

MINUTES of the meeting of General Overview & Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Wednesday 30 September 2015 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor WLS Bowen (Chairman)
Councillor MJK Cooper (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: JM Bartlett, Mrs A Fisher, Mr RJ Fuller, CA Gandy, J Hardwick, DG Harlow, EPJ Harvey, JF Johnson, AJW Powers, Mr P Sell, NE Shaw, A Warmington and SD Williams

Education co-optees: Mr P Burbidge, Mrs A Fisher, Mr RJ Fuller and Mr P Sell

In attendance: Councillors AW Johnson (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member, Corporate Strategy & Finance), JG Lester (Cabinet Member, Young People & Children's Wellbeing), PM Morgan (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member, Health & Wellbeing) and PD Price (Cabinet Member, Infrastructure)

Officers: C Baird (Assistant director education and commissioning), B Baugh (Democratic services officer), D Birch (Benefits operational manager), J Davidson (Director of children's wellbeing), A Hough (Head of educational development), G Hughes (Director for economy, communities and corporate), P Robinson (Director of resources), J Rushgrove (Head of corporate finance), and C Ward (Deputy solicitor to the council people and regulatory)

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

23. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

No substitutions were made.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 7 (minute 24) The development of a schools capital investment strategy

Councillor MJK Cooper, Non-Pecuniary, Declared an interest in relation to St Mary's CE Primary School, Dilywn.

Councillor WLS Bowen, Non-Pecuniary, Declared an interest during the item due to being a governor of Kingsland CE Primary School.

25. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2015 be approved as a correct record.

26. SUGGESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

It was reported that a suggestion had been received from Mr. Peter McKay; related correspondence was provided within a supplement to the agenda.

The Chairman thanked Mr. McKay for his continued interest and enlightening comments.

It was noted that, in response to a suggestion made by Mr. McKay at the last meeting, a briefing note had been circulated to committee members about the Public Rights of Way service.

The Chairman said that he was aware of the importance of the issues but also the limited time and resources available to the committee. Therefore, the Chairman asked officers to provide a detailed written response to the points raised at the earliest opportunity and for this information to be made available online in a supplement to the agenda for this meeting.

27. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions had been received in advance of the meeting in relation to the following items.

28. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SCHOOLS CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Chairman reminded the committee that a presentation on the council's approach to the strategy had been received at the [10 March 2015](#) meeting and invited officers to update the committee.

The Assistant director commissioning and education introduced the item with the following comments:

- i. The strategy was being prepared in the context of the council's priorities: to keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life; enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives; and invest in projects to improve roads, create jobs and build more homes.
- ii. The strategy was an important development for Herefordshire and the schools capital estate.
- iii. The council was working with a range of school and community leaders with a bottom-up approach.
- iv. The draft principles, identified in Appendix 1 to the report (page 21 of the agenda), were essential to the development of the strategy.
- v. The committee was invited to comment on the principles, the presentation, and the approach being taken.
- vi. The strategy would be put forward to Cabinet in early November 2015.

The Head of educational development gave a presentation on the background, the principles and applying the principles. The key points made under each slide are summarised below:

Where we are in the process...

- a. The work was in phase 4, the phases were: phase 1 - project set up; phase 2 - data collection; phase 3 - verification and analysis; phase 4 - consultation and

development of strategy; phase 5 - agreement of high level outcomes of the strategy; phase 6 - detailed development of a strategy and agreement; and Council approval and implementation.

- b. Officers had been consulting with various groups, including governors, local communities, and diocesan boards. Discussions with school clusters had been productive, with further sessions to be held during term time.
- c. With the emergence of academies and free schools and different governance arrangements, the role of the council was changing and thought needed to be given to the types of environment that the authority wanted to see for children.
- d. There was a spectrum in terms of the quality of buildings but this was not the only factor, particularly as there were some outstanding schools in less than outstanding buildings. Consideration needed to be given to how such schools could be supported and how education and schooling could be presented in the best light, particularly to ensure that Herefordshire was a place where businesses wanted to invest and people wanted to live and work.

