

## Notice of a Meeting

### Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 4 July 2011 at 10.00 am

County Hall, Oxford, OX1 1ND

#### Membership

Chairman -

Deputy Chairman -

#### Councillors:

Lawrie Stratford

Anthony Gearing

Bill Service

Carol Viney

Stewart Lilly

Alan Thompson

John Goddard

Susanna Pressel

Alyas Ahmed

John Sanders

#### Notes:

**Date of next meeting: 5 September 2011**

#### What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

- Community safety; anti-social behaviour; crime and the fear of crime; fire and rescue; consumer protection; emergency planning; police issues; coroner's service; gypsies and travellers; drugs and alcohol awareness; road safety (police, trading standards, fire and rescue); adult learning (oversight of the adult learning service in provider mode); libraries; museums and heritage; the arts; archives; leisure and recreation; registration service; community cohesion; equalities and social inclusion; voluntary and community sector.
- The functions of the responsible authorities (local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, the police, primary care trusts and the Probation Service) which comprise a Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership/Community Safety Partnership.
- Those regulatory functions of the Planning & Regulation Committee not falling within the remit of the Growth & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee.

#### How can I have my say?

We welcome the views of the community on any issues in relation to the responsibilities of this Committee. Members of the public may ask to speak on any item on the agenda or may suggest matters which they would like the Committee to look at. **Requests to speak must be submitted to the Committee Officer below no later than 9 am on the working day before the date of the meeting.**

#### For more information about this Committee please contact:

Chairman	-	Councillor Lawrie Stratford E.Mail: <a href="mailto:lawrie.stratford@oxfordshire.gov.uk">lawrie.stratford@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a>
Committee Officer	-	Sean Gibson, Tel: (01865) 815482 <a href="mailto:sean.gibson@oxfordshire.gov.uk">sean.gibson@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a>

*Peter G. Clark.*

Peter G. Clark  
County Solicitor

June 2011

## About the County Council

The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 74 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 630,000 residents. These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £0.9 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 9 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

## About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:

- Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
- Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
- Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
- Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
- Representing the community in Council decision making
- Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:

- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

## What does this Committee do?

The Committee meets up to 6 times a year or more. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session

**If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting**

**A hearing loop is available at County Hall.**

## AGENDA

1. **Election of Chairman for the Current Council Year**
2. **Election of Deputy Chairman for the Current Council Year**
3. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**
4. **Declarations of Interest - see guidance note on the back page**
5. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 8)
6. **Speaking to or petitioning the Committee**
7. **Director's Update**

**10.25**

John Jackson (Director of Social & Community Services) and David Ethridge (Chief Fire Officer) to report.

8. **Scrutiny Work Programme 2011-2012**

**11.00**

Contact Officer: Sean Gibson, Corporate Performance Officer, 01865 815482

Draft work programme 2011-2012 to be distributed separately.

The Committee is invited to approve the work programme.

### **SCRUTINY MATTERS**

9. **Report on changes to Museums Service** (Pages 9 - 14)

**11.15**

Contact Officer: Martyn Brown, Heritage & Arts Officer, Social & Community Services, 01993 814114

The Committee is invited to comment on a briefing by the Heritage & Arts Officer.

## **10. Emergency Planning preparations for winter 2011-2012 (Pages 15 - 18)**

### **11.35**

Contact Officer: Bethan Morgan, County Emergency Planning Officer, 01865 323760

The Committee is invited to receive an update from the County Emergency Planning Officer.

## **11. Crime & Disorder Partnerships Community Strategies 2011-2012**

### **11.55**

Contact Officer: Ruth Whyte, Manager, Safer Communities Unit, 01865 815396

Paper and summary of strategies to distributed separately.

The Committee is invited to comment on the Crime & Disorder Community Strategies.

### **BUSINESS PLANNING**

## **12. Forward Plan**

### **12.15**

Committee to consider any items of interest.

## **13. Close of Meeting: 12.20 approx**

## Declarations of Interest

This note briefly summarises the position on interests which you must declare at the meeting. Please refer to the Members' Code of Conduct in Part 9.1 of the Constitution for a fuller description.

### **The duty to declare ...**

You must always declare any "personal interest" in a matter under consideration, ie where the matter affects (either positively or negatively):

- (i) any of the financial and other interests which you are required to notify for inclusion in the statutory Register of Members' Interests; or
- (ii) your own well-being or financial position or that of any member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association more than it would affect other people in the County.

### **Whose interests are included ...**

"Member of your family" in (ii) above includes spouses and partners and other relatives' spouses and partners, and extends to the employment and investment interests of relatives and friends and their involvement in other bodies of various descriptions. For a full list of what "relative" covers, please see the Code of Conduct.

### **When and what to declare ...**

The best time to make any declaration is under the agenda item "Declarations of Interest". Under the Code you must declare not later than at the start of the item concerned or (if different) as soon as the interest "becomes apparent".

In making a declaration you must state the nature of the interest.

### **Taking part if you have an interest ...**

Having made a declaration you may still take part in the debate and vote on the matter unless your personal interest is also a "prejudicial" interest.

### **"Prejudicial" interests ...**

A prejudicial interest is one which a member of the public knowing the relevant facts would think so significant as to be likely to affect your judgment of the public interest.

### **What to do if your interest is prejudicial ...**

If you have a prejudicial interest in any matter under consideration, you may remain in the room but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the matter under consideration, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise.

### **Exceptions ...**

There are a few circumstances where you may regard yourself as not having a prejudicial interest or may participate even though you may have one. These, together with other rules about participation in the case of a prejudicial interest, are set out in paragraphs 10 – 12 of the Code.

### **Seeking Advice ...**

It is your responsibility to decide whether any of these provisions apply to you in particular circumstances, but you may wish to seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer before the meeting.

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## SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Monday, 9 May 2011 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.30pm

**Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Lawrie Stratford – in the Chair

Councillor Carol Viney (Deputy Chairman)  
Councillor John Goddard  
Councillor Patrick Greene  
Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale  
Councillor Susanna Pressel  
Councillor Bill Service  
Councillor Anda Fitzgerald-O’Conner  
Councillor Ray Jelf

**Officers:**

Whole of meeting Sean Gibson, Corporate Performance Advisor  
David Ethridge, Chief Fire Officer

Part of meeting John Jackson, Director, Social & Community Services

**Agenda Item**

**Officer Attending**

7 Richard Webb, Acting Head of Trading Standards & Community Safety  
8 Colin Thomas, Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
9 Colin Thomas, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

*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.*

### 117/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Anda Fitzgerald-O’Conner attended in place of Councillor Alan Thompson.

Councillor Ray Jelf attended in place of Councillor Stewart Lilly.

### 118/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

None.

### **119/11 MINUTES**

(Agenda No. 3)

Minute 107/11: Councillor Judith Heathcoat referred to the minute on simplifying the grant process for communities, and that work was on-going and being lead by Councillor Keiron Mallon.

Minute 109/11: Councillor Susanna Pressel said that she had been speaking about the 'on-going' training of volunteers to run libraries. As the minute stood, the impression was given that this would be one-off training. 'On-going' to be inserted as part of record.

### **120/11 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE**

(Agenda No. 4)

No requests to speak to the committee received.

### **121/11 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

(Agenda No. 5)

Reports were received from David Ethridge (Chief Fire Officer) and John Jackson (Director, Social & Community Services).

David Ethridge reported on:

#### Trading Standards

1. A strategy document, 'Better Choices: Better Deals', has been published by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills and the Cabinet Office's Behavioural Insights Team, and will lead to more information being made available for consumers in order to be able to make informed decisions when purchasing. It will also allow consumers to know more about what information is held about them by businesses.
2. An inspection had been carried out in the first week of may into how the council manages the Regulatory Investigations Powers Act. Committee will be informed when inspection report is published.
3. Discussions had been held with Buckinghamshire County Council on joint managerial proposals for the councils' Trading Standards teams. A project Implementation Document has been drafted.

#### Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership

Partnership has undertaken a review of its direction of work in light of changes to community Safety and the Policing Bill currently going through Parliament. The policing Bill contains proposals which would move responsibility for community safety



funding from the county council to the Police Authority. This will lead to the partnership having even more closer working arrangements with Police.

