

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 5 January 2017 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.20 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE – in the Chair

Councillor Janet Godden (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Sam Coates
Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE
Councillor Mark Gray
Councillor Patrick Greene
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Stewart Lilly
Councillor Sandy Lovatt
Councillor Charles Mathew
Councillor John Sanders

Officers:

Whole of meeting Steven Jones, Policy and Performance Officer
Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Committee Secretary

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

Officer Attending

5	Lorna Baxter, Chief Finance Officer
6 & 7	Kate Terroni, Director for Adult Services
6	Benedict Leigh, Strategic Commissioner (Adults)
7	Ian Dyson, Assistant Chief Finance Officer (Assurance); Lucy Butler, Director for Children's Services; Hannah Farncombe, Deputy Director Children's Social Care
8	David Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer; Simon Furlong, Deputy Chief Fire Officer; Julian Green, Station Manager Strategic Risk & Assurance
9	Chris Kenneford, Planning Regulation Service Manager; Howard Cox, Infrastructure Funding Manager; Susan Halliwell, Acting Deputy Director Strategy & Infrastructure Planning

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 and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda, reports and additional documents are attached to the signed Minutes.

1/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - GUIDANCE NOTE ON BACK PAGE OF THE AGENDA
(Agenda No. 2)

In relation to Agenda Item 7, Councillor Stuart Lilly declared that he occasionally acts professionally, as a property advisor, for Home Farm Trust.

2/17 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2016 were approved and signed as a correct record subject to the following corrections:

Minute 57/16: Second paragraph, delete: "look at the reviews" and replace with "review the responses".

Minute 59/16: Third paragraph, add "at this point" to the end of the second sentence.

3/17 SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANNING 2017/18 - 2020/21 AND CAPITAL BUDGET 2017/18
(Agenda No. 5)

Ms Baxter introduced the report which set out the main points arising from the Local Government Finance Statement which was published on the 15 December.

Members discussed the following points:

- The New Homes Bonus will only be paid on housing growth above 0.4% of the local authority's housing stock as opposed to the consultation proposal which was 0.25%. This and other changes will yield £241m nationally to fund the Adult Social Care Support Grant in 2017/18.
- The Government's proposal abating the Bonus in circumstances where planning permission for a new development has only been granted on appeal was criticised by some Members. The Government will consult on this in 2018/19.
- The changes in the Adult Social Care Precept and Grant will not mean more on-going money for Adult Social Care. £5m demographic funding which was to come from corporate resources can now be funded by the precept and grant. However, this £5m from corporate resources must be transferred to other funds in order to balance the budget. Members expressed frustration that more money could not be allocated to Adult Social Care but supported the Chief Finance Officer's approach given the current financial circumstances.
- Ms Baxter stressed that the 3% increase in the Adult Social Care Precept was a one-off measure for the next 2 years and so the money could not be used for on-going spending but could be used for up-front funding.
- Members asked if the extended rights under Home to School Transport (HST) would increase pressure on the Council finances. Ms Baxter stated that the grant was not new and if reduced would not put pressure on HST funding.

- Members expressed concern at the spiralling costs of Adult and Children's Social Care and urged that the two be considered together.
- Members also called for a greater role for councillors in the Transformation process.

4/17 DAYTIME SUPPORT CONSULTATION

(Agenda No. 6)

The Chairman agreed to requests to speak on this item from Councillor Michael Waine and Mr Michael Hugh-Jones.

Mr Hugh-Jones, a member of the National Pensioners' Convention, called on the Director for Adult Services to reconsider the formula for eligibility for Council support and in particular the lack of an income limit.

Councillor Waine said that both options proposed in the consultation were historic and property-based not geographic. He believed that they didn't take into account growth in the east of the County.

Ms Terroni introduced the report and stated that the consultation period closed on 20 December so the information is still being analysed. She stressed that people are assessed according to national guidelines.

Points that have emerged from the consultation so far include:

- A preference for the Sustainability Fund over the Innovation Fund.
- More money is needed to aid transition.
- More help is needed for people deciding how to use direct payments.
- A preference for Option A over Option B.

Mr Leigh summarised the advantages and disadvantages of both options. Option A is cheaper, uses existing buildings and provides better opportunities for people to mix. However, people have to travel further and there would be less choice. Option B would mean shorter travel, more choice and more staff time per person. However, it costs more, groups are smaller and those with higher needs will need to travel further.

Members raised a number of points including the following:

- Members in rural areas said that the Comet bus service doesn't work in their areas because the cost of the travel time is too great.
- Will staff have to be able to drive? Will cars need to be provided to some staff? Mr Leigh agreed that case workers will have to be able to drive. Cars may have to be provided. An advantage is that trained staff will provide the transportation.
- Concerns have been expressed about the multi-functional spaces. Ms Terroni said that staff were confident they could make them work well.
- Members expressed concerns that voluntary groups will lose funding. Officers explained that they will be able to bid for funding. Overall, the funding available will drop from £900,000 to £250,000. There will be a fair and transparent process to decide.

