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GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 23 April 2012 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.25 pm

Present:

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

Councillor Nicholas P. Turner (Deputy Chairman)

Councillor Anne Purse

Councillor Michael Gibbard

Councillor Patrick Greene

Councillor Pete Handley

Councillor Charles Mathew

Councillor John Tanner

Councillor David Turner

Other Members in Attendance:

By Invitation:

Officers: Alexandra Bailey, 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.

58/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Bill Service substituted for Councillor Keith Strangwood

59/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

Councillor Nick Turner as a member of Banbury National Farmer's Union

Councillor David Turner as a member of Culham Site

60/12 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting of 27 February 2012 were approved by the committee.

61/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE
(Agenda No. 4)

There were no requests to speak or petition the committee.

62/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE
(Agenda No. 5)

Martin Tugwell, Deputy Director for Growth and Infrastructure stated that the Council had signed a single contract for the property and facilities management. This contract fell under the remit of the Strategy and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee; however the signing of the contract provided an opportunity to reflect on the most appropriate structure for the directorate going forward. The directorate is being restructured to bring together strategy and policy under one deputy director and contract and operations under a second. The new structure will come into effect on 2 July 2012.

The Minerals and Waste Development Framework was approved by Council and will be published in early May 2012.

Martin Tugwell explained that the council had a clear legal position on the A4130 and had secured the land necessary to deliver the road. The council was pursuing the matter through all appropriate legal channels and all responses to the consultation will be given to the inspector as part of the examination of the matter.

Councillor Bill Service asked for an update on the future of Didcot Power Station. Martin Tugwell replied that he was unaware of specific plans for the power station beyond 2015 but undertook to provide Councillor Service with an update. Councillor David Turner spoke in support of concerns that had been raised about the road capacity in Didcot.

Councillor Greene asked for an update on the matter he had raised at the previous meeting about railway bridges that are subject to electrification.

Martin Tugwell undertook to provide an update to Councillor Greene on the matter.

Councillor Nick Turner asked about the impact of the Energy from Waste Plant being built in Buckinghamshire. Martin Tugwell agreed to provide Councillor Turner with an update on the matter. Councillor Purse asked about the impact of the incinerator on health and Martin Tugwell reassured her that this was being managed by the Environment Agency.

63/12 THE COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE
(Agenda No. 6)

The committee received a number of presentations on the work of the Countryside Service, the Chilterns Society and the Forest Wychwood Project. The Countryside Service undertook to circulate the Countryside Service structure chart to members of the committee.

The committee expressed its thanks for the presentations and its support for the work of the Chiltern Society and the Forest Wychwood Project.

The council discussed the difficulties in managing public rights of way on private land and emphasised the importance of working with private landowners. The committee explored a number of issues in respect of the management of rights of way including the fencing and gating of footpaths; shooting near footpaths; leveraging funding from private landowners and the protection of wildflowers and biodiversity.

The Committee considered work being done to protect and encourage woodland in Oxfordshire. It was clarified that farmers can only succeed in being given grants for woodland if they are planting sufficient trees to qualify for forestry commission funding. The Woodland Trust is committed to planting and protecting trees and work with local communities to do the same. There is greater support and engagement for this work in rural areas than in urban and consideration should be given to how best to engage urban communities in open space planning and development.

The Committee emphasised the importance of open spaces to residents and to Oxfordshire's economic growth. The Committee was keen to ensure that open space was considered a core part of the infrastructure of Oxfordshire and supported the work that the service did to map and quantify the value of open spaces in Oxfordshire.

64/12 CLOSE OF MEETING
(Agenda No. 7)

The meeting closed at 12.25 pm

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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