

STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 10 January 2013 commencing at 5.30 pm and finishing at Time Not Specified

Present:

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

Councillor Ray Jelf (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor David Turner
Councillor Marilyn Badcock
Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE
Councillor Caroline Newton
Councillor Larry Sanders
Councillor David Wilmshurst
Councillor Stewart Lilly

Other Members in Attendance:

By Invitation:

Officers:

Whole of meeting Sue Scane, Assistant Chief executive & Chief Finance Officer
Lorna Baxter, Deputy Chief Finance Officer

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.

81/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Hallchurch (Councillor Lilly substituting)

82/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda No. 2)

None

83/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 3)

None

84/12 SERVICE & RESOURCE PLANNING 2013/14 - 2016/17

(Agenda No. 4)

Sue Scane, Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer gave an introductory presentation on the overall financial position and overview of the savings that are required from the budget.

Huw Jones, Director for Environment and Economy gave an overview of the changes to the Environment and Economy directorate in the past year. The directorate is now organised into three divisions; Strategy & Infrastructure, Commercial Services and Oxfordshire Customer Services. Deputy Directors Graham Shaw and Martin Tugwell presented the key savings proposals for their services relating to the committee.

Members were interested in the development of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) and the savings related to it. It was agreed that a more substantial discussion would be had at the next committee meeting where there will be a paper on the next phase of the CSC.

Graham Shaw confirmed that there is no intention to externalise the CSC but are looking at the potential for other 'back office' services such as HR or Finance to be externalised. Options will need to be considered in detail over the period of the medium term financial plan.

Members expressed a desire for locally based services even if they were to be externalised.

The committee noted that BT is improving broadband provision in the county so many of our buildings are already benefitting from this. It was noted that the Better Broadband programme is still in the procurement phase but members were keen that parishes should be made aware of the planned phasing for the roll out.

Members noted that the corporate landlord approach is now embedded and we are looking for opportunities to work with partners to join up on estates. Energy usage reduced by 15% last year but unfortunately this is not reflected in cost reductions as prices are increasing.

Sue Scane told the committee that the majority of savings in the Chief Executive's Office had already been achieved in earlier years. The efficiency reserve has been

SYP3

..... built up to pump prime activities so it is appropriate to remove the change fund at this time.

The committee were disappointed at the loss of the Big Society Fund base budget and urge Cabinet to reinstate this funding on a one-off basis if additional funding becomes available. The committee were also keen to ensure that sufficient staffing was maintained to support the fund and more broadly the whole back office function of the council.

Sue Scane undertook to provide members with details of the overall organisational development budget and what proportion of it will be given in savings.

Members thanked Sue Scane and Lorna Baxter for their support to the scrutiny committees.

The committee were happy to support the proposed pressures and savings. They noted that, in the main, the savings proposed were on the basis of the reduced size of the council overall.

85/12 CLOSE OF MEETING

(Agenda No.)

6.40

..... in the Chair

Date of signing