

STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 4 October 2012 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at Time Not Specified

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale – in the Chair

Councillor Ray Jelf (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor David Turner
Councillor Marilyn Badcock
Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE
Councillor Tim Hallchurch MBE
Councillor Caroline Newton
Councillor Larry Sanders
Councillor David Wilmshurst

Other Members in Attendance:

By Invitation:

Officers:

Whole of meeting Sue Scane, (Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item	Officer Attending
6,7 & 8	Alexandra Bailey, Senior Performance and Improvement Manager
10	Sean Collins (Service Manager – Pensions, Insurance and Money Management)

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.

57/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

None were received from the committee. Sue Scane sent apologies from Cllr Hudspeth who was due to cover the financial monitoring overview.

58/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

None.

59/12 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The committee agreed the minutes of its previous meeting on 26th July.

60/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 4)

61/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

(Agenda No. 5)

The Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer, Sue Scane, gave an update on current issues within the Chief Executive's Office of relevance to the committee.

- The locality review meetings in September went well.
- The Councillor Community Budget applications are picking up, budget is for up to end of March 2013. Details of how budgets have been spent will be published. The basic principle is that spend should meet a community need. Sue Scane clarified that this can include highway issues.
- Legal and Democratic Services – national benchmark figures have been released nationally Oxfordshire County Council comes across well with low cost but high performing.

Staff Updates

- New Communications manager to start in mid-November (Eddie Gibb)
- New Corporate Policy manager John Courouble started on 8th October, Maggie Scott will now be part time.

Finance

- Accounts for last year have been signed off successfully.
- still lots of uncertainty around the local government settlement and longer term financial picture for councils. Settlement not expected until mid December - scrutiny budget day will move to 10 January 2013.

62/12 PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN OXFORDSHIRE

(Agenda No. 6)

Alexandra Bailey (Senior Performance and Improvement Manager) presented the September Council paper on partnership working in Oxfordshire, for discussion. She explained that the information it contained was provided by a number of partnerships.

Cllr Newton asked how the information is challenged to ensure it is robust. Alexandra Bailey explained that the partnership landscape had changed and they were increasingly independent with less formal reporting, but Oxfordshire County Council representatives on partnerships are there to challenge as they go along.

Cllr Turner was keen to receive an update on Armed Forces Champions.

It was AGREED that an update on the champions and military partnership working more widely would be added to the scrutiny work plan.

Members of the committee were particularly interested in the progress of the LEP and how it was being held to account.

Sue Scane outlined that LEPs are primarily accountable to central government and explained that the LEP is a partnership involving business, education and the wider public sector therefore decisions were not being taken by business in isolation.

It was AGREED that it would be useful to receive an update on the LEP's work and to involve Cllr Hudspeth and explore the possible attendance of the LEP chairman or vice-chairman at a future meeting.

Alexandra Bailey also AGREED to bring an update on partnerships in general in 6 months' time.

Councillors wanted to be assured that there was rigorous assessment taking place of how partnerships were performing against their priorities.

Alexandra Bailey explained that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, to which a new approach was currently being developed, will in future provide an evidence base of need and outcome that could be used to challenge partnerships. She suggested councillors may like to be involved in the JSNA development process.

AGREED that Alexandra would bring back further information on the JSNA to the committee in future.

63/12 VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY & FAITH SECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

(Agenda No. 7)

Alexandra Bailey updated the committee on recent changes to the way in which Oxfordshire County Council supports the voluntary and community sector, encapsulated in new £180,000 3 year infrastructure contract.

SYP3

The contract is outcome based and asks the voluntary sector to join up, deliver more together and do things differently in future. Alexandra Bailey suggested that it might be useful for OCVA (Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Association) who won the contract to attend a future meeting and explain more about their work and how councillors in their local role can support the voluntary sector and vice versa.

It was AGREED to schedule an update from OCVA at a future meeting.

64/12 CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 1 2012 (Agenda No. 8)

Alexandra Bailey presented this report on performance in the first quarter. Councillors asked to give feedback now before the report goes to cabinet.

Councillors noted the report but questioned how valuable it was as it was currently presented.

65/12 FINANCIAL MONITORING OVERVIEW (Agenda No. 9)

Sue Scane talked through the Cabinet Member's report as Cllr Shouler was unwell.

She highlighted that there was a very small underspend in the council budget overall, she also explained that the council had received a refund from the Department for Education in relation to school funding. An efficiency reserve of £20m has been built up to help manage possible reductions in funding in future.

The Council is in a strong position and currently on track to achieve its agreed savings.

66/12 THE NEW LOOK LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME FROM APRIL 2014 (Agenda No. 10)

Sue Scane (Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer) and Sean Collins (Service Manager – Pensions, Insurance and Money Management) updated the Committee on planned changes to the local government pension scheme. A draft response to an anticipated national consultation on the LGPS was shared with the committee.

The Pension Committee and Cabinet have already welcomed the proposals.

The committee were happy to endorse the draft consultation response contained in the report.

67/12 FEEDBACK FROM GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP

(Agenda No. 11)

The working group has met twice and considered the feedback received from the member survey as well as looking at how other Councils work.

Cllr Hudspeth joined the last meeting and the members were encouraged by the discussion.

Members are keen to explore cabinet advisory models. The issue of scrutinising education in future is also to be explored.

68/12 FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda No. 12)

An update on LEP at the next meeting.
Voluntary Sector and Military and JSNA to be scheduled.

69/12 CLOSE OF MEETING

(Agenda No. 13)

..... in the Chair

Date of signing