
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2024

Present: Councillors Blackman (Chair), Evely, Y Frampton, Kloker, Leggett, McManus, Powell-Vaughan and P Baillie
Appointed Members:

Apologies: Councillors Renyard
Appointed Members: Rob Sanders

Also in attendance:

36. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

It was noted that following receipt of the temporary resignation of Councillor Stead from the Committee, the Monitoring Officer, acting under delegated powers, had appointed Councillor P Baillie to replace them for the purposes of this meeting and in addition noted the apologies of Councillor Renyard.

37. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the committee meeting held on the 21 November 2024 were approved and signed as a correct record.

38. **CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION CAB 24/25 46237 - STARTPOINT SHOLING DAY NURSERY**

Councillor Winning – Cabinet Member for Children and Learning, Clodagh Freeston – Head of Education Services and Darrin Hunter – Service Manager for Early Years were in attendance and with the consent of the Chair addressed the meeting.

Members of the public were also in attendance, including Startpoint Sholing Day Nursery employees and trade union representatives, and with the consent of the Chair a number addressed the meeting.

Councillor Winning provided an introduction and overview in relation to the decision taken by Cabinet on 26 November 2024 to approve the closure of Startpoint Sholing Day Nursery with immediate effect.

The Committee then discussed the following elements of the call-In in further detail as below:

- **Concern that the decision does not reflect the current and future demand for nursery places in Southampton as the population of the city continues to grow.**

The Committee raised concerns around the availability of nursery places within specific locations of the city. Councillor Winning provided assurances that there were sufficient spaces available across all areas in Southampton and through regular analysis and engagement with the sector ongoing sufficiency in places would be assured.

- **The decision ignores the overwhelming opposition to the proposed closure identified in the consultation.**

Councillor Winning provided an overview of the consultation in relation to the timeline, content and responses received. The Committee questioned the communication strategy and overall reach of the consultation to ensure the expected level of response was achieved. Darrin Hunter provided specific information relating to the communication strategy, responses received and how the information was analysed. Councillor Winning in summarising the responses acknowledged the opposition to the closure but noted that no new or credible alternative operating models or solutions had been identified or suggested.

- **There has been inadequate consideration of the rescue plan put forward to restructure the financial position of Startpoint Sholing Day Nursery.**

Councillor Winning set out the current financial position and further details of the alternative operating and finance models that had been investigated as an alternative to closure. Councillor Winning confirmed that to date no alternative models or restructure plans had been identified that would enable the setting to break even financially. The Committee discussed this at length, seeking to understand the alternative funding options explored.

The Committee then moved to a formal vote.

RESOLVED that

To advise the Decision Maker that the Scrutiny Committee does not recommend that the decision be reconsidered and that it can therefore be implemented without delay.

39. **SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL'S HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Councillor A Frampton - Cabinet Member for Housing Operations, Debbie Ward- Executive Director – Resident Services and Jamie Brenchley - Director of Housing were in attendance and with the consent of the addressed the meeting.

Councillor A Frampton set out the overall response in relation to the report of the Regulator of Social Housing published on 27 November 2024, specifically setting out the actions already being taken as set out within the Landlord Services Improvement Plan. Debbie Ward and Jamie Brenchley provided information on specific aspects of the service and planned improvements, this included:

- Proposals to improve reactive and planned repairs and maintenance.
- More joined up and collaborative approach across council departments and teams in relation to housing issues.
- Improving the management of assets and the overall coordination of the housing stock.
- Tenant engagement and wider communication with stakeholders.
- Improvements to speed up the turnaround of empty properties.
- Better performance management across the service.

The Committee noted the update and raised concerns around the monitoring of performance, how realistic the targets included within the improvement plan were,

communications, and Cabinet oversight of the performance of Housing Services. The committee also discussed how other public organisations within the city currently approach asset management and if any lessons could be learnt.

RESOLVED that

- i) In recognition of the need for additional scrutiny of the Council's Housing Landlord Service, the Committee reviews progress implementing the Housing Improvement Plan within 6 months.
- ii) The Administration considers whether there are lessons to be learnt about the management of assets from other public sector organisations in the city.
- iii) The terms of reference for the new Housing Advisory Board (HAB) are circulated to the Committee.

40. **RIVER ITCHEN FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME - UPDATE**

Councillor Keogh – Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport, Stephen Haynes – Executive Director for Growth & Prosperity, Pete Boustred – Director of Transport & Planning and Sam Foulds – Flood Risk Management Team Leader were present and with the consent of the Chair addressed the meeting.

Councillor Keogh provided an overview of the report and an update on the RIFAS scheme, specifically progress to date in relation to:

- National and regional reviews of flooding policy and funding and how the outcome of these may impact the schemes direction and viability.
- The potential funding models for the scheme.
- The development of an overarching business case identifying the current risks, benefits and cost benefit analysis.
- Ongoing communications and collaboration with external organisations at both a regional and national level.
- The inclusion of flood risk within all development and planning procedures.
- Plans for significant development along the banks of the River Itchen.

The Committee noted the update and expressed concerns, given the flooding experienced in April 2024, with regards to the urgency of the scheme and the necessity to secure funding for the scheme and commence construction of the project as soon as possible.

41. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered and discussed the responses from the Executive to recommendations from previous meetings.