

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 16 December 2013 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.50 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE – in the Chair

Councillor Neil Fawcett (Deputy Chairman)

Councillor Lynda Atkins

Councillor John Christie

Councillor Sam Coates

Councillor Yvonne Constance

Councillor Mark Gray

Councillor Jenny Hannaby

Councillor Richard Langridge

Councillor Sandy Lovatt

Councillor Lawrie Stratford

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Judith Heathcoat (for Adult Services)
Councillor David Nimmo Smith and Nick Carter (For Environment & Economy)

Whole of meeting Lorna Baxter, Chief Finance Officer; Eira Hale, Sue Whitehead (Chief Executive's Office)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

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Adult Services

Officer Attending

John Jackson, Director for Social & Community Services, John Dixon, Deputy Director Adult Social Care, Environment & Economy Huw Jones Director for Environment & Economy, Sue Scane, Director for Environment & Economy Designate, Mark Kemp, Deputy Director, Commercial, Martin Tugwell, Deputy Director Strategy & Infrastructure Planning Graham Shaw, Deputy Director – OCS

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.

19/13 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 3)

The following requests to speak had been agreed for this meeting and the meeting to be held at 1.50 pm:

Item 4 – Service & Resource Planning 2014/15 – 2017/18

Adult Social Care

General - Paul Cann, Age UK Oxfordshire and Action for Carers Oxfordshire

Impact of cuts on the lives of the poorest old folk - Mr Michael Hugh-Jones

Learning Disability Service Budget – Pam Bebbington, trustee of My Life My Choice

Advice Centres/Support Funding:

Ms Suzy Drohan, Oxfordshire Welfare Rights, Barton Neighbourhood Centre

Jill Tishler, Oxford City Advice Bureau

Fran Bennett, Treasurer and Trustee of Agnes Smith Advice Centre, Blackbird Leys

Sue Tanner, Convenor Oxford Advice Forum

Carole Roberts, Manager, Rosehill & Donnington Advice Centre, Oxford Lesley Dewhurst, Oxford Homeless Pathways

Environment & Economy

Oxfordshire Waste Partnership - David Dodds, Chairman, Oxfordshire Waste Partnership

20/13 SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANNING 2014/15-2017/18

(Agenda No. 4)

At its meetings on 16 December 2013 the Performance Scrutiny Committee considered a report that formed part of a series relating to the Service and Resource Planning process for 2014/15 to 2017/18.

The Committee considered in turn the Directorate Business Strategies and savings proposed for the service areas including the following annexes. The Director and relevant cabinet member for each Directorate was available to respond to questions.

Annex 1 – Directorate Business Strategies 2014/15 – 2017/18

Annex 2 – New Revenue Budget Pressures and savings 2014/15 – 2017/18

Annex 3 – Service & Community Impact Assessment (SCIAs)

Annex 4 – Summary of results from Talking Oxfordshire

Annex 5 – Summary of councillor comments from briefing sessions

Paul Cann, Age UK Oxfordshire and Action for Carers Oxfordshire highlighted the following two areas as examples of where the Council by spending on the voluntary sector saved money. He asked that the Council work with voluntary organisations to analyse of the impact of the proposed savings:

- 1) The subsidy for meals and laundry. The laundry service was provided for 75 people with continence problems. The County Council have identified this as

one of the biggest factors in admissions to care. This is the sort of service that keeps people living independently in own homes.

- 2) Information and advice services. He referred to the major chasm between claims and entitlements and to the large numbers of unclaimed pension credits.

He also spoke in support of the brokerage service.

Michael Hugh-Jones as a local resident referred to the need to raise more money locally. He offered to make a donation to services and felt that others might be similarly willing.

Pam Bebbington, a trustee for My Life My Choice run by and for people with learning disabilities spoke in support of the services provided by that organisation. She highlighted that issues of loneliness and isolation; premature death and higher levels of unemployment affected people with learning disabilities disproportionately and that the loss of support would have a great impact.

Suzy Drohan, Oxfordshire Welfare Rights, Barton Neighbourhood Centre – Organisation spoke in support of funding for Advice Centres noting that they put money back into the community by accessing benefits and entitlements from government. They worked with a range of bodies including social services. At a time of welfare reform where people will be confused and require independent specialist advice. The support reduced the risk of homelessness and supported people to remain independently in their own homes.

Gill Tishler Oxford City Advice Bureau added that the services affected were not mainstream, open access services but support to people with complex needs. She also queried whether the service could be retained only for over 65s or if this was open to challenge on age discrimination grounds. In response to a question she felt it would be difficult for other organisations to provide the services given the pressures on other agencies.

Fran Bennett, Treasurer and Trustee of Agnes Smith Advice Centre, Blackbird Leys pointed out that charitable trusts in principle will not replace lost public sector funding.

Sue Tanner, Convenor Oxford Advice Forum endorsed previous comments and also referred to Oxfordshire Support Fund and difficulties in accessing the application form.

Carole Roberts Rosehill & Donnington Advice Centre, Oxford spoke on the Support Fund and commented that she found it difficult to encourage applications. Alternatives were not viable in terms of emergency needs. She responded to a query from Councillor Sam Coates and stated its loss would increase the use of pay day loans.

Lesley Dewhurst, Manager, Oxford Homeless Pathways spoke in favour of housing related support and implications of reduction in support funding. She asked that the County Council enter into dialogue and work with them.

John Jackson, Director for Social & Community Services, John Dixon, Deputy Director Adult Social Care, and Councillor Heathcoat came to the table.

John Jackson read out a statement highlighting major pressures and savings and it was agreed that this be made available on the Council's website.

During detailed consideration the following key points were made by members of the committee:

- 1) The importance of advice in supporting the avoidance of need for Council services was highlighted and that this needed to be considered carefully by Cabinet.
- 2) In recognising the savings to be made the Committee queried whether organisations have sufficient time to plan for changes. It was suggested that there be consideration of whether some of the savings could be rephased to give more time to affected organisations. John Jackson responded that many of the changes would not come in until April 2015.
- 3) There was reference to community networks and engaging with the organisations heard from today in their development. John Jackson explained the thinking behind the development of community networks and that use would be made of existing networks. He emphasised that proposals did not reflect negatively on the work that organisations were doing but of the need to make savings.
- 4) The importance of monitoring the impacts going forward was highlighted to ensure that the most vulnerable were not adversely disadvantaged. Responding to further questions John Jackson explained that the changes to the laundry service reflected enforcement of Council policy not to subsidise services. He accepted the importance of incontinence as an issue but stressed that there was scope to use personal budgets and that the service would continue but at no cost to the Council.
- 5) There was discussion of the expected £10m from the Clinical Commissioning Group and where it could be spent including on the information and advice services. It was noted that the Better Care Fund would need to benefit health services and that any suggestion that it support information and advice services would need to make the case for the impact on acute services. John Jackson responded to a concern that the money from the Better Care Fund was being used more than once: firstly replacing services currently provided as a result of acute needs and also replacing other services currently provided by social care services. Whilst acknowledging the concern John Jackson commented that it was a case of following through on a process already begun. For example in promoting the use of the Alert system.

- 6) There was discussion about the need to make the fullest use of assistive technologies and John Jackson commented that they were important for all groups. He wanted to explore their use in the widest scope as there was evidence that local government in general had not exploited it enough. The Council would work with partner organisations to explore possibilities.
- 7) Responding to comments the Committee was advised that District Councils' were involved in the housing related support discussions.
- 8) A member highlighted that the success of pooled budgets was key, the problems with delayed transfers and concern over the availability of cash for people in crisis. John Jackson highlighted that the Council depended on the voluntary sector and on families with the Council and NHS providing critical elements. The Council was focusing on efficiency and leanness in its own organisation. Costs had to be reduced and we would be working with partners and particularly the NHS.
- 9) John Jackson referred to the moral as well as the legal obligation to meet care needs and the Council's commitment to doing so.

In conclusion the Chairman highlighted a number of key issues:

- 1) She welcomed the fact that there would be further consultation processes in connection with specific changes. The Committee commended further work with agencies so that their views could be worked through and impacts managed;
- 2) The role of advice and information services in relation to adult social care needs;
- 3) The Social Fund and how going forward it can be ensured that people in crisis and in desperate need can get access to help including a crisis loan.
- 4) Further work was required in respect of learning disability services to ensure people with learning disabilities were not adversely disadvantaged;
- 5) The idea of community networks should be embedded to support some of these issues.

Cllr Constance agreed with the summary of the points raised and recommended the budget as printed.

Following further discussion some Councillors commented that it was not the role of this Committee to approve the budget proposals; others felt unable to support the recommendation given the number of unknowns including the impact on the rural community they felt.

Councillor Atkins proposed an amended recommendation to accept the overall budget but welcome further consultation and further work with agencies in recognition that there was still a fair amount to do. On being put to the vote the amendment was carried by 8 votes to 3.

AGREED: the majority of the Committee (by 6 votes to 5) accepted the overall budget but in line with the issues identified above welcomed further consultation, further work with agencies and noted that there was still more work needed on fine tuning to numbers and timings to ensure that support is still available to vulnerable people in crisis and that sufficient information and advice is available, especially with regard to people with learning difficulties.

Environment & Economy

Councillor Reg Waite, Deputy Chairman, Chairman, Oxfordshire Waste Partnership spoke in support of maintaining funding to the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership and highlighted its important role in ensuring that Oxfordshire maintained its excellent record on recycling. Responding to questions Councillor Waite detailed the current level of funding from the County Council and District Councils, stressed the strategic importance of communications about recycling across the County and that it was not practicable to expect the Districts to fund it all themselves.

Mark Kemp, Deputy Director, Commercial, Sue Scane, Director for Environment & Economy Designate, Huw Jones Director for Environment & Economy, Councillor Nimmo Smith, Cabinet Member for Environment & Economy, Councillor Nick Carter, Cabinet Member for Business & Customer Services, Martin Tugwell, Deputy Director Strategy & Infrastructure Planning Graham Shaw, Deputy Director – OCS came to the table.

Huw Jones highlighted the 6 main themes running through the Strategy, the overall objective of a Thriving Oxfordshire and introduced the savings being proposed.

Responding to the comments from the Deputy Chairman of OWP Martin Tugwell stated that the proposals were endorsed by partners and that there was no further work required on the Waste Strategy.

During detailed consideration the following were amongst the points made:

- 1) There was support for the proposal relating to the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership noting that the partnership had done excellent work but that its main tasks had been done.
- 2) A member commended the Business Strategy feeling that it represented a good example of what the Council was trying to achieve in looking at all the elements including income generation, targeting resources and externalisation (working smarter).
- 3) On the Waste Recycling Centre Martin Tugwell responded to a query about the level of confidence to make savings given the pressure resulting from an inability to achieve earlier savings. He set the savings within the context of

looking at the overall need to reduce the net cost of the network. It would be kept under review.

- 4) There was some welcome for the additional funding into defects. How realistic the figure is given the exponentially expanding demand was questioned. Mark Kemp referred to the work being undertaken by the Transport Advisory Panel to look at a different approach. Responding to further comments on the defects budget Mark Kemp added that they would be looking at the capital/revenue mix of work undertaken. Responding to the points made Huw Jones commented that the aim was to have an infrastructure that was safe and effective. What would be lost was that it might be less cosmetically pleasing. He referred to the tension between responding to local need and to responding efficiently across the whole network and considering the strategic condition of the road
- 5) There was some discussion on the re-organisation of the Area Stewardship arrangements. It was queried how inspection and monitoring work would be carried out. The importance of maintaining communication with local councillors was stressed. Councillor Hannaby commented that she had been heartened by her visit to the works at Drayton but the difficulty was in getting good sub-contractors. Mark Kemp gave an assurance that there was a requirement to do inspections and these would be maintained. Sue Scane added that any Councillors wishing to visit their local depot were welcome to do so.
- 6) A member queried the changing role around school properties. Huw Jones explained that going forward it would be an increasingly complex picture as it will be dependent in part on the services schools chose to buy back.
- 7) The Committee felt that it would be inappropriate to support proposals on supported transport when the Home to School Transport policy was still out for consultation. Similarly a decision on externalisation was expected in January. Councillor Christie referred to the Talking Oxfordshire summary referring to comments from OSBAG and noting that they had stressed to him that it was not just about cutting services but also about the protection of services. Huw Jones commented that Integrated transport (EE14) covered all transport. The savings were back ended because of the need for further work. Statutory services would be protected and specific proposals would be consulted on. Councillor Jenny Hannaby highlighted the importance of transport services on rural communities.

In response to concerns of scrutiny members Councillor Carter emphasised that needs of vulnerable people would not be forgotten.

The meeting adjourned at 1.15 am and reconvened at 1.45 pm

The Chairman recommended and it was AGREED that the Committee note the proposals and ask Cabinet to consider the following key points:

- The committee welcomed the consideration of a wide range of different proposals, including income generation.

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- The committee asked that particular note be taken of the outcome of consultations on proposed changes, particularly to ensure that;
 - the proposals with regard to supported transport protect the most vulnerable people, especially those in rural areas.
 - the customer service externalisation approach achieves the required efficiencies.
- The committee also recommended that assurance be sought around councillor engagement in the development and maintenance of highways if the area stewardship model is changed.
- The need to ensure that there was an appropriate balance between Capital and revenue in highways works.
- The need to consider the property portfolios in connection with the changing environment for schools.
- The importance of keeping the savings in relation to the waste recycling centre under review.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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