Principles

- e. In addition to being detailed in the appendix, the draft principles were summarised as:
 - 1) Schools serving the community
 - right amount of places in the right place
 - meet parental preference
 - 2) High quality learning environments
 - good condition - maintenance up to date and not disproportionate to value
 - suitable buildings and grounds
 - supportive of curriculum delivery
 - not in temporary classrooms
 - energy efficient
 - accessible to all
 - 3) Expansion of high quality popular schools
 - 4) Consolidation and all through school opportunities
 - 5) Plans – particularly for schools with less than 105 on roll
 - 6) Finance from different sources
 - 7) Transport
- f. In view of the rural nature of the county and the relatively large number of small schools, it was emphasised that schools were not under threat but it was implicit that suitable curriculum delivery and financial viability had to be maintained. Education provision had to be planned over the longer term and finance was a significant issue.
- g. The direction of government strategy was on creating new places, potentially putting Herefordshire at a disadvantage, and the strategy needed to ensure that investment was obtained and other sources of funding identified.

Update on Colwall CE Primary School

- h. It was reported that the circumstances with Colwall typified the need for a strategy, such as: an historic increase in the number of classrooms but not in the hall and other facilities; issues with damp and maintenance; and the use of temporary buildings.

Existing school information

- i. Examples were provided of existing school information that had been collected, under the headings: site; building; maintenance work; occupancy and demand; inspection/outcome; energy consumption; and disability access.
- j. It was noted that some of the planned admission numbers of some schools were below capacity and an understanding was needed of what that meant and what opportunities it could provide.
- k. It was reported that maintenance work was one of the most contested areas. It was also reported that, given that academies could bid for central capital funding, it was difficult to obtain a consistent picture about all the properties across the county.
- l. In terms of occupancy and demand, many parents did not send their child to the nearest school. Maps were produced to show where pupils came from and there had been engagement to understand parental preference and to reflect on the implications of such choices over time.

Options and ideas to achieve principles

- m. Examples were also provided of options and ideas to achieve principles, under the headings: site; building; maintenance and efficiency; occupancy; and leadership.
- n. Where sites were over compliant, consideration could be giving to selling part for suitable residential development, thereby releasing funding for capital investment in buildings. It was recognised that this would not work universally but could form the basis of a discussion.
- o. Attention was drawn to the strategy consultation on the council's website:

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools/schools-capital-investment-strategy-consultation

The Chairman, referring to difficulties experienced by the authority historically, commented on the need for broad consultation about potential changes. The committee's education co-optees were invited to comment on the report.

Mr. Burbidge commented on a number of matters, including:

- Noting that around half of the nearest children went to the local catchment school, it was questioned what the analysis had revealed. The Head of educational development said that further engagement was being undertaken and some of the issues included: staff bringing their own children to school; proximity to workplaces; and nearby relatives to look after children before and after school. In response to a comment, the Head of educational development noted that school performance was a factor but parents' reasons could be many and varied, other issues might include: standards; the charisma of the head teacher; and approach to care.

- Reference was made to reductions in pupil numbers. The Head of educational development noted that understanding population change would be an important factor in how the strategy was put together.
- Home to school transport had been much talked about over the past year and it was questioned whether the costs of transition and the availability of transport would be factored into the strategy. The Head of educational development confirmed that there would be a mechanism to identify how miles increased or decreased by undertaking particular actions.

Mrs. Fisher commented on the need for clarity and transparency in terms of the principles going forward, particularly to manage expectations and to mitigate the potential for misunderstandings. The Assistant director commissioning and education confirmed that information was available on the council's website and said that it would be helpful if councillors also directed constituents to the consultation. The Chairman suggested that information be circulated to parish councils. Mr. Fuller endorsed Mrs. Fisher's comments.

Mr. Sell made a number of points, including:

1. The Diocese of Hereford had written to the council to express its support and offer any help that it could with the surveys being undertaken. Parallels were drawn to the Diocese's own review of churches and attendance.
2. A bottom-up approach was essential. In view of the increasing autonomy of schools, it was unlikely that a council 'masterplan' would be accepted.
3. Having attended some of the consultation exercises, it was noted that feedback had been broadly encouraging.
4. The emphasis on the best quality learning environments was welcomed.
5. Referring to the principle 'High quality popular schools will be supported to expand...', there was some concern about what the judgements would be based on; reference was made to the performance of Kingsland CE Primary School and its provision for children with special needs.
6. It was suggested that, to support successful schools to grow and be maintained, a three pronged approach was needed to consider buildings, funding, and models of leadership. It was also suggested that there was a need to review funding formula.
7. In terms of models of leadership, parallels were drawn to changes in parish support arrangements.
8. It was commented that many schools had less than 105 pupils on roll and there was a need to understand the geographic suitability of alternatives; for example, the next school might be a number of miles away, causing attendance difficulties during inclement weather.
9. In response to a question about the funding available to the Diocese, Mr. Sell explained that the Diocese did not have any control or call on capital released by the disposal of land by the Church Commissioners. He commented on the nineteenth century roots of church schools and advised that, when schools closed, reversion orders often required property to return to the heirs and successors of the family that originally provided for the school. Occasionally the Diocesan Board was designated and capital returns could be used for improvement works and education provision elsewhere.

