

STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 22 July 2010 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.45 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Melinda Tilley – in the Chair

Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE
Councillor Nick Carter (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Jean Fooks
Councillor Peter Jones
Councillor A.M. Lovatt
Councillor Dr Peter Skolar
Councillor Carol Viney (for Councillor David Wilmshurst)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Jim Couchman (for Agenda Items 5 & 7)
Councillor David Robertson (for Agenda Item 6)
Councillor Janet Godden) (for Agenda Item 8)
Councillor David Sexon)

By invitation J. Bradlow, Assistant Director of Public Health

Officers:

Whole of meeting Corporate Performance and Review Manager, S. Whitehead (Corporate Core)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item	Officer Attending
5 & 7	Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer
6	D. Lines, Shared Services
8	Director for Children, Young People & Families, P. Tansley, Interim Head of Commissioning, Performance and Quality Assurance J. Paine, Head of Service - Southern Area, Young People & Access to Education S. Taylor, Head of Northern Area, Raising Achievement J. Leivers, Interim Head of Service for Children and Families S.Rodway, Strategic Lead, Performance S. Breton, Strategic Lead & Head of Joint Commissioning

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting [, together with a schedule of

addenda tabled at the meeting/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

24/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Wilmshurst (Councillor Viney attending as substitute) and Councillor Sherwood.

25/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

Councillor Brighthouse declared a personal interest in Item 5, Directors Update as her husband is an executive director of Research Machines who tender for Council contracts.

Councillor Tilley declared a personal interest in Item 5, Directors Update as her son-in-law is an employee of Research Machines who tender for Council contracts.

26/10 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2010 (SYP 3) were approved and signed.

With regard to Minute No 10/10 members had yet to receive the dates of partnership meetings.

It was agreed that members receive a copy of the Communication Strategy once it was available.

Minute No 8/10 – Responding to comments the Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer advised that ICT had been considered by the Audit Working Group and Audit Committee and undertook to circulate the relevant report. It was suggested that Councillor Wilmshurst could report back to the September meeting.

27/10 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

(Agenda No. 5)

The Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer reported that there had been considerable focus on the Business Strategy and detailed the changes that had taken place. She referred to the report to Cabinet on 20 July that would be considered at the Council meeting on 27 July. The management changes were aimed at making the County Council even leaner. In terms of funding there was a need to find new ways of delivering services.

SYP3

A key issue for members would be how the budget process would be considered by this and other Scrutiny Committees. It would not be possible to have the detailed Annex 3 reports to the November/December cycle of meetings as had happened in the past and a radical new approach would be needed.

Following comments from Councillor Brighthouse about the need for better communication with members and concern that she had read of proposals first in the Oxford mail, the Deputy Leader agreed that information should be with Members first and gave an assurance that it would not happen again. Councillor Nick Carter referred to the new protocol in the constitution and suggested its effective implementation throughout the Council might be an area for a quick review. It was agreed that he explore this possibility for future consideration by the Committee.

There was some discussion of the current position on the schemes on hold.

Responding to comments about individual schemes and services, such as Bayards Hill and the Youth *Offending* Services Councillor Couchman advised that the situation on schemes was dependent on the Spending Review. There would be very few services that could be exempt from the budget consideration.

The challenges provided by the financial situation also provided an opportunity to consider new ways of doing things.

28/10 SHARED SERVICES PROGRAMME - COMPLETION (Agenda No. 6)

The Strategy and Partnerships Committee noted the success and continued improvement demonstrated by Shared Services in reducing resource expenditure and improving processes to support directorate and council outcomes.

In welcoming the paper the Committee raised the following points:

1. There was discussion about the importance of the income from schools and Councillor David Robertson stated that the income was being tracked. There had been discussions with academy schools about their needs and steps were in place to ensure that the Council could continue to provide a service.
2. Sue Scane, responding to a query, advised that the intention in future was to reduce the number of targets to focus on 1 or 2 key targets.

29/10 FINANCIAL MONITORING 2010/11 - QUARTER 1 (Agenda No. 7)

The Scrutiny Committee noted the financial monitoring report.

30/10 SCRUTINY OF PARTNERSHIPS

(Agenda No. 8)

(a) Children's Trust

The Scrutiny Committee received a presentation on the role and work of the Children's Trust and Children's Trust Board. The Director of Children, Young People & Families highlighted the work with young people through the Sounding Boards that sought the views of young people on a range of topics. Partnership working had brought about changes and she highlighted work with Police on first time entrants into police statistics where the Police had set aside their own targets to work to reduce this figure. Councillor Louise Chapman added that at Board level partnership working was resulting in success stories and fostering strong working relationships at an operational level.

