

## PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Monday, 16 December 2013 commencing at 1.50 pm and finishing at 4.30 pm

### **Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE – in the Chair

Councillor Neil Fawcett (Deputy Chairman)

Councillor Lynda Atkins

Councillor John Christie

Councillor Sam Coates

Councillor Mark Gray

Councillor Jenny Hannaby

Councillor Richard Langridge

Councillor Sandy Lovatt

Councillor Neil Owen (In place of Councillor Yvonne Constance)

Councillor Michael Waine (In place of Councillor Lawrie Stratford)

### **Other Members in Attendance:**

Councillor Melinda Tilley ( Children, Education & Families)

Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale (Chief Executive's Office)

Councillor Louise Chapman ( Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service)

Councillor Hilary Hibbert-Biles (Public Health)

### **Officers:**

Whole of meeting Lorna Baxter, Chief Finance Officer

Part of meeting

### **Agenda Item**

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Children, Education & Families

### **Officer Attending**

Jim Leivers, Director for Children's Services, Sarah Livedeas, Deputy Director Joint Commissioning Frances Craven Deputy Director Education & Early Intervention; Lucy Butler, Deputy Director, Children's Services & YOS

Chief Executive's Office

Joanna Simons, Chief Executive and Peter Clark, Head of Law & Culture came to the table.

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service

David Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer, Nathan Travis, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Richard Webb, Trading Services & Community Safety Manager

Public Health

Jonathan McWilliam, Director for Public Health, Val Messenger, Deputy Director for Public Health

*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.*

## **21/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS**

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Constance (Councillor Owen substituting) and Councillor Stratford (Councillor Waine substituting).

## **22/13 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE**

(Agenda No. 3)

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed:

Item 4, Service & Resource Planning 2014/15 – 2017/18

*Children, Education & Families*

Children's Centres Mr Greg White, Children's Centres (Butterfly Meadow)

*Chief Executive's Office*

Pegasus Theatre, Mr Jonathan Lloyd, Artistic Director/CEO, Pegasus Theatre), Maria Molinari, Trustee, Morgan Lee, Trustee,

Community and Village Grants, Linda Watson, CEO of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

Cuts to Refugee Resource, Dr Antony Kingsley

## **23/13 SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANNING 2014/15-2017/18**

(Agenda No. 4)

The Chairman noted that the consideration this afternoon was within the context of the overall presentation received from the Chief Finance Officer during the morning meeting.

### **Children, Education & Families**

Mr Greg White, as a father and user of a Children's Centre, spoke in support of the Children's Centre highlighting the vital support and advice they provide. The Chairman noted that there were no cuts to children's budget and there was to be a cross party group looking at children's centres and early intervention services.

Jim Leivers, Director for Children's Services, Sarah Livedeas, Deputy Director Joint Commissioning Frances Craven Deputy Director Education & Early Intervention; Lucy Butler, Deputy Director, Children's Services & YOS and Councillor Melinda Tilley came to the table.

During detailed consideration the following key points were raised:

- 1) Members welcomed that Children's Centres were being protected. Jim Leivers, responding to a query as to how the savings would be achieved without closing Children's Centres, referred to the timing of the saving of £3m and the role of the review of children's centre, early intervention service and children's social service over the next few years.
- 2) Responding to a query about respite care Lucy Butler replied that the Council was committed to maintaining respite and she did not see a reduction in provision or numbers.
- 3) There was discussion concerning how closer cooperation with partner agencies would be achieved. The importance of integrating services with partners was key to changing and enhancing the service provided whilst delivering the necessary savings.
- 4) There was some discussion on bringing children's placement back within Oxfordshire. Jim Leivers commented that there would still be some specialist placements outside Oxfordshire required. In response to comments about challenges in previous children's home projects, Jim Leivers commented that a new Children's Home was always a challenge. The Council would be transparent in whatever it did. He stressed the importance of good community relations.
- 5) There was discussion of the role of schools in referrals and how this would work with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Jim Leivers commented that there were 60% of referrals from schools. A small number become active cases. If we got better links & arrangements the need for formal referrals may reduce. Work will commence in early New Year. He gave an assurance that there would be a report back regularly to either Cabinet or this Committee.
- 6) During further discussion on safeguarding the Chairman noted that there can be different expectations around the referral process. Integration work should give some common purpose and understanding. However, she hoped for flexibility in the ceiling for referrals. It was about making it work at grass root and she asked whether there was a vision around that. Jim Leivers replied that it was an ambition he would own with her. Asked if he was trying to work towards that, Jim replied that we will work to ensure that in everything we do it is for the protection, nurturing and care of children in the County. The Committee was advised that there would be a seminar for members early in the New Year about how we do that. Councillor Tilley welcomed the involvement of all Councillors as corporate parents.

- 7) Responding to a query about the Directorate commitment to localisation. Jim Leivers replied that the Directorate worked across a range of localities and were deeply embedded in local communities. He refuted that there was a centralising tendency. He accepted that they did not have open access youth work.
- 8) A member received assurance that the planning for transitioning care began at 14 years old. Work was on-going with partners to enhance the experience.