The Chairman invited comments from councillors, the principal points and officer responses are summarised below:

- A committee member said that, although there was generally little to disagree with, there could be differences of opinion between principles 3 and 4 and consideration would need to be given about how the potential for conflict would be resolved. The Head of educational development recognised the need to look at each individual case and the weight given to particular principles.
- In response to questions, the committee was advised that the number of spare places was about 13% of the pupil population of approximately 23,000 and the county was a net importer of pupils; a written response would be provided.
- A committee member questioned the implications of the Core Strategy and anticipated housing numbers upon school provision going forward. The Head of educational development said that a real issue was when development may come on-stream, as this uncertainty made it difficult to make predictions with high degrees of accuracy; the department examined all planning applications but some were subsequently withdrawn or not progressed. It was noted that care had to be taken regarding expectations about the need for school places arising from new housing; it often depended on the types of housing built.
- The Head of educational development emphasised that it was not being suggested that schools under a certain admission level would be under threat of closure but it was important to avoid any spiral of decline which could further reduce numbers and disrupt the education of pupils. He said that there was a need for realism about future housing developments and to think through the implications over extended periods of time.
- The Assistant director commissioning and education commented on related issues, including: that the number of surplus places varied considerably across the county; Herefordshire achieved a high percentage in terms of parental first preference; the potential for expansion would not just apply to smaller schools; and the strategy needed to look at the whole of the county and consider whether schools were in the right place for parental demand.

In view of the comments made, Mr. Sell suggested that the principles should reflect the need to be responsive to anticipated growth in communities. The Director of children's wellbeing said that, given the ageing population, the potential for reductions in communities should also be taken into account.

A committee member said that the authority needed to be mindful of the sustainability criteria for the growth of rural communities, as identified in the draft Core Strategy policies RA1 (Rural housing strategy) and RA2 (Herefordshire's villages); he considered that there was critical connectivity between the two policy areas in terms of the growth and viability of rural housing and the presence of village schools. The committee member also commented on the need for the principles to be honest, transparent and realistic. In response to questions, the Head of educational development advised that:

- It was considered realistic to 'aim for 95% of parents to get their first preference school' (principle 3) and, whilst the concerns of head-teachers were understood, challenging parental preference was not necessarily constructive.
- It was clarified that principle 11 e., 'A local community council tax charge if they want support the continuation of a local school', intended to reflect the potential for a local charge to retain a school if this was wanted by the local community but it was acknowledged that further consultation would be needed as schools came forward and ideas were developed. A committee member considered it important

to consider this proposal in the context of the direction of broader council tax policy regarding participatory budgeting at a local level. The Director of finance commented that some parishes had successfully taken on some services previously delivered by the council and that work to inform the Schools capital investment strategy would provide an understanding of the commitments for schools and the council over the next five to ten years.

A committee member commented on:

- how the desire to meet parental preference could impact on individual schools;
- the danger that variations in demand could mean that the strategy became more reactive than proactive; and
- referring to principles 8 and 9, it was considered that more data was needed about school journeys, not only in terms of environmental responsibility but also in terms of the impacts where schools became oversubscribed.

The Head of educational development outlined the admission process and the information being collated about journeys. The Chairman commented on the need for up-to-date school travel plans and how longer journey times could have an impact on pupils.

