

GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 15 December 2011 commencing at 8.00 am and finishing at 10.00 am

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor David Nimmo-Smith – in the Chair

Councillor Nicholas P. Turner (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Anne Purse
Councillor Michael Gibbard
Councillor Charles Mathew
Councillor Keith Strangwood
Councillor David Turner

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor (for Agenda Item)

By Invitation:

Officers: Liz Johnston, Scrutiny Officer

Whole of meeting

Part of meeting

Agenda Item Officer Attending

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.

45/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Handley and Cllr Roger Belson.

Substitutes were Cllr Patrick Greene and Cllr Peter Skolar.

46/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

47/11 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 3)

There were no speakers or petitions.

48/11 SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANNING 2012/13 - 2016/17

(Agenda No. 4)

The Committee received a presentation from Officers outlining progress that has been made since the Business Strategy was agreed by Council in February 2011. They also set out the new pressures and variations to the Medium Term Financial Plan that are proposed for next year's budget.

The Committee raised a number of areas of concern that should be monitored by Scrutiny throughout the year:

- Cllr Nimmo-Smith and Cllr Purse stressed the need to monitor the impact of changes on smaller services, such as the Countryside Service when they are supporting voluntary organisations. This should come to a future scrutiny meeting.
- Cllr Mathew asked how performance on planning applications and enforcement will be affected by the proposals, which should come to a future scrutiny meeting. Cllr Mathew requested further information on the Growing Places Fund. Huw Jones agreed to provide to the Committee. Cllr Mathew suggested that efficiencies could be made through a more effective process for contacting Area Stewards, which should come to a future scrutiny meeting. Cllr Mathew urged officers to consider charging utilities companies for digging up highways and charging for commercial parking at park and ride sites.
- Cllr Nimmo-Smith was concerned that the announcement on the likely changes to solar panel tariffs would have an adverse effect on the budget; new plans should be considered at a future scrutiny meeting. Martin Tugwell described how the implications of the announcement will be unclear for a while.
- Cllr Greene urged that funding for infrastructure projects that will encourage business growth across Oxfordshire should be prioritised.

The committee were concerned with how accurate the plans could be beyond 2012/13 and reinforced the need to monitor upcoming national policy changes that will affect local government funding, responding and influencing as much as we can.

Cllr Skolar was concerned by the reduced budget for the schools capital programme, which has been caused by a change in the funding received from central government.

Cllr Strangwood challenged Officers to find bigger savings on contracts and re-negotiating with suppliers.

The Committee broadly supported the Business Strategy.

Cllr Nicholas Turner proposed that Officers and Cabinet members explore

- **Amalgamating the Natural History Service with the Countryside Service**

- **Amalgamating the Business Skills Bureau with the Connexions Service**
- **Robust monitoring arrangements for road repairs to ensure extra money can be diverted quickly if necessary**

The recommendation was seconded by Cllr Strangwood and carried unanimously.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing