

STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 12 January 2012 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.20 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor A.M. Lovatt – in the Chair

Councillor Sandy Lovatt (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Jean Fooks
Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE
Councillor Tim Hallchurch MBE
Councillor Hilary Hibbert-Biles
Councillor Dr Peter Skolar
Councillor David Wilmshurst
Councillor Larry Sanders (In place of Councillor Chip Sherwood)
Councillor Charles Mathew (In place of Councillor Nick Carter)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Jim Couchman Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

By Invitation:

Officers:

Whole of meeting Sue Scane (Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer)
Huw Jones (Director Environment & Economy)
Julia Lim (Scrutiny Officer)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item **Officer Attending**
6 & 7 Maggie Scott (Senior Policy Manager)

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.

1/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Carter (Councillor Mathew substituting) and Councillor Chip Sherwood (Councillor Larry Sanders substituting). The committee wished to express their condolences to Councillor Carter who had recently experienced a bereavement.

2/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

None

3/12 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 29th September were approved and signed subject to minor alterations.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th November were also approved and signed subject to minor alterations.

Matters arising:

Councillor Brighthouse queried when the committee would be able to review further information in relation to the inclusion of Food with Thought in the new Property and Facilities single service provider contract.

Huw Jones (Director Environment & Economy) explained the timescales for the Cabinet decision. The Cabinet will meet on 6th February to decide if the information on quality provided by the 3 tenderers is good enough for tendering organisations to be asked to submit a full bid including costs. On the 13th March the Cabinet will then take a final decision on the letting of the contract.

Councillor Brighthouse put forward a motion (seconded by Councillor Sanders) that an extra meeting of the Strategy and Partnerships Committee should be held on 2nd February to consider the Cabinet papers in advance on 6th February, thereby enabling the committee to feed their comments to the Cabinet.

The committee took a vote, there were 9 votes in favour of an additional meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th December were approved and signed.

Matters arising:

Councillor Brighthouse asked for a future agenda item on the risks posed to the Council by the externalisation of services.

It was AGREED that externalisation of services would be considered as part of a future item on risk management.

4/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 4)

None

5/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

(Agenda No. 5)

Huw Jones provided the key update. He updated on the facilities management procurement process. The decision on inclusion of Food with Thought in the scope of the contract will be taken by the Cabinet on 6th February on the basis of quality. All three tenderers have presented to the Procurement Board and site visits will follow.

Huw offered to widen the invitees on the site visits to include members of the committee if they would like to attend. Councillors were asked to follow up outside the meeting.

Food with Thought staff have been involved in developing the specification for the service and unions have also been fully briefed. The process overall is on track.

The Environment and Economy Directorate's work to review the council's asset management strategy (including the asset led locality reviews) was flagged as an item to come to a future meeting of the committee.

Councillor Lovatt asked how the council's restructuring is impacting on the strategic management of the Council.

Sue Scane explained that the council is settling down as a result of restructuring and capacity issues may emerge which will be prioritised accordingly. There has been no marked increase in calls to the customer service centre. The council is currently under spending mainly due to efficiency savings and good financial control. Staff development for the first three tiers of management is due to start in February.

Sue **AGREED** to bring further information on restructuring in the Chief Executive's Office and the wider council back to a future meeting.

Councillors expressed some surprise about no increase in queries to the call centre as their case load had increased.

Huw Jones welcomed any feedback from members about how the OCS service could be improved or difficulties that members of the public had encountered.

Councillor Wilmshurst highlighted the ongoing work being done by the Audit Committee to ensure the quality of services is maintained.

6/12 UPDATE ON LOCALISM BILL AND OPEN PUBLIC SERVICES WHITE PAPER

(Agenda No. 6)

Maggie Scott (Senior Policy Manager) introduced the paper and explained that it was designed to give the committee an overview of recent policy developments and highlight some areas they may wish to explore further.

