal panel meetings since 2020, Cllr Brent explained that the pandemic had caused disruption to the formal scrutiny process. He had however been in regular dialogue with the Cabinet Member and a lot of work had been undertaken informally.

Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel

The Chair, Cllr George Fielding, explained that the panel had met informally to decide whether to continue with the current review "Engagement with Culture and Leisure - widening social participation in Portsmouth". Panel members were keen to continue with this topic and a meeting had been held on 12 January 2023 with BH Live, Portsmouth University (Ravelin Centre), the Andrew Simpson Sailing Club and PCC officers to gather evidence.

The review would continue with fortnightly meetings up to the pre-election period to conclude the topic in the current municipal year.

After discussing ideas for future topics with the panel he proposed that the panel next review the protection and storage of heritage assets within the city. The idea for this topic followed a site visit where panel members had been concerned about the suitability of the storage conditions of some of the council's heritage assets.

Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel

The Chair, Cllr Gemma New, reminded the Scrutiny Management Panel that two reviews had been completed by the panel in 2022, the review into the accessibility of the transport network and the review into biodiversity enhancement in urban Portsmouth.

The panel had met informally to discuss ideas for future topics, and she proposed that the panel's next review be into the reduction of pesticide use on council owned land.

Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Corkery spoke as the former Chair of the panel and detailed the work of the panel on the topic of 'Procedures and Performance of Portsmouth City Council and Housing Associations in Relation to Response Repairs and Maintenance', the recommendations of which had been approved by Cabinet on 21 June 2022.

Some preliminary work had commenced on the proposed new topic of 'Review into the provision of breaks/respite for informal carers, particularly those who care for someone with dementia' and a scoping document had been drafted for the Scrutiny Management Panel's consideration.

The Scrutiny Management Panel thanked the themed scrutiny panel chairs for their updates and agreed that the topics suggested be added to the scrutiny work programme.

The panel also considered and approved the adoption of the updated work programme template, scoping document template and topic filtering flowchart.

RESOLVED that

- (i) The panel NOTED the updates received from the themed scrutiny panel chairs;
- (ii) the updated work programme template, scoping document template and topic filtering flow chart be ADOPTED; and
- (iii) the council's scrutiny work programme for the themed scrutiny panels be populated and updated as follows:

Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel

- Review into the reduction of pesticide use on council owned land.

Economic Development, Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel

- Review into the protection and storage of heritage assets within the city.

Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel

- Review into the provision of breaks/respite for informal carers, particularly those who care for someone with dementia.

Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel

- The current topic of 'Review into support for children with disabilities be abandoned.
- Review into school attendance in transitional years, with a particular focus on years 6-7.
- Review into out of area school placements.

5. Updates on scrutiny recommendations upheld by Cabinet in 2022 (AI 5)

The panel received updates from the relevant Cabinet Members and officers in respect of the scrutiny topics below, whose recommendations had all been upheld by Cabinet during 2022.

- Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel review into Procedures and Performance of Portsmouth City Council and Housing Associations in Relation to Response Repairs and Maintenance (recommendations agreed by [Cabinet on 21 June 2022](#)).

Cllr Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness, thanked the panel for its diligence in respect of the review and provided updates against the seven recommendations approved by Cabinet.

The panel discussed the importance of supplying tenants' with instructions on how appliances worked and in particular new technologies such as those found in homes with a Passive House design. In respect of Passive House design principles, the panel was aware that other house designs met high environmental standards and encouraged that they also be explored.

Cllr Sanders explained that he was keen for the councils housing stock to be as environmentally sound as possible with rents kept as low as possible. Passive House design was being explored on a small scale to begin with and he confirmed that those moving into these homes would receive information on how to make best use of the technology.

- Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel review into the accessibility of the transport network (recommendations agreed by [Cabinet on 21 June 2022](#))

Cllr Lynne Stagg, Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation, thanked the panel for inviting her to attend.

There had been 40 recommendations approved by Cabinet and the updates to each of these had been provided in the supplementary agenda. Some of the actions requested had already been commenced prior to the review, some were ongoing, and a number were dependent on funding.

In response to questions, she confirmed that the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding would be used for everything around improving bus services. This included improved ticketing, route information and timetabling and disabled access.

Currently tickets purchased for Stagecoach buses were not able to be used on First buses and vice versa. Introducing a range of tickets that could be used on both companies buses was an aim, along with bus, ferry and train journeys being integrated via the 'Breeze' app which would allow one ticket for a journey to be used across different modes of public transport. Funding had recently been confirmed for this and the project had commenced. The Breeze app was progressing well and had generated a lot of interest nationally. In response to a concern about dead ends in new developments preventing through bus routes it was confirmed that this would be addressed in the strategy.

In respect of discounted public transport, discounts would be for certain groups of people, such as those up to the age of 19 rather than 16 and job seekers.

The panel discussed member involvement in the allocation of developer contributions via S.106 agreements for highway safety improvements. These agreements were drafted without ward councillor consultation, and it was felt that the local knowledge of ward councillors would better inform where such contributions should be spent.

Officers believed that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding would be appropriate for such highway safety contributions and enable ward member engagement but agreed to investigate the matter.

- Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel review review into biodiversity enhancement in urban Portsmouth (recommendations agreed by [Cabinet on 26 July 2022](#))

James Hill, Director of Housing Neighbourhoods and Building Services, spoke to the item and highlighted that the review cut across a number of directorates. A number of the 36 recommendations fitted in with business-as-usual work for the Council and a detailed list of updates against all actions had been drafted. He was happy to detail these or to circulate the document to the panel. The panel confirmed that it would be content for written responses to be circulated and these are attached as an appendix to these minutes.

In respect of cross directorate working, it was confirmed that the Climate Strategy was the umbrella document which would provide the means to coordinate various strands of work across the council and partner organisations including greening, bio diversity, carbon reduction etc which all contributed to achieving the City's climate change targets. All relevant directorates and partners were represented on a refreshed Climate Programme Board which would oversee the actions. A Green and Healthy City Co-ordinator was also in post and work was underway to secure long term funding for this post.

With regard to tree planting, wildlife corridors and the greening plan were being looked at as part of the wider work around biodiversity and the links between sites.

The panel understood that there was a feeling amongst some residents that the number of trees in parts of the city had declined. In reply it was confirmed that there was a tree audit and if trees were lost on council owned land they were replaced like for like to maintain the number of trees in the city. The council's contractor, Colas, identified suitable locations and species type where trees couldn't be planted in the same area to ensure that they would be suitable. The overall aim was to increase biodiversity.

In respect of planting and maintaining communal green spaces, the City Councils Housing team will be launching in Spring revised guidance for tenants and a forum with Housing Associations would be used to share good practice.

The panel requested that an update on the Economic Development, Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel review into Portsmouth International Port be given at a future meeting. The recommendations of this review had been agreed by Cabinet on 9 September 2019.

Cllr Heaney suggested the SMP may wish to consider a scrutiny topic to review the impact of systems thinking as it was understood that this had been implemented by Housing. As the relevant Director, James Hill explained that the systems development service worked across the council and he was happy to discuss and answer any questions that panel members had. The panel agreed for Cllr Heaney to discuss the potential topic with James Hill.

The meeting concluded at 1.06 pm.

Councillor Matthew Atkins
Chair