

STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 17 January 2013 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at Time Not Specified

Present:

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

Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE
Councillor Caroline Newton
Councillor David Wilmshurst
Councillor Patrick Greene
Councillor Stewart Lilly
Councillor Roz Smith

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Ian Hudspeth (for whole of meeting)

By Invitation:

Officers:

Whole of meeting Sue Scane, Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer. Julia Lim, Scrutiny Officer.

Part of meeting Graham Shaw, Deputy Director for Oxfordshire Customer Services and Mark Peet, Operations Manager for Oxfordshire Customer Services (item 8) and Alexandra Bailey, Corporate Performance and Review Manager (Items 9 and 10)

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.

86/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Cllr Badcock, Cllr Sanders, Cllr Hallchurch (Cllr Lilly as substitute), Cllr Turner (Cllr Roz Smith as substitute), Cllr Jelf (Cllr Greene as substitute).

87/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

None

88/12 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes were agreed.

Matters arising – Julia Lim to follow up with Graham Shaw on his action to produce a briefing on pro-active / community broadband development.

Cllr Hudspeth explained that the City Deal bid had been submitted and feedback from government was awaited.

The Corporate Asset Strategy to come back to next meeting following discussion at Cabinet in late January.

89/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 4)

None

90/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

(Agenda No. 5)

Sue Scane provided the directors update focusing on the budget as many key activities of the Chief Executive's Office were already on the agenda.

Budget – Throughout the whole council process Corporate Finance have worked very closely and positively with all directorates. The Council is still waiting for some final finance information from the government. The final settlement is expected in early February; it's therefore possible that the February Council papers will need to be supplemented by addendas as more information becomes available. It was stressed that everything produced so far is provisional and could be subject to change, however there was sufficient reserves to deal with changes in the short term.

91/12 SERVICE & RESOURCE PLANNING 2013/14 - 2016/17 - COMMENTS FROM SCRUTINY MEETINGS 10/1/13

(Agenda No. 6)

The members of the committee expressed their regret about the proposal to change and eventually remove the Area Stewards Fund as the fund is a key way

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in which communities feel able to influence local spend and is an opportunity to pool funding with parish councils.

Cllr Hudspeth explained that in future the fund will be managed at a locality level and it will still be possible for parish councils to add funding.

The committee agreed to support the comments made by other scrutiny committees on 10th January in relation to service and resource planning and put forward the following comments to Cabinet:

- i. The Strategy & Partnerships Committee has noted the comments from the various scrutiny committees and is broadly supportive of the points agreed and the backing they have given to the budget proposals. However the committee wished to stress that it regrets the fact that the local government sector has had to bear such significant reductions in its budgets and the difficulty this creates for delivering local services.
- ii. The Strategy & Partnerships Committee would particularly like to draw the Cabinet's attention to the feeling of widespread regret expressed in relation to the proposal to remove the Area Stewards Fund. This fund is popular with the public and has enabled members to respond to local transport issues. The committee supports the proposal that the council considers reinstating the fund if it receives any one off or unexpected funding from central government.

Cllr Greene wished to highlight that the comments provided from the Growth and Infrastructure committee did not reflect a long discussion about pot holes which took place at the meeting.

92/12 THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN 2013/14 - 2016/17 - DRAFT (Agenda No. 7)

Sue Scane introduced the refreshed plan which had been developed with the input of a member working group chaired by the Leader. Both Sue Scane and Cllr Hudspeth expressed their thanks to the staff that had worked on the document.

Cllr Newton felt there could be an ambitious communications approach around the plan particularly in relation to the highlighted success stories.

Sue Scane explained that Eddie Gibb the new communications manager is keen to address this.

Cllr Brighouse highlighted that references to the Big Society Fund need to be amended bearing in mind budget proposals responding to the local government settlement. She also suggested that the work the Fire Service does with young

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people as well as adults should be highlighted e.g. the County's Fire and Rescue Service Cadets

The CHOICE values were discussed and it was suggested that these could be revised following the election to better reflect current priorities.

93/12 CUSTOMER SERVICE UPDATE

(Agenda No. 8)

Graham Shaw and Mark Peet provided an update on progress with improving performance in the Customer Service Centre. Performance is now in line or exceeding service level agreements.

Corrective actions to address poor performance during 2012 have focused on recruitment and retention of staff including training for staff to ensure they have a good understanding of the services being offered through the centre.

Sue Scane highlighted that the Customer Service Centre had been excellent in stepping up service levels during the flooding last year and expressed her thanks to Graham, Mark and their teams.

There have been improvements in service levels in highways, concessionary fares and dial-a-ride. Much of this has been due to taking a more pro-active approach to communication with customers and improvements to online facilities.

The committee welcomed the improvements, Cllr Newton asked for more detail on call answering times for those not answered within the 20sec target time and Cllr Brighthouse asked for more information on block bookings for dial-a-ride (% of journeys that block booked, the number cancelled or no-shows and the number of journeys refused due to a lack of capacity). Mark Peet AGREED to provide more information.

Graham Shaw stressed that the service is now stable and there are lots of opportunities to continue improvements in future.

94/12 OUTLINE GOVERNANCE REVIEW CONCLUSIONS

(Agenda No. 9)

Alexandra Bailey introduced the report and talked members through the proposals. The committee queried the officer support available to cabinet advisory groups and the potential to lose member expertise.

Cllr Hudspeth and Alexandra Bailey explained that cabinet advisory groups will be supported by officers and that the new proposals provide an opportunity to

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focus on issues that really matter to the council rather than issues of interest to committee chairmen.

Cllr Brighthouse suggested that the Education committee is called Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She also suggested that it should be made clear that the Transport Advisory Panel was a standing committee rather than a task and finish group.

Cllr Hudspeth explained that cabinet advisory groups could be commissioned by the Performance Scrutiny Committee as well as the Cabinet. The precise process for this will be determined.

There was a discussion about the proposed Education Scrutiny committee and its lack of statutory basis to call academies to account. The importance of keeping academies on board with the council and using the committee to help them link up and share information was stressed by Cllr Brighthouse and supported by the committee.

The committee supported the proposals and it was agreed that more detail would be presented at the committee's February meeting.

95/12 EQUALITIES ANNUAL UPDATE

(Agenda No. 10)

Alexandra Bailey introduced the report and explained that all actions were achieved or on-going.

The committee noted the report.

96/12 FINANCIAL MONITORING OVERVIEW 2012/13

(Agenda No. 11)

Cllr Hudspeth introduced the report which presents a positive picture overall and expressed his thanks to Sue Scane and her team. The committee noted the report.

97/12 FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda No. 12)

The following items were suggested for the February committee meeting:

- Corporate Asset Management Plan
- Update on military champions
- JSNA
- Governance review

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98/12 CLOSE OF MEETING
(Agenda No. 13)

..... in the Chair

Date of signing