David Ethridge explained in response to a question from the deputy chairman that annual budget is £600,000, and that county council has committed to maintaining current funding for 12 months. However, this will reduce to £400,000 the following year.

#### Fire & Rescue Service

The call on Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue service is the forest fire in Berkshire which has led to the need for national assets to be utilised and co-ordinated. Oxfordshire stores some of this equipment.

The fire is in an area of 300 hectares of mixed forest, and it is estimated that 55% has been destroyed. The fire is complicated by a thick covering of pine needles and a deep peat layer which has also caught fire.

Up to 200 fire fighters have been in operation every day for 11 days with 20-30 engines in place. Along with Oxfordshire, five other areas have been involved; London, Hertfordshire, Hampshire, Surrey and Buckinghamshire.

Oxfordshire is offering permanent support for Berkshire, this includes officer support, command and control, and communications support.

David Ethridge paid tribute to all staff in the Control Room particularly their work in co-ordinating joint logistical support. He noted that the additional investment has improved availability by 22%, and that Oxfordshire has benefitted from the retention of Control Room staff as their experience when a situation like the Berkshire forest fire arises.

The Chief Fire Officer would send a briefing on the incident to all members.

The Chief Fire Officer was asked about costs, and the likely cause of the fire. He said that the Fire & Rescue Act 2004, section 13, places a duty on brigades to work together regardless of where the incident is located. At present the cost stands at £100,000, but should not be viewed as one incident. For example, the requirements of the act means that Oxfordshire can keep a single engine at Henley rather than two as Berkshire is aware that it needs to be able to provide an engine when necessary.

David Ethridge added that 'Belwin scheme' could be used to help cover costs, but that Berkshire would have to instigate proceedings.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that two people have been arrested and are on police bail at the moment.

The deputy Chairman asked if the Control Room had benefited from the control room project coming to an end. The Chief Office said that Oxfordshire to consider alternatives over the next few months. He added that one off funding has been

provided to refresh software for example, but though resilient it is getting old and maintenance costs will continue to rise.

Due to forest fire, resilience in Thames Valley area to be tested.

John Jackson reported on:

### Cogges Museum

Julia Holberry has stood down as Chair of the Shadow Board. Judy Niner will replace her as Chair with Richard Munro as Vice-Chair. The two Oxfordshire County Council representatives on the Board are: Councillor David Robertson and Simon Kearey (Head of Strategy & Transformation, Social & Community Services).

The Shadow Board due to set up trust with charitable status, and is also in the process of appointing a Director. Some funding has been made available by Community Services and West Oxfordshire to support activities during March, a major bid to the heritage fund is underway. The museum plans to be open for the summer holidays.

The vision for the museum is to draw on Cogges past to reflect on the issues of the present, anticipate the priorities of the future, and explore the themes of food and its production. It is planned to return Cogges to be an active farmstead, run by a smallholder who will live in the Manor House. Planning permission is being pursued in order to make the necessary changes.

The museum will be reliant on volunteers, and will concentrate its activities on school holidays and weekends.

Members noted that work towards the opening of the museum was moving very slowly. John Jackson could not offer a precise opening date, but would circulate details after meeting.

### Libraries

Consultation on provision of library service will start later in May. Council is working closely with Museums, Libraries & Archives Council on any proposed changes.

In response to a question from Councillor John Godden on whether the administration is striving to ensure a countywide system of public libraries, John Jackson explained that the council will take into account the Libraries Act remit to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' service.

Judith Heathcoat commented that some questions had already been covered at full Council.

## 122/11 THAMES VALLEY POLICE: PRESENTATION AND Q&A

(Agenda No. 6)

Sara Thornton, Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police gave presentation.

### *Management comment*

Chief Constable spoke about|:

- Strategy for 3 years; 2011-2014
- Crime levels and performance of force during past year
- Budget

### Strategy for 3 years, 2011-2014

- To cut crimes that are of most concern to the community
- To increase the visible presence of the Police
- To protect our communities from the most serious harm
- To improve communication with the public in order to build trust and confidence in our communities
- To tackle bureaucracy and develop the professional skills of all staff
- To reduce costs and protect the frontline

Delivery Plan targets for 2011-2012:

#### **To cut crimes that are of most concern to the community**

- Reduce the level of violence against the person by **12%**
- Reduce serious acquisitive crime by **5%**
- Increase the detection rate for violence against the person with injury to **42%**
- Increase the detection rate for serious acquisitive crime to **15%**
- Maintain the detection rate for serious sexual assault above **25%**
- Improve satisfaction levels for victims of domestic burglary, violence and vehicle crime above those achieved at 2010/11 year end

#### **To increase the visible presence of the police**

- Increase the number of Special Constables to **700**
- Achieve an annual recruitment target of **10% BME** for Police Officers, PCSOs and Special Constables

#### **Protect our communities from the most serious harm**

- Increase the number of confiscation orders achieved by **5%**

### Crime levels and performance of force during past year

Data showed good performance against targets for serious acquisitive crime and violence against the person with injury. Number of Special Constables for the area

remained stable, and confidence in the police and satisfaction with overall experience showed an improvement in the year.

### Budget

Thames Valley police face a £52m reduction over 4 years. The Chief Constable explained that Police Grant was reduced across the board with no consideration given to local differences. However, Thames Valley Police are in the middle range of budget reduction.

£47m savings has been identified via the force's Productivity Strategy, and a Zero Based Budget approach is always taken when drafting budget. Locally changes have been made to the managerial structure, and plans are in place to utilise technology better.

### Questions

Main areas covered:

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Chief Constable said that though the priority is to protect the frontline a balanced approach must be taken to ensure that the proper 'back office' support is available. Otherwise efficiency gains may be undermined.

Councillor John Godden asked how targets are set, and was informed that they are set by the Thames Valley Police Authority in a public meeting. Police areas are grouped in 'families' to allow comparisons to be made.

Councillor Patrick Greene asked for data on fixed speeding cameras since they were re-activated. He also asked for information about the number of motorcyclists caught speeding. The Chief Constable said that she would have the details sent after the meeting.

Councillor Bill Service asked if the trial at Berkshire/Oxfordshire border on lorries only using inside lane of A34 at certain times should be extended to the whole of the A34. The Chief Constable replied that she would ask Road Policing for their view.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Constable for her presentation, and for the work of the police in Oxfordshire.

## **123/11 OPERATION OF BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL'S ILLEGAL MONEY LENDING TEAM IN OXFORDSHIRE**

(Agenda No. 7)

Richard Webb (Acting Head of Trading Standards & Community Safety) reported that the Birmingham Illegal Money Team has been operating in Oxfordshire since January 2010. Agreement is necessary as team uses statutory powers.

The team works by using face to face interviews, and a communication drive to highlight the means by which people can bring a complaint. No evidence of illegal money lending has been uncovered during the past year, but the authority recognises

that time is needed for the team to gather intelligence, and build contacts and confidence.

Given the covert nature of the activities carried out by the team, reports are confidential, but are discussed with Richard Webb.

Richard Webb said that county council support is minimal as team works and acts independently. However, intends to consult on how the council can increase levels of support.

In response to questions asked by committee, Richard confirmed that the agreement had been extended, and that the local media have been helpful and supportive when they can. He said that the team tries to work with organisations who work with vulnerable individuals (eg, Citizens Advice Bureau).

## **124/11 ROAD SAFETY**

(Agenda No. 8)

Colin Thomas reported that steady progress is being made in transferring road safety responsibilities from Environment & Economy Fire & Rescue. Priorities include re-aligning structure to provide management, supervision and guidance, transferring information and redeploying safety roadshows, and identifying priorities for a work programme to be launched in the summer.

Colin also referred to the launch of the United Nations Decade of Road Safety on 11 May 2011.

Councillor Susanna Pressel stated that it would be preferable to be able to comment on structure and focus of team prior to changes being agreed and fixed in place.

Councillor John Goddard stressed that an more integrated approach would be beneficial bringing together events, guidance and training, and area based rather than specialist based.