Another committee member commented on:

1. the need for an integrated view, with the development of the Local transport plan supported by a county level school transport plan, particularly as travel associated with schools could impact on bus routes, road loading and other strategic objectives;
2. referring to points made at previous meetings, consideration should be given to schools' community links and the potential for schools to provide wider benefits in terms of libraries, access to activity and exercise space, and to look more creatively in terms of new ways to deliver services;
3. planned growth and contraction had to be tied into the principles;
4. assurance should be given that the authority would provide backing and support for strong petitions for central funding by academies to improve infrastructure;
5. the permeability of county boundaries and the need for dialogue with adjoining authorities to ensure that provision was not considered in isolation;
6. the circumstances of schools in more rural areas would continue to be dynamic and the principles would provide a framework for discussions and decisions;
7. the need for clarity about how the authority would assure itself that 'There would be an appropriate number of faith places' (principle 3), as an important component of school provision in terms of parental choice.

The Cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing made a number of comments, including:

- i. it was key that the process was driven by a set of principles, with the focus on the best outcomes for school children;
- ii. there was no 'perfect size of school' but schools needed to be sustainable and flourish;

- iii. different and creative models would be explored and minds needed to be open to change;
- iv. freedom of choice meant that there was limited control over outcomes, so it was essential that school travel plans were robust and sustainable; and
- v. the authority wanted all children to have an excellent education.

A committee member said that long journey times not only had an environmental impact but also had cost implications. In response to a question, the Head of educational development said that information would be provided on the percentage of schools with travel plans.

The Chairman welcomed the suggestions and noted the need for flexibility in the strategy.

RESOLVED:

That it be recommended to the executive that the Schools capital investment strategy principles:

- 1. **include reference to the need to be responsive to anticipated growth and reductions in communities, including the key role of local schools in the sustainability of growth villages in Core Strategy policies RA1 and RA2;**
- 2. **(within principle 8) take school journey distance, mode and time into account, not only in terms of environmental and transportation impacts but also the effect of journey times on pupils, with schools encouraged to keep school travel plans up-to-date;**
- 3. **recognise what schools can and should offer, outside school hours, to local communities – such as libraries, information hubs, meeting venues, open space etc.;**
- 4. **provide assurance that the authority would provide backing and support for academies to make bids for central funding to improve infrastructure;**
- 5. **include consideration of county boundary transitions, including dialogue with adjoining authorities to ensure that provision was not considered in isolation;**
- 6. **clarify how the authority would assure itself that ‘There would be an appropriate number of faith places’ (principle 3); and**
- 7. **revise principle 11 e. to ‘Participatory budgeting as a means of enabling local communities to assist in supporting a local school’.**

29. REVISIONS TO THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

The Director of resources introduced the report, the principal points included:

- a. The background to the abolition of the national council tax benefit system in 2013 and its replacement with a local council tax reduction (CTR) system was explained, as well as the subsequent reductions in central government funding.
- b. Pensioner benefits continued to be protected and the council had discretion on CTR for working age claimants only.

- c. The CTR scheme for 2015/16 gave £4.6m in council tax subsidy to working age claimants. Reflecting reductions in government support grant, there was a saving requirement of £200k from CTR for 2016/17.
- d. The current CTR caseload profile was: pensioners fully or partially unaffected by the CTR scheme 6,594; and working age claimants 6,738, with approximately 4,500 in receipt of CTR at 84% (the remaining claimants qualified for partial subsidy).
- e. The collection rates for council tax remained stable, with 98.10% achieved in 2014/15; the collection rate was 82.5% for claimants in receipt of CTR.
- f. The report provided a breakdown of the circumstances of 190 sample CTR cases that had received a summons and this showed that 53% were in receipt of Employment & Support Allowance.
- g. Initial responses to the council's [Priorities and budget consultation 2016-2020](#) prioritised income and savings in the following order (out of 10 proposals for savings): sell our smallholdings estate of 4,500 acres, to reduce our debt repayments; increase car parking charges in Hereford; and reduce the discounts available under the council tax reduction scheme.
- h. Appendix 3 to the report detailed the results of a consultation questionnaire on the CTR scheme and the related proposals for 2016/17. The proposals were:

Proposal 1 - reducing the level of CTR from 84% to 80% but also increase restrictions to CTR and protect CTR at 84% for certain claimants.

Proposal 2 - reducing the level of CTR from 84% to 80% with no other scheme changes.
- i. The Director of resources said that, informed by the data on summonses, consultation responses and engagement with the Children's Society, Proposal 1 would seek to maintain CTR at 84% where the claimant was either in receipt of severe disability premium, carers allowance or families with a child under the age of five. This was expected to deliver £144k per annum.
- j. To bridge the gap to the saving requirement of £200k, Proposal 1 would involve two additional proposals, to amend CTR from a band D property restriction to a band C restriction and reduce the capital limit to £6k. Appendix 1 to the report detailed the financial impact of 80% CTR and band C restriction and provided examples. The Director of resources, acknowledging a point made to him by the Chairman, noted that 327 CTR claimants living in a band D property would see an increase in the amount payable from £254 to £458 but also referred back to the potential protections for certain claimants.
- k. The current capital limit was £16k, reducing this to £6k would mean that approximately 110 claimants would cease to receive CTR. It was reported that 36% of unitary authorities had reduced the capital limit. Appendix 2 to the report provided an Equality Impact Assessment on the CTR scheme.
- l. Attention was drawn to the financial assistance available under the council's Discretionary hardship policy. It was reported that there had been only two successful applications to the scheme from applicants in receipt of CTR in 2014/15. It was noted that questions had been asked by Cabinet members about this issue and officers were reflecting on how to make the scheme more accessible.

- m. It was emphasised that the authority achieved good collection rates and this was collected responsibly.
- n. It was reported that savings would also benefit preceptors: parish and town councils, West Mercia Police, and the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority.
- o. The Director of resources commented on financial pressures in Children's safeguarding and that it would be difficult to achieve the saving requirement of £200k from CTR from alternative compensatory savings.
- p. It was recognised that the issues were complex and important, therefore the views of the committee were sought ahead of the Cabinet review in October and Council approval in December 2015.

The Chairman made the following points:

- It was questioned what could be done to ensure that citizens could access hardship relief and other protections.
- Amending the property band restriction would result in a substantial increase in liability for claimants living in a band D property and it may not be practical or possible for them to move house.
- The potential for a reduction in the capital limit might seem unreasonable.
- In view of the number of summonses, there could be diminishing returns from further revisions to the CTR scheme.

In response, the Director of resources commented on the difficult choices that had to be made to ensure that the council was able to balance the budget given the dramatic reductions in central government funding. It was reiterated that the council currently gave £4.6m in council tax subsidy to working age claimants and the proposals sought to achieve savings of £200k. He added that council tax, being based on property values, was not progressive and it was difficult to design a perfect scheme, hence the options had been put forward for comment.

Responding to questions from a committee member:

- The Benefits operational manager reported that the overall caseload had reduced slightly.
- Claimants who deliberately deprived themselves of capital in order to gain benefits could be subject to a process in order to be treated as if they still had that capital.
- The Director of resources said that the authority did not have any information about people that might be eligible for CTR but were not claiming it. The Benefits operational manager added that a lot of work had been undertaken by welfare benefit teams and others to ensure that people were aware of the scheme.

Another committee member asked a number of questions, along the following lines:

- Comparing decisions for claimants with council budget setting, would officers recommend depleting capital reserves to fund a revenue expense?
- Do we understand what it is costing to police this as an activity and how much extra effort was likely to be involved?

- What was the direction of travel in terms of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and were further reductions to CTR anticipated in future years?
- What elements of overspending reflected under performance with the projected change programme and savings targets? It was suggested that there could be a perception that the authority was balancing its own delivery failures by reducing levels of support to CTR claimants.

In response to questions, the Director of resources advised the committee that:

- The authority had set aside general reserves of 5% of overall expenditure. A claimant would need to have annual income of more than £120k for the proposed £6k capital limit to reflect a lower percentage of annual income which would not be possible under benefit claimant rules.
- Although an estimate could not be provided at the meeting, it was not likely to cost more to administer the revised scheme.
- The current MTFS had been approved by full Council on [6 February 2015](#) and included savings from CTR for 2016/17. The strategy was being refreshed and would need to take into account further reductions in government grant. The views of the committee were being sought on the CTR scheme for the next financial year only.
- Safeguarding involved demand led services and there had been a large increase in the numbers of looked after children both in Herefordshire and in other authority areas, including Worcestershire and Devon.

The Director of resources noted that people held different views and the issue was considered important enough nationally for the government to mandate that the decision needed to be taken by full Council.

The Leader commented on the following: there were likely to be many people on low incomes that were spending capital to meet revenue costs and did not receive any subsidy at all; it was possible that government grant could be reduced to nil by 2020; the majority of spending was on health and care, demand led services which made it difficult to predict costs; and not proceeding with the revisions to the scheme would require savings elsewhere.

A committee member:

- thanked officers for the clear and comprehensive report and for the responses provided at the meeting;
- considered that a £200k saving was small in the context of the overall council budget and reference was made to a Cabinet decision to allocate an additional £250k to meet unforeseen scheme costs to relocate Broadlands primary school on the Aylestone business and enterprise college (ABEC) site [considered by Cabinet on [11 September 2015](#)];
- commented that the Council would not have been aware of national welfare reforms when it agreed the Budget and MTFS in February 2015; and
- commented that the potential disbenefits for the county and particularly for the individuals concerned would not necessarily be known to all budget consultation respondents.

The Director of resources commented on a number of matters, including:

- i. Claimants used council services and many people would consider that they should make a contribution to these.
- ii. The provisional outcomes of the Priorities and budget consultation (see paragraph g. above) were re-iterated and it was commented that the least popular options were: reduce customer services and libraries across the county; remove public transport subsidy; and remove community transport subsidy.
- iii. Individual savings figures might appear small but the overall budget would not balance if the authority ignored them.

A committee member felt that many people would not expect others to be able to receive subsidy if they held £16k in capital and commented on the need for pensioner benefits to be looked at nationally. In response to questions, the Director of resources confirmed that the authority charged the maximum council tax permitted on second homes and empty properties, charging an extra 50%.

A committee member made a number of comments, including:

1. This was a difficult choice involving vulnerable people and it should not be perceived as an 'us and them' situation.
2. It was questioned whether the authority would make any saving in the long run given the potential knock on effects in terms of public health and children's attainment.
3. Comparisons with other authorities were noted but Herefordshire had the lowest wages in the country.
4. Feedback from CTR scheme consultation showed that the majority of claimants were in some form of employment but still needed support.
5. Although capital of £16k might seem substantial, such an amount would not go far if expenditure was needed on home repairs or a vehicle to get to work.
6. It was likely that many people with savings would already be spending some of it to meet living costs.
7. The authority needed to ensure that it did all it could to enable people to access all the help available.

The Leader reminded the committee of the proposals and said that the discretionary hardship policy would be reviewed to ensure it was fully understood and accessible.

The Deputy Leader: emphasised the importance for the authority to be involved in projects that improved the economy and reduced the number of people on low incomes; noted that the capital limit in terms of Adult social care was £23k, including a person's savings but, unlike the CTR scheme, also including the value of their home; and said that the hardship scheme had to be fit for purpose.

In response to a question from a committee member, the Director of resources drew attention to the supplement to the agenda which contained an illustration of the collection of debt from CTR scheme working age claimants, with £300k outstanding as at 24 September 2015; he stressed that this was outstanding debt, often involving payment plans, and the amount of bad debt was a much smaller proportion.

The Chairman asked whether members wanted to make any recommendations to the executive but the committee was minded to request that their comments be noted.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made by the committee be noted.

30. WORK PROGRAMME

A draft work programme was submitted for consideration. The Chairman drew attention to the following:

- the Smallholdings estate task and finish group was completing its review and its report would be submitted for consideration by the committee on 27 October 2015;
- various other changes had been made to the work programme, as shown at paragraph 6 of the report; and
- in anticipation of the next round of consultation, it was intended that a member workshop be held on the Community infrastructure levy (CIL).

The Deputy Leader, referring to planned agenda items for the 17 November 2015 meeting, said that additional work was being undertaken on the Housing strategy and was unlikely to be available in the timescale identified.

A committee member considered that there was outstanding work for the CIL task and finish group to complete. The Chairman said that he would seek further officer advice on the matter.

A committee member questioned progress with a Digital strategy task and finish group. The committee was advised that, in view of the time that had elapsed since the group had been commissioned, a seminar would be arranged to update members on the current position and to help identify any specific areas where future scrutiny activity could be focussed. The Director of economy, communities and corporate said that it was for the committee to decide how it wished to prioritise the work programme. A committee member requested that a briefing note be prepared.

RESOLVED: That the

- (a) the draft work programme be noted; and**
- (b) a briefing note be prepared on digital issues.**

31. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 27 October 2015 at 1.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 1.00 pm

CHAIRMAN