Officers noted questions asked during the discussion and committed to circulating further information and clarification to Members of the Committee after the meeting.

The Chairman summarised the outcome of the discussion:

- The model must be financially sustainable in all its parts.
- A transition package must be in place.
- It must ensure the sustainability of organisations that are currently meeting needs.
- Transport is of particular concern – especially the cost of booking the Comet in rural areas.
- The possibility of combining aspects of Options A & B should be considered.

5/17 Q2 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

(Agenda No. 7)

The Chairman invited Members to identify issues from the report that may require closer study. Several points were taken away to be scheduled for further consideration.

Members expressed concern about the increasing number of children being placed in homes out-of-county. This has been compounded by a delay in providing new centres. It was agreed that Members who would like to pursue this further can attend a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel. Councillors Hannaby, Greene, Gray and Mathew indicated that they were interested in attending.

Members discussed with Officers the problems in recruiting enough staff for reablement. Ms Terroni reported that the new contract had delivered more reablement in its first month – even with less staff than any of the previous 12 months, but there were still not enough staff available despite efforts by agencies to recruit. The workforce must have the right skills.

6/17 OXFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

(Agenda No. 8)

Chief Fire Officer Dave Etheridge introduced the report and thanked the Committee for their support over his tenure which is due to end in April this year. He appreciated the way in which the Council had invested in him as a member of staff and given him great development opportunities.

Mr Etheridge stated that Oxfordshire is one of the safest counties in the UK. He drew attention to the introduction of a fire inspectorate in April 2018. Mr Etheridge thanked Deputy Chief Fire Officer Simon Furlong, the incoming Chief Fire Officer, for his support.

Mr Furlong drew attention to a number of points:

- There were no accidents involving OFRS staff during the last year.
- They achieved their targets in the 10 year vision.

- They have implemented co-responding with the ambulance service.
- Although there had been an increase in significant fires the overall trend was still down.
- He provided the additional briefing document to provide more detail on integration.

Asked why only 24 stations are involved in co-responding with the ambulance service, Mr Furlong responded that any scaling up would be at the request of the ambulance service.

In response to questions relating to the legislation going through Parliament to enable Police and Crime Commissioners to make a business case to take on responsibility for the fire service Mr Etheridge made the following points:

- This seems to be the current direction of travel.
- It's important that nobody thinks it would be a straight-forward move.
- There is room for increased efficiencies through collaboration.
- It's important that we don't complicate collaboration through governance issues.

Mr Etheridge responded to other points as follows:

- Training for users of mobility scooters is something they could look at.
- The service's new vision commits more cadet spaces for Looked After Children and this would include work experience.
- He would like to roll out the work done with Police Community Support Officers across the county. They can play roles in safety advocacy, safeguarding and Prevent.

Members thanked Mr Etheridge for his commendable service and wished him well in the future.

7/17 S.106 AGREEMENTS & THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) (Agenda No. 9)

Mr Kenneford introduced the report which had been prompted by a set of questions from Members of the Committee arising from meetings with Officers last year.

He reported that the Single Response system had been well received. The system coordinates the County Council's responses to City and District Council planning applications. Mr Cox explained that City and District Councils have to negotiate S106 agreements with developers but the County Council is responsible for the key services for which financial contributions are required – especially education and transport. He described how the Single Response system is used to manage that situation.

Officers responded to questions from Members on the following points:

- They were aware of pressures on General Practitioners' services in the Vale of White Horse area. This is primarily the responsibility of the District Council through its local plan.

- • The release of monies has been relatively slow in the last year. Sometimes it's necessary to renegotiate the use of monies and this can take time.
- Officers have met with District Councils and have received assurances that there will be no more bipartite agreements with developers.
- Members asked about enhancing the role of local councillors. Mr Kenneford said that officers are available to meet with councillors.
- The Government's announcement of proposed Garden Villages and Towns was raised and the infrastructural problems that would be created by those proposed in Oxfordshire. Mr Cox responded that he would expect such developments to include S106 agreements.
- It was agreed that it would be useful for the locality meetings to get the papers for this Agenda Item, updated with matters that have arisen in this discussion.
- Mr Cox said that the tools used to calculate population increases as a result of developments take local variations into account.

The Chairman asked Members if this way of scrutinising an aspect of the Council's work had been beneficial. Members agreed that it was useful for some Members to have meetings with Officers in advance of a report coming to the full Committee in order to determine the questions that need to be addressed.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

2017