Councillor Lovatt drew the committee's attention to issues within the committee's remit (greater community powers / involvement, community right to buy, the development of open commissioning)

The committee was interested to explore the three areas further where they can have influence. Councillor Hibbert-Biles highlighted her experience of asset transfer within the big society agenda and the fact that often communities do not fully understand what they are taking on and time involved.

7/12 THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN

(Agenda No. 7)

Maggie Scott invited comments on the Council's draft Corporate Plan.

Councillor Lovatt highlighted that the measures for the plan are currently missing and asked that the committee receives quarterly monitoring information in future so it can help ensure the plan stays on track.

Councillors were concerned that the plan did not contain sufficient detail to be meaningful and that more detail on what actions had been effective was needed. Sue Scane and Huw Jones highlighted that the document is a high level plan and detail is included within the specific directorate Business Plans which the relevant scrutiny committees receive updates on.

Councillors Brighthouse and Sanders highlighted the key role that the universities play in generating growth in Oxfordshire and suggested that currently this was not appropriately reflected in the plan.

Maggie Scott suggested that the reports produced for Cabinet on a regular basis are received in advance by the Strategy and Partnerships Committee. She welcomed any further specific comments from the committee and explained that she would feed these into the consideration of the plan at Cabinet the following week.

It was **AGREED** that the committee would receive regular monitoring information on progress in relation to the Corporate Plan.

8/12 FINANCIAL MONITORING OVERVIEW 2011/12

(Agenda No. 8)

SYP3

Councillor Couchman introduced the Financial Monitoring Overview. He drew attention to the following items:

- OCC currently forecast to underspend £3.311m.
- The funding allocated via the big Society Fund
- OCC is in a strong position to fulfil the savings outlined in the Business Strategy
- Budget setting seminar to take place on 13th January, councillors were urged to attend
- 2012/13 proposals will be presented at Cabinet next week

Adult social care was highlighted as the most challenging area for savings. Councillor Skolar highlighted the threat to adult social services budgets by delayed transfers of care.

Councillor Mathew expressed some concern about the impact of schools changing to academies on the council's capital programme. He also asked what was the impact on the council's revenue budgets of the academies policy.

Councillor Fooks asked for a paper explaining LACSEG funding more fully.

Sue Scane **AGREED** to being a paper to the next Strategy & Partnerships committee meeting on the impact of academies and LACSEG funding. She stressed that the council was still working on the basis of the government's 'minded to' consultation so details may change.

9/12 SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANNING 2012/13 - 2016/17 (Agenda No. 9)

The committee noted the comments of the other scrutiny committees made on the 15th December and **AGREED** for them to be put forward to Cabinet, along with a comment to highlight their concerns about the potential impact of academies on the capital programme.

10/12 BICESTER GARRISON VISIT - FEEDBACK & NEXT STEPS (Agenda No. 10)

Councillor Hallchurch recapped on the Bicester Garrison visit for those members of the committee that were unable to attend. He highlighted three key issues for the future: the re-location of other military services to Bicester, the development of Graven Hill and military redundancies.

Councillor Bolster encouraged others to visit the Garrison and highlighted the importance of all tiers of government working together to support effective partnership working with the military.

Councillor Fooks stressed the importance of infrastructure needs being worked through as re-locations take place.

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Councillor Lovatt highlighted the importance of involving the military in locality working.

The committee welcomed future updates on the council's military covenant and partnership working.

11/12 FORWARD PLAN
(Agenda No. 11)

Issues highlighted during the meeting for future consideration by the committee were:

- Property asset management plan and locality reviews
- Restructuring of Chief Executive's Office and wider council
- Potential impact of Academies
- Corporate plan monitoring
- Externalisation of services and risk management

Sue Scane suggested that HR could bring new structure charts for the Council to a subsequent meeting to help bring the committee up to date with changes across the Council. This was **AGREED**.

12/12 CLOSE OF MEETING
(Agenda No. 12)

12.20

..... in the Chair

Date of signing