Councillor Bill Service raised the issue of HGVs and overtaking on A34 particularly the Newbury Bicester section.

Colin Thomas noted all comments, and said that a risk based approach would be used in deciding the work programme.

## **125/11 FIRE CONTROL**

(Agenda No. 9)

Colin Thomas reported that a paper on 'Future Arrangements for Call Receipt, Mobilising and Incident management for Oxfordshire County Council Fire & Rescue Service' had been submitted for consideration by Cabinet (11 May 2011). Lessons from the forest fire in Berkshire would inform the work on future arrangements.

**126/11 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

(Agenda No. 10)

The Chairman asked for the work programme to be considered by new committee at next meeting, and thanked current members for their contribution during the past year.

**127/11 FORWARD PLAN**

(Agenda No. 11)

Nothing of interest to committee noted.

**128/11 12.30 CLOSE OF MEETING**

(Agenda No. 12)

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....

## Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee

4 July 2011

### Oxfordshire Museums Service

1. Oxfordshire County Council assumed responsibility for museums in 1974 under the powers of the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964. There is no statutory minimum service. However the Council has acquired museum collections over the last 35 years (and previously under a joint provision with the City Council) and these are held in trust for present and future generations. The Council has a responsibility to care for these collections which represent the material cultural heritage of the county.

### Key outcomes of the Oxfordshire Museums Service (2010/11)

	Target	Actual
Number of visits to		
The Oxfordshire Museum (TOM)	170,000	167,641
Web site visits	70,000	94,790
Learning & Access (adults)	3,400	3,687
Learning & Access (children)	2,400	2,101
School visits TOM	2,000	2,232
Volunteer hours	2,600	4,269

2. Following the decisions of the Cabinet and Council in January and February to reduce the budget of the Oxfordshire Museums Service by 40% over the following three years, managers have prepared plans to meet this reduction and currently those proposals are in a process of formal consultation with the staff. The gross budget of the OMS for 2011/12 is £1,144,000; the income target is £198,000. The net budget is therefore £946,000. £160,000 is included in that figure as a grant to the Cogges Trust, leaving £786,000 for the museum service. The budget reduction agreed by the Council is £200,000 in 2012, and £100,000 in 2013 (38% in total).

3. At the same time, the service is having to respond to an anticipated reduction in income from partner museums (Museum of Oxford, Abingdon Museum, Banbury Museum, Vale and Downland Museum), and to the changes at Cogges.

4. The museum service budget comprises salaries and staffing costs(83%), supplies and services (8%) and premises costs (8%). There is no opportunity to reduce the premises costs; the supplies and services budgets are already very low, so there is no choice other than to cut staffing. In order to meet the reductions, the service is planning to reduce staffing from 30 fte to 15 fte over the period.

5. A new structure has been developed which aims to maintain the assets of the service and the broad skills base the service currently enjoys and needs in order to undertake work for our partners as well as meeting the needs of the County's collections and service. Broadly the new structure proposes three sections:

- Public services and access to collections focused at the Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock
- Curatorial and collection services at the Museum Resources Centre, Standlake
- Learning and access, countywide

6. In addition it is proposed to support a 'business unit' through 2012 which will offer specialist conservation, collection care and technical support services to partner museums (and other organizations).

7. Given the reduction in staffing, and in order to maintain services, all sections will become increasingly dependent on the support of volunteers. It is proposed to appoint a 'Volunteers Coordinator' to manage the recruitment of volunteers. The post will also manage the 'front of house' staff at The Oxfordshire Museum.

8. The formal consultations with staff are planned to continue until 14 July; Staff Support, Unison and Human Resources are involved in the process which aims to consult all staff on the plans and to ensure appropriate and fair procedures, in accordance with Council policies, for the implementation of the plans. It is planned to implement the new structure in two phases from April 2012.

### **The Oxfordshire Museum**

9. The Oxfordshire Museum (TOM) was established in Woodstock in 1964 as the County Museum. It is housed in a fine 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century town house in the heart of the town. In recent years it has been refurbished and redisplayed, with awards of over £2.5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and support from other grant aid organizations and from the community (through the Friends organization). A capital contribution from OCC over the last three years of £150,000 has enabled the redisplay of two further galleries and improvements to retail and visitor services across the site. TOM currently attracts c 170,000 visitors per year.

10. The staffing reductions will reduce front of house staff, curatorial and support staff. The service is working with the Friends of TOM to seek volunteers to help staff the galleries and museum reception, and to undertake support tasks.

11. Following a report to the Cabinet in June, it is anticipated that a lease and management arrangements will be confirmed enabling work to start on the construction of a new building within the TOM site to house the Soldiers of Oxfordshire (SOFO) collections and exhibit them. This new development is



funded entirely by SOFO. The SOFO museum aims to illustrate the impact of conflict on the people and places of Oxfordshire.

12. Work is due to start on site in July 2011 with the demolition of the current Pratten building in advance of construction work starting in the autumn. Completion is planned for 2013/14.

13. In the meantime SOFO has been successful in obtaining a grant of £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to support a new temporary exhibition due to open at TOM in the autumn on the theme *Children and War*. This to be supported by an extensive outreach programme involving schools and the wider community delivered in partnership with the County service and others.

#### **Curatorial and collection services at the Museum Resources Centre**

14. The Museum Resources Centre (MRC) at Standlake houses the County Council's museum collections of archaeology, history and art from Oxfordshire. This resource is used by TOM and the partner museums for exhibitions, learning and outreach. In 2010/11 an extension to the building, funded by Oxfordshire Council with additional contributions from 106 agreements, was completed to increase storage capacity, improve collection care (particularly for the textile collections) and to provide more space for volunteers and researchers using the collection.

15. Curatorial, conservation, documentation and technical staff are based at MRC; from 2012 that staffing will be reduced to part-time curators for archaeology and social history; part-time documentation and conservation staff. Opportunities to improve access to collections and to enhance collection care and documentation will be limited.

16. A significant number of volunteers already support work at MRC – assisting with documentation and collection care. That support will be encouraged and more volunteers recruited to support the work of the remaining staff.

#### **Learning and Access**

17. The Learning and Access team provide a range of learning opportunities at TOM – formal learning for schools, family 'drop-in' sessions, workshops and lectures for adult audiences; they also take collections out to schools and to adult groups (day care and residential homes and other community groups). This work is highly valued by the recipients and has attracted wide support from Adult Social Care (particularly for reminiscence and creative work with adults) and Children, Education and Families (for work with primary schools).

18. The reduction in staffing will reduce the level of service that can be provided – with less visits to schools and groups of older people.

#### **The Business Unit**

19. In the current year the museum service anticipates an income of £53,000 from partner museums. The museum service provides specialist conservation and collection care for these museums, documents the collections, and manages a programme of changing exhibitions. These services are charged to the partner museums 'at cost'. However, the future potential for income generation is uncertain; other local authorities and individual museums are facing their own similar budget pressures, so the opportunities for externally funded work are reducing.

20. The Business Unit allows some capacity and a broader range of skills to be maintained through 2012 for work for the partner museums (and others). If the unit is successful and can generate sufficient income, it will be retained; but if it proves unable to generate income, then it will be closed down. The unit will be monitored closely over the next 9 months in order to assess its likely future.

### **Cogges**

21. Previously part of the museum service, Cogges is about to be transferred to a new independent charitable Trust. The Trust hopes to sign a 30 year lease on the site before the end of June; a new Director, funded and managed by the Trust, has been appointed, and the Trust aims to reopen the site in July.

22. The new Trust plans to relaunch Cogges with the themes of 'food' and 'sustainability'. The historic room settings in the ground floor of the Manor House will be retained; elsewhere the Trust is planning to introduce a resident 'smallholder', to provide catering and retailing, and to offer a programme of creative activities for schools and community groups. A very successful Volunteers Day was run on 14th May attended by over 100 people who were briefed as to the new Trust's vision for the future development of Cogges and the role to be played by volunteers. A recruitment process for volunteers is now underway.

