

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 18 June 2012 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.20 pm

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillor Lawrie Stratford – in the Chair

Councillor Stewart Lilly (Deputy Chairman)

Councillor John Goddard

Councillor Patrick Greene

Councillor Susanna Pressel

Councillor Bill Service

Councillor Chip Sherwood

Councillor Alan Thompson

Councillor Ray Jelf (In place of Councillor Carol Viney)

Councillor Charles Mathew (In place of Councillor Anthony Gearing)

Councillor Judith Heathcoat

Other Members in

Attendance:

Officers:

Whole of meeting

Kathrin Luddecke

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

Officer Attending

5

Peter Clark

6

Jacquie Bugeja, Karen Warren, Jillian Southwell

7

Vicky Field, Mike Bardsley

8

David Etheridge

9, 10

Richard Webb

11, 12

Colin Thomas

13

David Etheridge, Colin Thomas

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.

27/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Charles Mathew substituted for Councillor Anthony Gearing. Councillor Ray Jelf substituted for Councillor Carol Viney.

28/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

The chairman declared an interest under item 10 in his position as chairman of the trustees of the Bicester Citizens Advice Bureau.

29/12 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 30 April and 15 May (**SSC3a, b**) were approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

Matters arising from the meeting of 30 April:

- Item 14/12: Councillor Lilly had liaised with the council's Business Continuity Manager and gave an update about feedback from those affected
- Item 22/12: Councillor Pressel queried progress with fundraising efforts and discussions about City archives; Karen Warren responded with a brief update
- Item 23/12: confirmed the committee's draft forward plan would be circulated

30/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 4)

There were no speakers or petitions.

31/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE - REGISTRATION, CORONER'S SERVICES AND CULTURAL SERVICES

(Agenda No. 5)

The Head of Law and Governance, Peter Clark, gave a verbal update on the Registration, Coroner's, Library, Museums, History and Archives services. He highlighted particular achievements and changes, including two new appointments:

- Darren Salter will replace Nicholas G Gardiner as Coroner for Oxfordshire
- Karen Warren has been appointed as Cultural Services Manager.

Members of the committee:

- Expressed their thanks to Nicholas G Gardiner for his dedicated work over 40 years and wished him a happy and long retirement
- Congratulated Karen on her appointment.

They also paid tribute to the Registration and Coroner's Service for their contribution to the 36 repatriations to date and to the Jubilee citizenship celebrations.

32/12 REVIEW OF MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICES

(Agenda No. 6)

Councillor Heathcoat, the Cabinet Member for Cultural Services, introduced this item, noting that:

- Oxfordshire Library Services' aim is to be a service that is fit for purpose and the 21st century, with a static and mobile service that complement each other and provide a comprehensive service
- The proposed review of mobile services is about efficiencies not cuts, with single staffing introduced on two routes and a third of savings already delivered

- Its scope is to review stops and timetables with a view not to reduce the service, but deliver it to more people, meeting individual and local community needs.

Jillian Southwell, Library Service Manager, followed on giving further details about the background, aims and format of the proposed review. She answered a range of questions from members including about different elements of the service, usage and promotion. She invited the committee to consider how it could support the work of the project group and stakeholders identified.

AGREED that selected committee members will be a stakeholder in the proposed review, with the chairman to confirm members to be involved.

33/12 OXFORDSHIRE ADULT LEARNING - UPDATE

(Agenda No. 7)

The chairman noted that while this update had been requested by the committee, responsibility for Adult Learning is expected to lie to Councillor Tilley, Cabinet Member for Education, and a different scrutiny committee in future. Councillor Heathcoat confirmed that the service had not been part of her portfolio since October 2011.

Vicky Field, Operational HR Manager, and Mike Bardsley, Skills and Learning Manager, presented the report circulated (**SSC7**) and responded to questions raised by members. Areas discussed included the very positive recent Ofsted report, location of learning centres and provision from other venues, balance of in-house and other providers, outcomes and targets for learners, the First Steps programme and trends for English as a Second Language (ESOL) provision.

AGREED that Mike Bardsley will circulate information about courses and numbers of learners. Also **AGREED** for details of comments made by members to be passed on to the relevant scrutiny committee taking on responsibility for the service.

34/12 DIRECTOR'S UPDATE - FIRE & RESCUE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

(Agenda No. 8)

David Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer and Head of Community Safety, updated the committee about key issues. These included the Police and Crime Commissioner and Panel and an update about prosecutions following the accidental death of three Warwickshire fire fighters.

Councillor Mathew asked for thanks to be recorded for Joe Wilkins' contribution to the Eynsham Fire Service who lost his life in a cycling accident three weeks ago.