During discussions and in response to questions the following matters were raised:

1. The importance of pre-schools to the well being and development of children.
2. The statutory guidance relating to Children's Trust was very complex and would benefit from being simplified. It was suggested that a simple summary was needed defining the Children's Trust, explaining what they do and addressing how it provided value for money.
3. The current financial situation provided an opportunity to strip away the target driven obsession. The Committee sought information on the thinking about how kpi's might be reduced, removed or a different approach taken. Councillor Chapman undertook to provide a list of targets that she personally would like to see removed. She added that a sub group was looking at performance and that what drove her were the local targets. Some measures of performance were necessary.
4. Councillor Chapman undertook to provide a written response on the cost of the Children's Trust Board.
5. Responding to questions from members the Director for Children, Young People & Families confirmed that the Children's Trust was a statutory body and outlined the type of activity that the Trust brought about that was different to what could achieved by individual organisations working alone. She highlighted actions to tackle the problems of families in temporary accommodation and tackling school absenteeism. Process had been simplified.
6. Asked what she was most proud of in relation to the Trust, Councillor Chapman referred to the work to raise awareness of Looked After Children and their representation at Board level.
7. The Director for Children Young People & Families recognised the need to guard against the Trust Board becoming a talking shop. The Children's Trust was about more than Board membership and efforts were made to keep the representation on the Board to the minimum required for effective working. The

SYP3

Board ensured that the Children's Plan was being delivered. Responding to criticism that time had been spent on developing the Plan when what was needed was already known, the Committee heard that there had been a great deal of consultation; there was a duty to consult as the Plan was statutory and guided all that was done in this area.

8. A member who had attended meeting of the Children's Trust Board commented that they had been well run, well chaired and with a good level of engagement. However the reports from the sub groups showed a lack of attendance and she queried what the Trust could do about this problem. Councillor Chapman replied that it was important that the right people were present but that sometimes meant that they could not always attend as they had other commitments.
9. Sally Taylor detailed work by the Trust to tackle the cycle of deprivation by targeting specific families in identified wards. It was early days but the emerging evidence was that this type of targeting was both effective and an efficient use of resources. Jean Bradlow, Assistant Director of Public Health referred to work detailed in the Director of Public Health's Annual Report that focussed on deprivation in Oxford City and included the provision of additional health visitors. Councillor Chapman added that work on reducing teenage pregnancies was beginning to see results.
10. Reference was made to the 155,000 children in Oxfordshire with a query over how far the Trust focussed on the 4,000 vulnerable children in the County. Meera Spillett explained the layered approach to service provision; some areas of work were universal such as 'Every child a reader'; below that support was provided to a smaller number of children who had additional needs usually on a temporary basis; finally there were those children with complex ongoing needs.
11. There was recognition of the impact on Trust working of the Health White Paper proposals. There would need to be a strong relationship with GPs and GP Consortia. It was noted that it was too early for arrangements to have been determined and the Trust would have to wait and see how proposals developed.
12. Responding to comments about safeguarding Meera Spillett acknowledged that the process around CAF and TAC forms was patchy and required work. Extra money had been included in the budget to link social workers with schools. One of the big challenges was the expectations on social workers and the sheer volume of universal services. Every school should have a governor and a designated member of the senior management team responsible for safeguarding issues and additional training was available to them.
13. Concern was expressed that misunderstanding could lead to children being removed from parents. Meera Spillett confirmed that there were Emergency Protection orders but that generally parents were notified and were part of the process.
14. Responding to comments about neglect it was reported that this issue had been identified and an action plan drawn up.
15. Responding to criticism that two out of 17 LAA targets on track did not seem like value for money, Councillor Chapman explained that some targets could not be

assessed except on an annual basis. She undertook to provide a response and actions on each of the targets not being met.

- 16. During discussion of cross boundary working the Committee was advised that the common legislation meant there was dialogue between the Children’s Trust at a strategic level. There were protocols about working together and arrangements in place for picking up cross boundary issues.
- 17. Asked whether people such as head teachers, social workers and voluntary groups would understand what the Trust was doing the Committee was advised that that there was a continuum with some being more aware than others. An example was the process established to notify head teachers in the event of domestic violence.

The chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Children, Young people & Families and officers for their attendance and it was **AGREED** that this matter be considered again in a year.

(b) Oxfordshire's Thematic Partnerships: Review of Performance and Governance

In view of the time it was **AGREED** to note the report without discussion.

31/10 FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda No. 9)

The Scrutiny Committee recognised that the Scrutiny budget consultation process would need to be different this year. There needed to be holistic consideration of the issues. It was **AGREED** that information on the Spending Review 2010 be brought to the first available meeting and that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman discuss with officers the most appropriate way forward.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing