

STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 24 September 2009 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.10 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Dr Peter Skolar – in the Chair

Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE
Councillor Nick Carter
Councillor Arash Fatemian
Councillor Jean Fooks
Councillor A.M. Lovatt
Councillor Larry Sanders
Councillor Melinda Tilley (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Carol Viney

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Keith Mitchell (for Agenda Item 5)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer, A. Bailey & S. Whitehead (Corporate Core)
Part of meeting A. Ulusoy-Shipstone (Corporate Core)

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.

17/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Apologies for absence and temporary appointments were received as follows:

Apology from	Temporary Appointments
Councillor David Wilmshurst	Councillor Carol Viney

18/09 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting of the former Corporate Governance Committee Scrutiny Committee held on 5 March 2009 (**CG3(a)**) and the minutes of the meeting of the Strategy & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee (**CG3(b)**) held on 16 June 2009 were approved and signed.

Matters Arising

Minute 9/09 - Referring to the work of the Partnerships Working Group, Councillor Brighthouse highlighted this area of work as something that should be taken forward. The Chairman confirmed that the scrutiny of partnerships was one of the objectives of the new Committee.

Minute 11/09 – Councillor Carter commented that ‘publications ‘ was a topic he would be happy to return to in the future.

19/09 FUTURE WORK OF SCRUTINY

(Agenda No. 5)

The Chief Executive highlighted key issues relevant to the work of the Committee including, partnership working and in particular the CAA process, the Single Conversation and the focus on efficiency in relation to the Corporate Core.

During discussion of the issues raised by the Chief Executive the following points were made:

- 1) In relation to the Single Conversation there was a need to consider the social and community impacts as well as the physical environment. It was about place shaping and engaging communities, particularly in the most deprived areas.
- 2) Joint working on health was discussed together with the current financial challenges to be faced. The Chairman commended progress on joint commissioning. Reference was made to the work on breaking the cycle of deprivation and the targeting of funds in the most deprived areas. One member expressed concern at the impact on poorer communities not being targeted.

The Committee agreed that members receive copies of a general briefing note on the Single Conversation and that the matter be brought back to the Committee as appropriate.

Councillor Mitchell, Leader of the Council, responding to an invitation from the Chairman detailed what he saw as the remit of the Committee: to look at the Corporate Core; to look at Council strategy to see how it was working across Directorate boundaries and whether a long term view was being taken and in relation to partnerships to see if they were bringing added value. Within this he saw a number of roles that scrutiny could fulfil: challenge to the decision makers (provided by call in); policy development; reviews of decisions taken and review of outside bodies.

Members discussed the future work of Scrutiny and the following points were made:

- 1) A model for scrutiny was needed that made it clear what was expected from Cabinet in response to the work undertaken.
- 2) Reference was made to the Bucks model and members generally warned against taking on a model without considering the Oxfordshire context. Members' had a great deal of experience of scrutiny work and this should be considered.
- 3) Councillor Brighthouse whilst feeling that the Bucks model might have much to commend it disagreed with the political basis for membership of the Task and Review Groups. Scrutiny work should cut across party politics, making best use of people's interests and experiences regardless of party.
- 4) Consideration needed to be given to the views of other Scrutiny Committees and members.
- 5) There was general support for considering further the way that scrutiny should be organised. However members were clear that given the other priorities of the Committee this piece of work should be very focussed.
- 6) There was discussion of the Star Chamber budget process and whether Scrutiny could add value to it. Councillor Mitchell outlined the reasons why the Cabinet would not be supportive of the involvement of Scrutiny at such an early stage in their budget thinking. It was suggested that an additional meeting of this Committee in advance of the Scrutiny Committee meetings in December could look at the totality of the budget before it was considered by individual Committees.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) undertake a focussed piece of work on how scrutiny could be undertaken in future;
- (b) to hold a work shop/seminar involving other members and giving consideration to a paper from the Corporate Performance & Review Manager on other forms of scrutiny undertaken elsewhere and to members own experience of scrutiny.

20/09 FINANCIAL MONITORING

(Agenda No. 6)

Councillor Tilley asked that the Committee's best wishes be sent to Councillor Shouler, Cabinet Member for Finance & Property who was currently unwell.

The Committee noted the commentary of the Cabinet Member for Finance & Property.

The Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer outlined the contents of monitoring reports generally. The role of the Committee was to look at Annex 3 and the budget position. Following discussion the Committee confirmed that they wished to continue to receive a summary of the financial monitoring picking up key issues and referenced back to the detail in the Cabinet reports where necessary.

There was discussion on the role that the Committee could play in relation to the budget setting process.

The Committee noted a brief presentation on the governance structure for capital infrastructure planning and the proposed reporting process.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) agree that officers in consultation with the Chairman look at ways to bring forward preparatory work on service & resource planning to inform the round of scrutiny committee discussions during November/December and that the Chairman in discussion with other members look at the date of the next meeting;
- (b) agree that an item be included for the next meeting on capital infrastructure planning.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 2009