### **Issues for the future**

- a. Capacity: the loss of staff reduces the capacity of the service overall. This will impact on the ability of the service to continue to work successfully in partnerships (currently the museums service works closely with the Oxfordshire Museums Council and others supporting museums countywide). It will also reduce the service's ability to apply for external funding.
- b. Loss of expertise and skills: the reduction in staffing will reduce the breadth of specialist skills available to the service (and to partner museums); if the Business Unit is not able to sustain itself and is closed, then this will exacerbate the issue.
- c. Uncertainty of income: in addition to the uncertainty over future income for the Business Unit, other income from retailing, catering, commission on

sales, room hire at TOM is also less secure in the current economic climate.

- d. Increasing reliance on volunteers: the service has welcomed the support of volunteers for many years – adding value to core work and undertaking very valuable support roles; however in the proposed new structure the service will become increasingly reliant on volunteers. The involvement of more volunteers across a range of activities will increase demands on management.
- e. Oxfordshire Heritage Partnership: the Oxfordshire Museums Service is working in partnership with Oxford University Museums in order to bid to become a ‘core’ museum with the opportunity of attracting significant external funding (from the Museums Libraries and Archives/Arts Council) for increasing access to the museum collections. Criteria for the selection of ‘core’ museums are due to be published in July with the outcome of applications announced before Christmas. A pilot project, funded by MLA, has already begun – drawing on collections from across the county. A draft Heritage Strategy for Oxfordshire has been written, in preparation for the bid, and the first consultation meeting for this will be held on 21 June.
- f. Change in governance: during 2010/11, an external consultant was engaged by the museum service, funded by the MLA, to advise on possible changes to the governance structure (a number of museums around the country have been encouraged to undertake this work). The consultant advised that in view of the current development with SOFO and the changes already being considered for the museum service, no change to governance should be planned at present, but that a future change, possibly to an independent Trust might be considered in due course.

Martyn Brown  
County Heritage and Arts Officer

Carol Anderson  
Museum Service Manager

June 2011

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## Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee

4 July 2011

### Winter preparations and lessons from severe weather

*Dealing with resilience arrangements following lessons learnt from snow events and preparations being made for future events.*

#### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this briefing is to:

- 1.1 Inform the Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee of progress to increase resilience to snow and severe weather events within the county council; and
- 1.2 Outline action taken to improve plans and processes to improve the local response to severe weather incidents.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 In the last 18 months, Oxfordshire has experience several periods of heavy and prolonged snowfall where an emergency response was required to support critical services, partner agencies and the community.
- 2.2 In response to the snow event in January 2010, a Severe Weather Plan was produced by the Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) in consultation with the District and City Councils to provide a more coordinated response to weather events. This plan was published in November 2010 and was used by partners during a further snow event in December 2010.
- 2.3 In response to Met Office issued weather warnings on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2010, the activation procedures in the Severe Weather Plan were followed which included a teleconference with internal and external response personnel to prepare services for the weather conditions and consultation with the Duty Director to activate the online Major Incident Reporting System (MIRS) for Monday 20<sup>th</sup> Dec in anticipation of significant disruption.
- 2.4 In contrast to the snow event in January 2010, schools were closed for the Christmas period eliminating the requirement for the Council to publish school closures. However, the proximity to the Christmas holidays – and in particular the fact snow fell on the last shopping Saturday before Christmas meant that many people continued to travel and were involved in extended traffic delays despite advice from emergency services to stay at home. The time of year also meant that some agencies experienced a lower than usual availability of volunteer staff due to holiday commitments.

#### 3. Lessons identified and subsequent activity

- 3.1 **Review of Severe Weather Plan:** The existence of the Severe Weather Plan and its use by responding agencies within Oxfordshire reinforced the view that such a plan was both required and useful in coordinating the activation activities of local

agencies. It is usual practice to review learning and amend plans following use and this process is underway within the EPU and with partner agencies to incorporate learning. This review will also take account of changes to Met Office weather warning procedures and legislative and policy changes which affect the response such as changing approaches within the county to flood response following the Flood and Water Management Act as the plan covers flooding, snow, gales, heat wave and drought.