The Chairman recommended and it was AGREED to note the proposals and to ask for consideration by Cabinet of the following key issues:

- In general, the committee raised concern to maintain locality focus through any change process.
- The committee also wanted to ensure that there was no reduction in service despite the proposed savings in relation to respite care.
- The committee supported the plans to increase looked after placements within Oxfordshire and the plans for a multi-agency safeguarding hub. However, they wanted to ensure that any work falling out of the service review supported safeguarding work.
- The committee were keen to agree with Cabinet appropriate progress monitoring processes regarding the integration of children's services.
- Overall the committee were keen to see that the proposals for integrated work with partners delivered the expected savings.

At 2.36 pm there was a short adjournment with the Committee reconvening at 2.47 pm.

### **Chief Executive's Office**

The Director of Pegasus Theatre spoke about the proposal to reduce by 2/3 the grant to the Theatre and asked that given the already significant decrease the cut be reduced to 1/3. Any more would impact on their capacity to provide services. He referred to a current petition on the Council's website of some 1117 signatures. In addition 2 trustees spoke of their experience of the assistance provided by the Theatre. The importance of the grant in attracting other funding was also highlighted. Asked if the fact that the cuts were spread was helpful Mr Lloyd said that it was but that the capacity to absorb further cuts was being reached. Any cut over a 1/3 over two years would affect the services they were able to offer.

Linda Watson, ORCC spoke in support of the continuation of the community and village hall grants outlining how their work contributed to County Council priorities and the breadth of the services offered. Responding to questions Linda Watson acknowledged that some funding came from Parish and District Councils but emphasised the importance of the County Council funding.

Dr Kingsley, Refugee Resource, stated that their clients were amongst the most marginalised and impoverished people and they provided them with specialist services. The cuts would result in the Oxfordshire losing match funding for 2014/15 and the hard to reach client group making a greater call on mainstream services. The cuts would have a differential impact on this group. He recognised the financial

difficulties of the Council but asked that if the cut was inevitable that it be tapered over 2 years to allow for self-sufficiency by 2017/18.

Joanna Simons, Chief Executive and Peter Clark, Head of Law & Culture came to the table.

Responding to the above points Joanna Simons indicated that they had tried to limit the reductions and to give time and space to allow organisations such as Pegasus Theatre to discuss and plan their future. Responding to the comments from Dr Kingsley she added that they would phase the savings concerning Refugee Resource over the period suggested by him. Councillor Lindsay-Gale, Cabinet Member for Community & Cultural Services commented that the proposals had not been an easy decision. She regretted the impact on voluntary organisations but had managed to protect library services and the youth and museums services.

Following detailed consideration the Chairman recommended and it was AGREED to note the proposals and to ask for consideration by Cabinet of the following key points:

- The committee supported the Chief Executive's response to the speaker from Refugee Resource and endorsed the proposal to taper funding to the organisation to protect their ability to secure Big Lottery and Comic Relief match funding.
- In relation to all proposals to reduce grant funding the committee were keen to ensure that time was made available, through a phased reduction, to give organisations effected, time to consider alternative funding sources or commissioning work.
- The committee noted that village halls and community centres will still be able to seek grant funding from Parish Councils, District Councils and other funding sources.
- The committee also noted that recent success in gaining national funding for military bases replaces any proposed reductions in local authority funding.

### **Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service**

David Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer, Nathan Travis, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Richard Webb, Trading Services & Community Safety Manager and Councillor Louise Chapman, Cabinet Member for Policy Co-ordination came to the table.

Following detailed consideration during which the Committee generally congratulated the Chief Fire Officer and his Team for the exemplary service provided the Chairman recommended and it was AGREED to note the proposals and to ask for consideration by Cabinet of the following key points:

- The committee wished to note that proposals to changes to the way in which the fire service is delivered are based on successful operations elsewhere in the county and the timing is governed by national requirements for consultation.
- Community safety funding proposals reflect the fact that this area is now funded by the Police Crime Commissioner (PCC). The committee wished to explore the

possibility of this funding continuing to be routed via the upper tier local authority to reflect the work of the community safety units and broader partnership.

**Public Health**

..... Jonathan McWilliam, Director for Public Health, Val Messenger, Deputy Director for Public Health and Councillor Hilary Hibbert-Biles, Cabinet Member for Public Health & the Voluntary Sector came to the table.

During detailed consideration of the proposals there was discussion of the impact of the inherited NHS contracts on the timing and level of savings to be made.

Following detailed consideration the Chairman recommended and it was AGREED to note the proposals and to ask for consideration by Cabinet of the following key points:

- The committee welcomed the fact that contracts were being revisited to seek efficiencies and noted that the phased 10% savings were intended to ensure that efficiencies could be identified without cutting front line service delivery.
- The committee also wanted to ensure that the opportunity to improve the alignment of public health services and council services to support local communities was fully explored.

**Overall comments**

Following further discussion the Chairman proposed and it was AGREED that Cabinet be advised of a following further points that related to the budget process overall

- The committee wanted to note that the current proposals are in response to a restrictive financial settlement from central government, which means that further change is being proposed in areas of work where services are already stretched and recognised that this was a difficult situation for all.
- The committee wished to be involved in monitoring the progress and performance of big change programmes, in partnership with Cabinet.
- The committee further acknowledged the risks of change and the need to monitor the mitigation and ensure that action plans are implemented.
- The committee also queried how the Council is assured about the application of effective change management during the implementation of proposals.
- The Committee drew attention to Annex 5 containing councillors' comments as a result of the briefings for Councillors.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

2014