35/12 REGULATORY & INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) - UPDATE

(Agenda No. 9)

Richard Webb, Acting Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety, explained the legal requirement for information on the council's use of its powers under the Act to be brought to the committee and spoke to the report circulated (**SSC9**).

Richard Webb indicated that the government's commitment to change local authorities' rights to surveillance is likely to require changes to the council's policy in the autumn. He explained the main direction of the proposed changes and requested the committee to authorise the Head of Legal Services and the Director of Social and Community Services to make any changes required. This was moved, seconded and **AGREED** by the committee, subject to a report being brought back to the committee at the appropriate time.

36/12 CONSUMER PROTECTION - UPDATE

(Agenda No. 10)

Richard Webb, Acting Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety, presented an update based on changes announced by the government in its report on Empowering and Protecting Consumers. He noted that the Oxfordshire consortium of Citizens Advice Bureaus (CAB) is receiving funding from Citizens Advice at national level for a consumer empowerment pilot project. Trading Standards remains responsible for enforcement and is involved in the project.

Discussion included:

- The National Trading Standards Board will have one representative from the South East region excluding London, representing 19 local authorities
- Chain of accountability allowing issues based on evidence to be brought up from the grassroots
- Respective responsibilities and close liaison between Oxfordshire CABs and Trading Standards in dealing with enquiries.

In response to a question by Councillor Pressel, it was **AGREED** for Richard Webb to circulate the report by Citizens Advice nationally about the consumer advice service for which it is now responsible, once received.

37/12 OFRS RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

(Agenda No. 11)

Colin Thomas, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, spoke to the report circulated (**SSC11**). He noted the great commitment by retained fire fighters and the reliance of the service on both its whole-time and retained staff. He highlighted recent innovation to allow more flexible use of all resources and the close working with retained staff themselves in continuing to make improvements, as part of the service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) reported to the committee on previous occasions.

Discussion included Health & Safety in the context of reduced incident numbers, targeted recruitment and the Oxfordshire service attracting a greater than average proportion of female retained staff. Councillor Pressel requested more detailed information which Colin Thomas undertook to send her.

AGREED that selected committee members will be involved in supporting this work. The chairman undertook to confirm details based on expressions of interest.

38/12 SAFE AND SECURE OLYMPIC GAMES

(Agenda No. 12)

Colin Thomas, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, spoke to the report circulated (**SSC12**). He highlighted that training and exercises undertaken are not specific to this particular event; the benefits and experience gained from them will be retained within the organisation. This work is part of the service's regular business, working closely with others in the council and the statutory Thames Valley Resilience Forum; no additional staff have been appointed or financial resources committed.

39/12 ROAD SAFETY - UPDATE

(Agenda No. 13)

Colin Thomas, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, spoke to the report circulated (**SSC13**). As requested by committee members, the update focuses on the positive progress in integrating the Road Safety team into the Fire & Rescue Service since its transfer just over a year ago. He noted that strong links to the Environment & Economy directorate remain in place and referred to their annual report.

In discussions, members also noted concern about cycling accidents in particular and made suggestions on helping schools recruit and thank volunteers for cyclist training. Noted as a correction that table 10 Appendix 6 gives information for the first four months of the current year; previous years are covered in other tables. Officers agreed that while overall trends were downward there is no room for complacency. The role of the Police in enforcement was also noted.

Councillor Heathcoat referred to the work of the Junior Citizen Trust Oxfordshire which she chairs and which is supported by the service, offering advice in different settings to around 4,500 children a year.

In response to a question by Councillor Goddard, David Etheridge noted that he has recently taken on national responsibility for Road Safety, as a dedicated work stream within the Chief Fire Officers Association. This is due to statutory responsibility for Road Safety education, training and publicity having transferred to the Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service as one of the first in the UK (see Appendix 1). The Department for Transport's new strategic framework for road safety includes making available information and data to facilitate intelligence-led management and monitoring going forward.

AGREED for a future update to cover developments under the new national framework and to involve Environment & Economy. Colin Thomas undertook to ensure Councillor Greene receives information in relation to concerns about road safety raised by a local school governor.

40/12 BRIEFING ABOUT EQUALITY ACT AND EQUALITY DUTY

(Agenda No. 14)

The chairman spoke to the report circulated (**SSC14**), having attended a national briefing on the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Duty. The purpose of bringing this item to the committee was to help scrutiny be mindful of implications.

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In response to a question by Councillor Pressel he noted that meeting the Equality Duty does not mean that impacts on particular groups can always be avoided. However, the council needs to be able to demonstrate that it has considered these as part of its decision making and that proportionate actions are taken in mitigation.

41/12 FORWARD PLAN
(Agenda No. 15)

AGREED for the committee officer to circulate the committee's draft work plan in advance of the next meeting.

42/12 CLOSE OF MEETING
(Agenda No. 16)

The meeting finished at 1.20pm.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing