

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 5 September 2011 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.15 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Lawrie Stratford – in the Chair

Councillor John Goddard
Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor John Sanders
Councillor Bill Service
Councillor Alan Thompson
Councillor David Wilmshurst (in place of Councillor Viney)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Judith Heathcoat

By Invitation:

Officers:

Agenda Item	Officer Attending
5	Colin Thomas, Simon Kearey
6	Jacque Bugeja, Sue Scane
7, 8	Richard Webb
9	Ruth Whyte
10	Carol Anderson

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.

142/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Carol Viney had sent apologies, and Councillor David Wilmhurst substituted.

The Chairman informed the committee that Councillor Stewart Lilly, Deputy Chairman, had sent his apologies.

143/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

None.

144/11 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

Minute 131/11

- Councillor Judith Heathcoat said that she had attended the Manor Hospital and not the John Radcliffe Hospital as recorded.

Minute 135/11

- Consumer Safety Review: noted that a national helpline was being set up
- DAAT consultation: members were appreciative of the one page summary provided.
- Gypsy & Travellers Service: Councillor Judith Heathcoat informed the committee that tender has been submitted.
- Actions on power outage: Members requested update on actions.
- Cogges Museum: noted that a new Director has been appointed.
- Libraries: noted that proposals on volunteering were available on library pages on council website.

136/11

- Councillor Susanna Pressel requested that 'successively' be amended to 'successfully'.

137/11

- Figure referred to in minute is incorrect, and should be £100k for year 2013-14, and £200k in year 2012-13.

145/11 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 4)

None.

146/11 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

(Agenda No. 5)

Colin Thomas, deputy Chief Fire Officer, reported on:

Recent Civil Disorder

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Colin Thomas reported that multi-agency procedure was activated to ensure that infrastructure was in place to minimise likelihood of disturbances in area, and to be able to deal with any incidences if they occurred. Only some small cases of disturbances took place.

Councillor Susanna Pressel said that she appreciated the regular updates from Police.

Efficiencies 2011/2012 and 2012/13 budget setting process

The 2011-2012 savings targets for Fire & Rescue were being delivered. However, meeting the £100,000 savings target for the Road Safety budget is a challenge.

It is too early to take a view on 2012-2013 budget, as it has yet to go through the Star Chamber process. Colin Thomas was confident that the budget would meet the Medium Term Financial Plan requirements.

Richard Webb added that Trading Standards was meeting its short term savings targets. The service had been reviewed and undergone a restructuring exercise. Sharing services with Buckinghamshire County Council was being talked through as a possible way forward. The Director for Social & Community Services and the Chief Fire Officer were considering an options paper on this subject. However, this approach may not deliver the level of savings required.

The Chair of the Committee asked about the timeline for talks with Buckinghamshire. Richard Webb replied that once budgets and options had been discussed by relevant committees we were looking at October or November as a likely time for proposals to be discussed. Councillor Judith Heathcoat added that the process was dependent on another authority coming to a view.

Simon Kearey reported on:

Cogges Museum

The trustees are interviewing applicants for the positions of Director and Operations Manager. 46 applications were received for the Director post with 7 being interviewed on 7 September 2011. 6 applicants are being interviewed for the Operations Manager post on 8 September 2011. Some candidates for each post may be interviewed twice, but it is hoped that appointments will be made in September.

Overall, trustees are pleased with the progress being made; the Natural Bread Company is running the café, and weekend events are proving to be popular. Simon Kearey said that the greatest gain has been the sign up of volunteers to support the work of the museum.

Libraries

Many meetings have been held with Friends of Library groups and Simon Kearey reported that these had been enthusiastic with the information provided being well received; for example, information on the role of volunteers.

Councillor Judith Heathcoat added that the meetings were well attended, open and frank with a mixture of support and dissent. She stressed that no libraries will be closing.

Councillor John Goddard welcomed the analysis provided by council officers. He said that under current plans volunteers would be essential for running all libraries, and asked if there was any progress in winning over volunteers.

Councillor Judith Heathcoat stated that statistics show that Oxfordshire leads the way in volunteering, and that the plans will be implemented over a three year period.

In response to a question on volunteering levels in more deprived parts of the county from Councillor John Sanders, Councillor Judith Heathcoat replied that she is visiting a successful community library in an area of deprivation in Swindon to learn how it is run.

Members of the committee were advised to send specific questions to the consultation address which would mean that they would be recorded and responded to and that they would inform the consultation.

147/11 CORONER'S SERVICE

(Agenda No. 6)

Jacque Bugeja reported on:

Death Certificate Reforms

The Department of Health is working with a wide range of organisations and groups to reform the process of death certification. These reforms will introduce a unified system of scrutiny by independent medical examiners of all deaths in England and Wales which do not require investigation by a coroner. The reforms are part of the Government's response to the Shipman Inquiry and aim to strengthen safeguards for the public, make the process of death certification simpler, more open to the bereaved and improve the quality of mortality data.

The Government is proposing to fund scrutiny by medical examiners on a cost-recovery basis through a statutory fee chargeable for all deaths that are not investigated by a coroner. This statutory fee, collected locally, would replace the existing fee charged by doctors for the completion of cremation forms which will be removed by the new process.

The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 made it a duty for Primary Care Trusts to: appoint medical examiners for their area; establish a local medical examiners service; make

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arrangements to collect the proposed statutory fee; and, ensure required service standards and performance levels are achieved. The new architecture of the NHS, announced in October 2010, led to a ministerial decision to transfer these responsibilities to upper-tier local authorities through a provision in the Health and Social Care Bill. This decision was based on the need to maintain local control and independence and the belief that these essential criteria could not be met in any other way.

The new process has been tested in death certification pilots in Sheffield, Gloucestershire, Powys, Mid-Essex, Brighton and Hove, Leicester and inner North London.

The pilot work suggests that an area with 5000 deaths per year would probably require a team of 7 part-time medical examiners supported by 3 full-time medical examiner's officers. The cost of providing the services will be recovered from the proposed statutory fee. Work is currently being carried out – with input from local authority representatives – to ensure that the level of fee set, considers the costs of alternative models and other local considerations.

The Death Certification Regulations are expected to be published for consultation in October 2011 and, subject to the Bill's Parliamentary passage, will be laid before Parliament in May/June 2012 with a commencement date of April 2013. The extended period between introduction and commencement is intended to provide time for local authorities to establish a local medical examiner's service for their area. The Department of Health will assist local authorities by providing a suggested outline of preparatory activities and access to national and regional support.

It was agreed that a further update would be presented to the next meeting of the committee in November.

Coroner's Service Readiness for Repatriation

Legal responsibilities of the Coroner were outlined, and Jacquie Bugeja assured the Committee that the service was in good shape to cope with the additional work. She added that the majority of the costs would be met by the Ministry of Justice.

The family room which would be used when the Coroner's Court was in session was being refurbished.

Sue Scane, Assistant Chief Executive reported on:

Repatriation Preparation

Sue Scane referred to the 'Wooton Bassett effect' in that families, friends and members of the public expected to be able to pay their respects.

In light of this, an Events Advisory Group was set up to consider and resolve issues of family facilities, public safety, media support, traffic management and wider events management.

Sue Scane explained that the agreed route provides the ability to close the road between two roundabouts near RAF Brize Norton.

148/11 REPORT ON THE USE OF THE USE OF THE REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 BY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

(Agenda No. 7)

Richard Webb reported that the Committee is required to have oversight of provisions of the Act and review policy annually. He also informed the committee that an inspection had been carried out in May 2011 on how the authority used its powers under the Act, which found that Oxfordshire County Council's procedures under the Act were of the highest quality.

Richard Webb said the powers are mainly used by Trading Standards and only he, Peter Clark and Sue Scane can authorise activities. The main use made by Trading Standards is to check underage sales and doorstep crime.

149/11 BRIEFING ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO CONSUMER PROTECTION ENFORCEMENT

(Agenda No. 8)

Richard Webb reported that the National Audit Office review of consumer protection stressed the importance of Trading Standards services working collaboratively and more consistently.

The key proposals included setting up a new consumer protection board to ensure that intelligence collected nationally would be shared locally and across boundaries if necessary.

Members of the committee were concerned that more responsibilities would be placed on Citizen Advice Bureaux (CAB) with the risk that their independence may be undermined.

Richard Webb would draft a response to the national consultation which would be informed by the following comments made at Committee:

- No reduction in funding of CABs from Oxfordshire County Council;
- No reduction in local intelligence at '1st tier';
- Welcome the strengthening of cross-border intelligence and working.

150/11 COMMUNITY SAFETY PLANS 2011-14

(Agenda No. 9)

The draft Community Safety Plans had initially been tabled at the July 2011 meeting of the committee, and members had decided to discuss any comments at 5 September meeting. Members to have let Ruth Whyte any comments in the intervening period.

Ruth Whyte reminded members that the specific plans reflected local needs, but all worked within a common framework to ensure consistency and progress against agreed goals.

Members wanted actions on reducing recidivism to be more prominent, and an update on progress on implementing the MANTRAH programme.

151/11 DRAFT HERITAGE STRATEGY

(Agenda No. 10)

Carol Anderson apologised for not providing a written report, and explained that this was due to changes to how the application process is to be run and the transition of responsibilities from Museums, Libraries and Archives to the Arts Council. The draft was now with the Directors of council and university museums awaiting input and approval. Once the draft is agreed it would be sent to the committee.

The strategy will aim to make Oxfordshire a centre of museum excellence via collections, research expertise and an outreach programme.

152/11 ROAD SAFETY

(Agenda No. 11)

Peter Cleary reported that the alignment of Environment and Economy and Fire and Rescue Road Safety activities was progressing well. He added that managerial functions have been absorbed into the Fire and Rescue structure. Work was being carried out to reduce overlap and duplication of activities.

153/11 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

(Agenda No. 12)

The work programme was not discussed at committee.

154/11 FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda No. 13)

Noted that feedback on library service consultation would be available.

155/11 CLOSE OF MEETING APPROX 1.15PM

(Agenda No. 14)

..... in the Chair

Date of signing