- 3.2 **Availability of 4x4 vehicles and volunteers:** The availability and coordination of 4x4 capabilities within the county was highlighted by all responders in the snow event of January 2010 where the Fire Service provided support to both OCC and NHS services. Progress was made by December to review fleet and lease cars to increase access to 4x4 vehicles within many teams. However, due to some shortfalls in provision and planning arrangements, initially the Fire & Rescue Service and later, the Integrated Transport Unit were required to manage an emergency 4x4 cell to support the delivery of some critical services, particularly to rural areas. The Environment & Economy Directorate, supported by the EPU will work to construct a 4x4 plan which can be placed on standby in response to weather warnings and to gain an understanding of potential demand for such a service following changes to Home Support services within OCC. Work is also underway via the Business Continuity Stakeholder Group (BCSG) to promote team-based reviews of transportation requirements and whether measures such as “snow-socks” are appropriate resilience measures for some teams.
- 3.3 **Review of holiday cover arrangements:** The timing of the snow in December 2010, being close the Christmas holidays, meant that some holiday rotas had already started and many people who would normally be free to volunteer for emergency response were reluctant to interfere with Christmas arrangements. However, when the extent of the situation was understood, staff did come forward and the response was managed. The BCSG has raised this issue with all directorates to ensure that holiday and standby rotas are robust and that resilient standby arrangements are activated in response to weather warnings.
- 3.4 **Explore out of hours telephone answering for emergency situations:** An area of learning for services throughout the weekend in December, was the pressure placed upon out-of-hours call handling arrangements already in place. A number of comments through the debrief process related to arrangements to provide a high volume call handling capacity to respond to resident’s calls. Discussions are underway between the BCSG and the customer service centre to explore opportunities to offer this facility and via the BCSG, directorates have been asked to review the existing arrangements for out of hours call handling to ensure they have capacity to manage increased demand during an emergency.
- 3.5 **Facilitate multi-agency planning for emergency disruption on the A34:** Travel disruption on the road network is an expected result of high levels of snow and freezing temperatures and responding agencies such as the Highways Agency and Police provide public advice on appropriate action for drivers. Feedback from the two snow events in 2010 indicate that the OCC management of its highways improved, particularly with the provision of information on gritting routes via the website. However, the biggest disruption occurred on the A34 north, which is part of the Highway Agency network. The EPU has agreement from partners to engage in a project to produce a plan for disruption the A34 with contributions from OCC Highways and Network Management, Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue, Thames Valley Police and Road Policing, Highway Agency, West Berkshire Council, Hampshire

County Council and BBC Oxford. Good progress is being made to plan for a multi-agency response and to potentially establish a "Traffic Cell" to support the tactical response to an incident on the A34 with stronger public information systems to inform road users on appropriate action to take.

- 3.6 **Continued community resilience activity:** During 2010, the emergency planning unit with support from the EA, Environment & Economy, Social & Community Services and the District and City Councils, organised 4 events for Parish & Town councils to promote community resilience and the development of community emergency plans. With the support of parish councils to distribute the "Are you ready?" booklet to households, promotion of the OCC community emergency plan template and the highways website and a focus on helping the vulnerable in communities, there was positive feedback from communities through the second snow period on resilience of communities and access to useful information. A second round of similar events is planned for September-October 2011 to re-engage with Parish and Town Councils, to deliver further advice on personal and community resilience, give advice on action to be taken in response to severe weather including flooding and snow and to continue to support communities to develop their own emergency plans.

#### 4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Lessons have been identified for an increased level of resilience and sharpening of business continuity arrangements to improve Oxfordshire County Council's response to severe weather events. The BCSG is managing the internal OCC reviews to increase our resilience to severe weather events and the associated weather warnings.
- 4.2 Multi-agency partners are supporting the efforts to review existing plans and to produce new plans where a requirement has been identified, and in particular, efforts are being made to ensure that plans and processes are flexible to facilitate a response to a range of events and circumstances.
- 4.3 Engagement with communities is resulting in the development of community emergency plans which complement the response plans held by statutory responders and this work stream will continue to be a priority within the emergency planning unit throughout 2011.

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